

God's Will for our Lives in Ephesians

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A study in the Book of Ephesians

- *“Therefore look carefully how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. On account of this, do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.”* (Eph. 5:15-17 LSB)
- A good place to look is the book of Ephesians. This verse is one of the key verses in the book and relates to our study. So, what can we learn from this book about the will of God for us?

Background

The will of God is mentioned directly or indirectly a number of times. Paul is an apostle by the “will of God”. Any time that we see a command or direction, we need to see that as God’s will for our lives.

Ephesus had one major god – Artemis, the imperial cult and many others as well. Magic, occult etc. was a large part of the focus of people. We need to remember that in the minds of these people, (as well as many others) you sacrifice to gods in order to gain their favour. Acts 19:11-21.

Overall Summary

Read through the book in one sitting as the original hearers would have heard it. As we read this letter, what seems to be the over arching message? The first three chapters seem to set the stage for the practical application in the remaining three chapters.

- God has provided us with everything that we need and has chosen us to bring glory to Him.
- Talks about where they have been, i.e. walking sinfully.
- Moves on to how they should live their lives.
- Relating to others in love to build each other up.
- Relationship between husbands and wives.
- Struggle against spiritual forces.

God has blessed us and provided with:

- Spiritual blessings.
- Purpose.
- Forgiveness of sins.
- Predestined to bring praise and glory to God.
- Predestined to be sons of God.
- Christ dwells in our hearts.

- That we may be filled with the fullness of God.

Chapter 1

- Paul affirms that they are believers who are faithful.
- He then mentions the spiritual blessings that God has blessed us with.
- Verse 4 is a key verse:
 - *“just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him in love,”* (Eph. 1:4 LSB)
 - There are a number of items in this verse:
 - He chose us.
 - For the purpose of being holy and blameless.
 - To do this in love – this love being the “agape” love.
 - Here the will of God for our lives is to live holy and blameless lives and love others.
- When we walk according to His ways, we bring glory and praise to God. We praise God for what He has done for us.
- The forgiveness of our sins is through the shed blood of Christ.
- Being wise is portrayed as living a holy and blameless life.
- God’s power is at work in us to help us live a holy life.
- His power far exceeds that of the other spiritual being which have been subjected to Christ.
- The church is the body of Christ.

Chapter 2

- Paul highlights that previously they had walked in sin according to Satan’s ways who is working in those that are disobedient to God.
- We are saved through grace, not works. He makes this point here since they were accustomed to doing things for the gods in order to appease them and gain favour for their lives.
- Verse 10 is another key verse:
 - *“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.”* (Eph. 2:10 LSB)
- Since he is speaking to Gentiles (non-Jews), he now reveals the mystery that they too were now God’s people. Both Jew and Gentile is saved by grace through the shed blood of Christ.

Chapter 3

- Chapter 3 continues the theme of Gentiles being fellow heirs, members of the body and partakers in the promise in Christ.
- The church now makes known to the spiritual rulers and authorities God's wisdom.
- God works in our inner being so that we would be strengthened with power to live in love and to know the love that Christ has for us.

Chapter 4

Paul now gets into the practical implications and applications as he teaches on how to live holy and blameless lives in love.

- He starts chapter 4 with an overall call to live a worthy life:
 - *"Therefore I, the prisoner in the Lord, exhort you to walk worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, being diligent to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all."* (Eph. 4:1-6 LSB)
- He transitions to talking about the body (church) and lists the gifts that God gave for building up the church for unity, maturity and purity of doctrine. Eph 4:9-16
- Every part of the body is to do its part so that the body functions and grows properly. This is to be done in love.
- He again calls them to no longer live as those without God as they used to, but to put on the new self that was created after the likeness of God. Eph 4:17-24
 - The old way is futile. Interesting how he points to the mind as being the issue in this section.
 - They are alienated from God because of the hardness of their heart. Paul relates the hardness of heart with ignorance and the mind, perhaps looking back at verse 14. This seems to emphasize the need for sound doctrine. It is a choice where they have given themselves over to all sorts of evil. Rom 1:18-25
 - The mind is a key aspect in the renewal process.
 - *"and to be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and to put on the new man, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth."* (Eph. 4:23-24 LSB)
- Another key verse is:
 - *"Therefore, laying aside falsehood, SPEAK TRUTH EACH ONE of you WITH HIS NEIGHBOR, for we are members of one another."* (Eph. 4:25 LSB)
 - He is contrasting the deceit and falsehood of the previous way of living with the new way of truth and righteousness.

- In verses 25-32, he shares with ways that the devil gains a foothold, place or opportunity to work in our lives.
 - Anger
 - Stealing
 - Unwholesome speech
 - Grieving the Holy Spirit
 - Bitterness
 - Wrath
 - Slander
 - Malice
- He then tops it off with how we should live:
 - Kindness
 - Tender-hearted
 - Forgiving – The basis of this is God having forgiven us **Therefore** we should forgive others – this is key
 - Love

Chapter 5 & beginning of 6

Paul continues with another “Therefore”. We should really read 4:32 and 5:2 together. Let’s unpack why and how we need to forgive and walk in love. What are the implications of these two verses?

- *“Instead, be kind to one another, tender-hearted, graciously forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has graciously forgiven you. Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, and walk in love, just as Christ also loved us and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.”* (Eph. 4:32-5:2 LSB)
- In 5:3, he moves on to the contrast to what he has just talked about. Here are the things that we are not to be and the things that lead to eternal damnation:
 - Sexual immorality
 - Impurity
 - Greed (covetous)– which is idolatry

There is to be no filthiness, foolish talk, coarse jesting

- Good fruit consists of all goodness, righteousness and truth.
- Do not get drunk but be filled with the Spirit

Paul now moves on to the topic of being subject to those above in authority. He starts with the Church being subject to Christ, then

- Wives being subject to husbands (also 1 Pet 3:1-6) (also look at the curse in Gen 3:16)
- Children to parents

- Slaves to masters

Chapter 6:10ff

Paul caps of the letter with “finally”, he seems to present an analysis of what it going on at a higher level and a strategy to deal with it. Since we live in this world, we tend to concentrate on the physical aspects of life. Paul has just been going through listing how we should walk in this life and now presents the real struggle behind this.

- What are the schemes of the devil? Eph 6:10
- Deceives – Gen 3:4-5, Rev 20:3 etc.
- Seeks to destroy – book of Job, 1 Pet 5:8 etc.
- Is a murderer and liar – Jn 8:44
- Disguises himself as an angel of light 2Cor 11:14-15 and the demonic forces are behind false teachings and teachers. Acts 13:10-8



- Accuser – Rev 12:10
- Tempts people 1 Chr 21:1, Acts 5:3, 1 Cor 7:5

Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil 1 Jn 3:8



The armor of God

- In verse 10, we are called to be strong in the Lord and in the might of His strength. What does that mean?
- Let's go through the armor one piece at a time.
- Verse 11 tells us the reason for putting on the armor – to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. We looked at the schemes of the devil already, so in light of what they are, what are we fighting against?
- How is our fight against the spiritual forces? 6:12

- *“Who rescued us from the authority of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.” (Col. 1:13-14 LSB)*
- *“to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the authority of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.” (Acts 26:18 LSB)*
- In this section we see standing firm, resisting, standing firm and persevering a number of times. What does that tell us?
- How does **Truth** help us to resist the devil?
- How does being **Righteous** help us resist the devil?
- How does the **Gospel of Peace** help us resist the devil?
- How does **Faith** help us resist the devil?
- What are the flaming arrows of the evil one?
- How does the **Helmet of Salvation** protect us?
- How does the **Sword of the Spirit** being the **Word of God** factor in?
- How does **Praying in the Spirit** fit in?

Agape love

The Greek language has more than one word for love.

What we describe as love is differentiated in Gk. by various expressions (for details ἀγάπῃ CL). phileō is the most commonly used word, indicating a general attraction towards a person or thing. In the foreground stands the meaning of love for one's relatives and friends (cf. the typical formation of philadelphia, love for a brother; Brother, art. ἀδελφός), but the whole area of fondness is also included with gods, men and things as possible objects. philia accordingly, denotes love, friendship, devotion, favour; and philos is a relative or friend. By contrast erōs is love which desires to have or take possession. agapaō, originally meaning to honour or welcome, is in classical Gk. the least specifically defined word; it is frequently used synonymously with phileō without any necessarily strict distinction in meaning. In the NT, however, agapaō and the noun agapē have taken on a particular significance in that they are used to speak of the love of God or the way of life based on it.¹

But in the case of the noun agapē there is no corresponding negative usage in the NT. It is always in the sense of hē agapē tou theou, the love of God, either subjective gen. (i.e. God's love of men) or the objective gen. (i.e. men's love of God), or referring to the divine love for other men which the presence of God evokes.²

¹Günther,, W. *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*. Accordance electronic edition, version 3.8. 4 vols. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986.

²Günther,, W. *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*. Accordance electronic edition, version 3.8. 4 vols. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986.