

Ephesians Introduction to the Letter

Dave Crisp is a hospital chef in the Southwest of England. In his spare time, he likes to roam the countryside with his metal detector, looking for lost or buried objects. Earlier this year he was scanning a field – and he struck it rich.

"I have made many finds over the years, but this is my first major coin hoard," he said. After his metal detector gave a "funny signal", Mr Crisp says he dug down 14in before he found what had caused it. "I put my hand in, pulled out a bit of clay and there was a little Radial, a little bronze Roman coin. Very, very small, about the size of my fingernail." Mr Crisp reported the find to the authorities, allowing archaeologists to excavate the site.

What they found was a literal buried treasure dating back to the 3rd Century: A large clay pot containing over 52,000 coins, weighing an estimated 350 lb., and valued at a \$1 million (US).

Link to an article from the BBC [here](#). Or one from Archaeology Magazine [here](#).

Q: Why is it that in over 1700 years no one else ever found this buried treasure? Generations of people had walked right over it; animals had grazed the field, farmers had certainly plowed the land during all these passing centuries. How did it remain undiscovered?

A: Previous generations had all only scratched the surface. Until Dave Crisp came along, no one had ever bothered to dig so deep. He had to go down 14" before he found the first coin. The rest lay deeper still. So the treasure was lying there, all 52,000-something coins of it, waiting to be uncovered and brought out for the world to see. But no one had ever seen it.

Much of what passes for Christianity today is woefully superficial. Faddish books and trendy music rule the day. Someone watching from the outside would have to be forgiven if they honestly thought that the Christian faith went no deeper than the cross around our neck or a slogan on a T-shirt.

The treasure is there to be found, but in our day and in our surroundings the surface is barely being scratched. Consequently, our riches are never discovered and brought out for the world to see. Many people have no idea of the spiritual wealth and resources available to them and how it might impact their lives. They don't even realize how much they don't realize; they don't know how much they don't know. For those of us willing to embark on a little spiritual treasure hunt (become biblical Dave Crisps), the book of Ephesians is a great place to start.

Ephesians might be described as deep, weighty, profound or intense at times. It might not immediately seem clear what Paul is talking about, because he speaks of things that do not normally occupy our minds. In the end, however, it will be very practical and will truly make a difference in our lives. We might not think going for walks in fields each weekend is very practical, but finding a \$1 million one random day suddenly makes it all look very practical indeed. The truth in Paul's letter to Ephesus is worth much more than \$1 million. A superficial look at it will never fully expose the treasure, so we're going to spend a few months going through it, 13 studies: This Introduction + 12 separate chunks.

Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon are called the *Prison Epistles*. Paul wrote them during the time he was held under house arrest in Rome. This letter does not address any specific error or problem in the church in Ephesus. In fact, it is the least personal of all his letters. There is evidence Paul intended it as a circular – to be shared by other churches in Asia along with Ephesus. It may be the same as “the epistle from Laodicea” (Col.4:16), since no *Letter from Paul to the Laodiceans* ever made it into the New Testament. One thing is certain: It will certainly deepen the spiritual understanding of any Christian who reads it and considers what Paul says.

Ephesus was a big, influential city for commercial and political reasons. It was also a major hub of idolatry, witchcraft and the occult. The cult of the Ephesian Artemis or Diana was based here. According to Acts 20, Paul spent about three years in Ephesus during which time the whole Roman province of Asia heard the gospel. Many who practiced magic turned to Christ and renounced their former way of life. Because of the impact of Paul’s ministry, Ephesus was also the scene of a huge riot. (See Acts 19 & 20.)

After Paul, Timothy took charge of the church (1 Tim 1:3). Later still, after Jerusalem was destroyed and the other apostles had all been martyred, the apostle John made Ephesus his home and headquarters for his later ministry. In the book of Revelation, Jesus Christ made this church the target for the first of His seven letters. (See Rev. 2:1-7)

Key themes in Ephesians:

- God’s eternal plan
- What it means to be saved by grace
- Redemption
- Reconciliation
- Our heavenly inheritance
- The church: our relationship as believers to God and our relationship as believers to one another
- Paul’s prayers (He doesn’t talk *about* prayer, but *records* two separate prayers for us to study.)
- The ministry of the Holy Spirit
- Living the transformed life
- Practical Forms of Holiness
- How to avoid sin
- Submission and authority
- Practical advice for earthly relationships
- Spiritual warfare

Introduction The Gargantuan Riches of God’s Grace 1:1-14

³Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ,

Paul’s First Prayer in Ephesians (For Life-Changing Spiritual Insights) 1:15-23

²²And He put all *things* under His feet, and gave Him *to be* head over all *things* to the church, ²³which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

Salvation by Grace through Faith 2:1-10

¹⁰For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

The Church: United in Christ 2:11-22

¹³But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

The Mystery of the Gospel Is Revealed 3:1-13

⁸To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,

Paul's Second Prayer in Ephesians (For Spiritual Strength and Depth) 3:14-21

²⁰Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, ²¹to Him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Christian Unity 4:1-16

¹¹And He Himself gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, ¹²for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,

Our New Life in Christ 4:17-24

¹⁷This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind,

Practical Examples of Living the New Life 4:25-32

³¹Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. ³²And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.

How to Walk a Holy Walk 5:1-21

¹Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. ²And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.

Various Forms of Submission and Authority 5:21 – 6:9

³³Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects *her* husband.

Spiritual Warfare and Closing Words 6:10-24

¹³Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

²⁰for which I am an ambassador in chains (Remember, Paul was writing this while under house arrest in Rome, chained to a Roman soldier)

Conclusion:

- The Christian life was never meant to be superficial.
 - It was meant to be fun, joyful, enjoyable, satisfying – all of that and more, but *never superficial*.
 - Rightly understood it is becoming new creatures and learning to live new lives – this is the deepest transformation possible that a human being can undergo this side of heaven.
- We have been brought near to the infinite, eternal, all powerful God – to the very power that drives the universe – that spoke all that there is into existence and now sustains it by His power.
- The blood of Jesus Christ has accomplished this. God has sealed us with His Holy Spirit.
- That was not a superficial death that Jesus died on the cross. It was not a superficial resurrection that happened on the third day. That was not a superficial chain Paul was wearing as he wrote this letter for us to read. When you were born again – if you have been born again – that was not a superficial process, but an actual regeneration, the giving of new life – and potentially a bigger deal than your first physical birth was (The Bible speaks of those for whom it would be better if they had never been born.) Let's not be so rude as to offer our Lord superficial praise or a superficial life in return.
- We should now leave anything that remains of a superficial Christianity behind, lest we find ourselves insulting the God of all grace who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Jesus Christ.