

Patterns for Christian Living

Ray Summers

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Basically there are two doctrines in the New Testament: how to be saved—that is, justification by grace through faith plus nothing; and how the saved ought to live. Comprehensively, this covers the New Testament. In a very real sense, every other doctrine is properly placed in one of these categories. As an expression of basic Christianity the epistle to the Ephesians stands near the top in any consideration of doctrine and ethics. This was true in the day when Christianity was a young and growing movement. It is equally true in the twentieth century when Christianity has come to be one of the major forces challenging the minds and the loyalties of men.

³ For this pattern, compare Ephesians: doctrine, 1-3; application, 4-6. Romans: doctrine, 1-11; application, 12-16. Galatians: doctrine, 1-4; application, 5-6. Colossians: doctrine, 1-2; application, 3-4. 1 Peter: doctrine, 1:1 to 2:10; application, 2:11 to 5:14. Hebrews: doctrine, 1:1 to 10:18; application, 10:19 to 13:25.

Epistle	Doctrine	Application
Ephesians	1-3	4-6
Romans	1-11	12-16
Galatians	1-4	5-6
Colossians	1-2	3-4
1 Peter	1:1 to 2:10	2:11 to 5:14
Hebrews	1:1 to 10:18	10:19 to 13:25

EPHESIANS:

Pattern for Christian Living

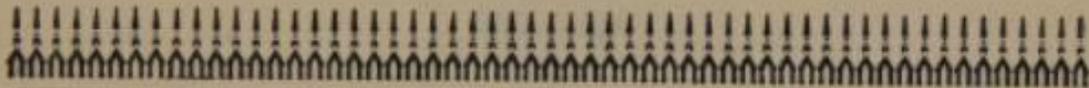
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PATTERN for CHRISTIAN LIVING



Ray Summers



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Preface

Basically there are two doctrines in the New Testament: how to be saved—that is, justification by grace through faith plus nothing; and how the saved ought to live. Comprehensively, this covers the New Testament. In a very real sense, every other doctrine is properly placed in one of these categories. As an expression of basic Christianity the epistle to the Ephesians stands near the top in any consideration of doctrine and ethics. This was true in the day when Christianity was a young and growing movement. It is equally true in the twentieth century when Christianity has come to be one of the major forces challenging the minds and the loyalties of men.

For this reason the epistle to the Ephesians has a particular relevance today. No loftier expression can be found than that which is presented in this epistle. Everywhere and in multiple ways man is seeking for “the good life.” Many movements—religious, social, political—offer their way to the realization of the good life. It is at this point that Christianity steps forward to present its own challenge to the best thinking and the best living for every man. When that challenge is reduced to its basic minimum or lowest common denominator, these are the elements which remain: the way

of salvation; the presentation of that way to men; the application of that way in life, whether in individual or group activity. Ephesians is the loftiest expression of this basic minimum to be found in the New Testament.

The purpose of the work before us is to present a guide to the understanding of this relevant message in both its doctrinal and ethical implications. In the New Testament there can be no division of the two—doctrine and ethics. For purposes of organization the Epistles do at times set out, first, a doctrinal section and, second, an ethical section showing how this doctrinal truth is to be applied in the lives of men.¹ This, however, is a matter of organization and presentation only. The writers of the New Testament would never have thought of putting doctrine in one pigeonhole and ethics in another, as though the two were separate matters. They are the two sides of one picture, and that is the total Christian approach to life. This study will be for the most part nontechnical in nature. The Greek text of Ephesians will be in the background of the study at every point, but there will be a determined effort to present the material in such a way that the reader who has no acquaintance with Greek will experience no handicap in understanding the interpretation. It is the hope of the author that the study will be useful not only for college and seminary students and pastors but also for the great mass of laymen who hunger for an understanding of the New Testament and seek nontechnical source material for arriving at that understanding.

In line with this purpose certain limitations must be placed upon the work. There are several areas of research

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related to every book in the New Testament which offer stimulating and fascinating consideration to the one who desires to explore them. Ample source material for such approach is available and will be found in the bibliography at the end of this book. The bibliography is of such nature that it will guide the individual who desires to pursue these problems of research and to come to an understanding of the views of the scholars, whether of liberal or conservative approach. One of the areas of research not included in this study is that of the authorship of the epistle to the Ephesians. The claim is made that the epistle was written by the apostle Paul. This was the traditional position through all the years when the different Christian writings were being used by the churches as the processes of canonization were being worked out. In fact, the Pauline authorship of the book was unchallenged for centuries. In the bibliography at the end of this book are many works on New Testament introduction. These include works by those who accept the Pauline authorship of the book and those who reject such authorship. The evidences leading to the conclusion of the particular author are presented. For my own part, I have studied every argument available on both sides of the controversy and, recognizing that among the scholars it is still a subject of controversy, I feel no hesitation in accepting the traditional view that the book was written by the apostle Paul.

Another area of research relates to the problem of the date of the book. This in turn is inevitably tied in with the problems of place of writing and authorship. The author presents himself in the epistle as a prisoner. In considering Paul as the author of the book, two outstanding prison experiences appear in the book of Acts. Another appears when one accepts 2 Timothy as a genuine letter from Paul. Paul was in prison when he wrote 2 Timothy, but it appears to be

an imprisonment not found in his lifetime as presented in the book of Acts. In Acts we find Paul a prisoner for two years in Jerusalem and Caesarea (Acts 21:27 to 26:32) and two years in Rome (Acts 27:1 to 28:31). The pastoral epistles in the order of their writing (1 Timothy, Titus, and 2 Timothy) appear to present missionary activity of Paul after that first Roman imprisonment and ending with the second Roman imprisonment. This makes three notable prison experiences during which time the letter could have been written. Some authorities feel that the conditions behind the Ephesian letter suggest Caesarea as the more probable place of writing. If this is correct, the date of writing would be perhaps A.D. 58 or 59, depending on the chronology which one uses for the life of Paul. Most of the authorities who accept Pauline authorship, however, hold that the letter was written from the first Roman imprisonment, which would place it somewhere in the A.D. 60-62 period. A person's chronology of the life of Paul depends much on the date which he fixes for the conversion of Paul and his understanding of Paul's references to two trips to Jerusalem in Galatians 1:18 and 2:1. Again, my own study of the arguments and evidences leaves me with the impression that the most probable place of writing is Rome during Paul's first Roman imprisonment, with the period from A.D. 60 to early 62 as the date covering that imprisonment.

One of the most vexing problems for the scholars has to do with the recipients of the epistle. On the surface that might appear to be a superficial problem, since the letter itself is addressed to "the saints who are in Ephesus" (1:1). That salutation, however, does not solve the problem with the ease of similar salutations in Romans, Corinthians, Thesalonians, and Colossians. There are several problems involved in the matter of recipients. One that must head the

list is the fact that in the best Greek manuscripts on Ephesians the expression "in Ephesus" is not found. It is absent from Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, the Chester Beatty Papyri, 67², 424², and 1739². It is also clear that the expression was absent from Marcion's Canon, and both Tertullian and Origen indicate that it was absent from the manuscripts which they used. It is included in Alexandrinus, Bezae, and in the old Latin and Syriac versions. In the science of textual studies such evidence is regarded as conclusive that the expression was not in the earliest circulated copies of the epistle and most likely was not in the original.

This likelihood suggests the possibility that Paul wrote the epistle as a general treatise to be used as a circular letter for all the churches in Asia Minor. Wherever the letter was read, the name of the church would be inserted in the public reading: Ephesus, Colossae, Laodicea, etc. In fact, in Colossians 4:16 Paul instructed the Colossians to send their epistle (Colossians) for reading in the church at Laodicea; they in turn were to read the epistle which would come to them from Laodicea. The term used is not "to Laodicea" but "from Laodicea," leaving the impression that it was a letter which was in circulation and, having been read at Laodicea, would find Colossae as its next destination.

There are other reasons for thinking that the epistle entitled "Ephesians" may have been a circular letter. In Colossians 4:7-8 and Ephesians 6:21-22 reference is made to Tychicus as going on a general mission of instruction. Tychicus appears to have been the bearer of the specific letter to the Colossians, and he was probably the bearer of this circular letter which Paul wanted all the churches to hear. There was a particular problem in the church at Colossae which called for a particular letter. The Ephesian letter faces up to no such specific problem; rather, it is general and not

local in tone, in salutation, in conclusion, as well as throughout the discussion. There is evidence, too, from Ephesians 1:15 and 3:2 that many of the readers of the epistle were not personally acquainted with Paul. This is understandable, if the letter was to be used throughout Asia Minor. It is difficult to understand if the letter was directed only to Ephesus, where Paul had spent three years in ministry.

This discussion is merely suggestive of the lengthy lines of argument and evidence to be found in sources previously cited. To me it appears that we have excellent position for understanding and appreciating the message of this epistle if we think of it in terms of a circular letter written by the apostle Paul from his imprisonment in Rome and sent for the purpose of reading in Ephesus but also in Colossae, Laodicea, and other churches of that strategic center of the Christian movement. It is Paul's finest expression of Christianity at its basic best, the way to the good life.

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