

# **PAUL'S LETTER TO THE EPHESIANS**



## **HOW TO UNDERSTAND IT**

## **ABOUT THE COVER**

The cover image of this booklet is a stylized artist rendering of Ephesians 6: 11–17: “Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil... Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked... And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”

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Scriptures in the booklet are quoted from the King James Version (“Authorized Version”), unless otherwise noted.

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# Introduction

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Paul's letter to the Ephesians is one of the most comprehensive letters written by Paul to explain to us the nature of God and God's great plan and purpose for His creation, especially the future of mankind. Sadly, it has been greatly misunderstood by almost everyone who reads it.

Although the exact date the letter was written is somewhat unknown, it is widely believed that Paul wrote the letter around 60 A.D., while he was imprisoned in Rome (compare Acts 28).

Paul was undoubtedly concerned about the Ephesians and he tried to give them encouragement and hope. At the time of Paul's writings, Ephesus was the commercial metropolis of Asia. It was known for the Temple of Diana—one of the so-called seven wonders of the ancient world. Paul had resided in Ephesus for two years, until the worshippers of Diana stirred up a violent riot against him. Before being incarcerated in Rome, Paul returned to the area for a final visit to warn the elders of deception (Acts 20:17–38).



# Ephesians, Chapter 1

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We read Paul's words in Ephesians 1:1–2:

“(Verse 1) Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the **saints** which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus: (Verse 2) Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ (Emphasis added throughout).”

Consistent with most of his writings, Paul identifies himself at the very beginning of his letter as **an apostle**—someone who was sent out to preach the gospel—emphasizing at the same time that he became an apostle of Jesus Christ—not of or by or because of any man—and Christ appointed him to be an apostle because it was the will of God (the Father).

Paul makes it clear that there is a **hierarchy within the Godhead**—God the Father is over all, followed by Jesus Christ, the Son. Jesus Himself stated, after His resurrection, that He was returning to His Father and *His God* (John 20:17). Paul acknowledges in Ephesians 1:17 that God the Father is “the *God of our Lord Jesus Christ*.”

Note that Paul addresses his letter to the “**saints** which are in Ephesus,” and to the faithful in Christ Jesus. When people use the term “saint,” they are typically referring to someone who has died and has somehow “qualified to achieve sainthood.” This is an entirely wrong concept. The **biblical** concept of saints refers to **all believers who are sanctified, or set aside, by and in Jesus Christ**. Saints are those believers who live here on earth (Psalm 16:3; Acts 9:41; Romans 15:26; 16:15), and being human, they can die (Psalm 116:15). Paul is not writing to dead people.

Paul is reminding the Christians in Ephesus that they were **called out** of the world—they were “saints,” set aside, sanctified—to be different—and as long as they remain faithful in Christ, they will succeed.

However, Paul's words would have reminded the Ephesian Christians of his warning which he had given them earlier, as reported in Acts 20:17–38.

In verse 2 of Ephesians chapter 1, Paul shows that both God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ bestow **grace and peace** on the saints. No mention is made of the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit is not a person. Rather, it is the power of God emanating from both the Father and the Son, Jesus Christ. As we thoroughly explain in our booklet, *"Paul's Letter to the Galatians—How To Understand It,"* whatever blessings we have received is by God's grace. Paul is expressing his wish that God's blessings and His peace would abound toward the saints in Ephesus.

Paul continues in **Ephesians 1:3**:

"(Verse 3) Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in **heavenly places** in Christ."

Paul explains that God the Father, and our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, *have already blessed His people* with all spiritual blessing necessary to qualify for the Kingdom of God. At the very beginning, Paul makes it clear to the Christians in Ephesus that they are *without excuse* if they were to fail in their calling.

The term "**heavenly places**," which Paul uses several times in his letter, has confused some. But even those who falsely believe that we go to heaven when we die have to admit that we are not yet in heaven. So, what is meant by the phrase that God has placed us already in this life "in heavenly places in Christ"?

The Greek words are "*ta epourania*" and mean, literally, "the heavenlies." As we can see, the expression "places" was added by the translator.

Paul uses these words again in Ephesians 2:6 and 3:10, when he states: "[God] has raised us up together [with Christ], and made us sit together in the heavenly places [lit., in the heavenlies] in Christ Jesus... now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places [lit., in the heavenlies]..." (*New King James Bible*).



Paul uses a related expression in Ephesians 6:12, in the *New King James Bible*: “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places [Greek: “*epouranios*,” lit. “in or on heaven”].

As *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* explains under No. 2032, this word means literally, “above the sky.” It can refer to the third heaven where God dwells, but it can also refer to the realm that is above the first heaven or the sky.

For instance, we read that Satan is the prince of the power of the air, although he is not necessarily in heaven. We read that prior to Christ’s return, Satan will have no more access to God’s throne in heaven. But even so, he remains the prince of the power of the air until Christ de-thrones him and has him thrown into the abyss—the bottomless pit.

In addition, Paul uses the Greek expression “*epouranios*” in Philip-pians 2:10, in the *New King James Bible*: “...that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven [Greek: “*epouranios*”], and of those on earth, and of those under the earth.”

The concept here is that every created being will submit to Christ—including holy and fallen angels, as well as human beings—the living and the dead (when the dead will come back to life as human beings).

The words [“*ta epourania*”] are also used in the gospel of John and in the letter to the Hebrews, where the *New King James Bible* translates them as, “heavenly things.”

In John 3:12: “If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?”

In Hebrews 8:4–5: “For if He [Christ] were on earth, He would not be a priest, since there are priests who offer the gifts according to the law, who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, ‘See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.’”

Also, in Hebrews 9:23: “Therefore it was necessary that the copies of things in the heavens [Greek: *ouranoi*] should be purified with these, but the *heavenly things* themselves with better sacrifices than these.”

In those instances, the terms “*ta epourania*” refer clearly to “things” pertaining to the third heaven.

When used as an adjective, the word “*epouranios*” can be found in various places. For instance, Paul writes in Ephesians 1:20: “... He [God] worked in Christ when He raised Him up from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places [Lit., heavenly, or in heaven].”

While in many instances, the Greek term refers to someone or something *in* the third heaven (Matthew 18:35; 1 Corinthians 15:48–49; Hebrews 12:22), the Greek term can also refer to gifts or blessings *from* heaven (compare Hebrews 3:1; 6:4; 11:16; 2 Timothy 4:18).

As Albert Barnes’ *Notes on the Bible* points out in regard to Ephesians 1:3, “The word ‘places’ is... not in the original. It may mean heavenly ‘places,’ or heavenly ‘things.’ The word ‘places’ does not express the best sense. The idea seems to be, that God has blessed us in Christ in regard to heavenly subjects or matters.”

*Vincent’s Word Studies* adds: “*Places* is supplied, the Greek meaning ‘*in the heavenlies*.’ Some prefer to supply *things*, as more definitely characterizing *spiritual blessing*. But in the four other passages where the phrase occurs, [Ephesians 1:20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12], the sense is local, and ‘*epouranios*,’ ‘*heavenly*,’ is local throughout Paul’s epistles. The meaning is that the spiritual blessings of God are found in heaven and are brought thence to us.”

Paul is predominantly addressing spiritual blessings in Ephesians 1:3, but he is also referring to the fact that a Christian, wherever he may be living, has been, figuratively speaking, resurrected with Christ from the dead (Romans 6:3–11), and has been seated with Christ in the heavenly realm. Later on in his letter, he makes it much clearer that if we are called out of this world, then **we are part of a heavenly kingdom, being ambassadors for that kingdom, with our citizenship being in heaven and our names having been written in heaven.**

As Christ sits on high, together with the Father on the Father’s throne, so we are, in that sense, sitting with Christ on the throne (compare Revelation 3:21), although the literal fulfillment of this promise is still in the future. At that time, we will not sit with Christ on the throne that is in heaven, but rather, Christ will return to this earth and the resurrected saints will sit on His throne that will be established here on this earth. They will then rule with Him, here on this earth, for 1,000 years—also referred to as the Millennium.

Continuing in Ephesians 1:4–6:

“(Verse 4) According [better: just] as he hath **chosen us in him before the foundation of the world**, that we **should be holy and without blame** before him in love: (Verse 5) **Having predestinated us** unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, (Verse 6) To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted **in the beloved**.”

Beginning with these verses, Paul explains the highly misunderstood concept of **predestination**. He reminds the Ephesians that God called and chose them “before” the foundation of the world.

Paul mentions again the concept of predestination in Ephesians 1:11, where he says: “In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will” (*New King James Bible*).

As we explain in great detail in our free booklet, *“Are You Predestined to Be Saved?”*, God the Father knew prior to the foundation of the world—in fact, prior to the beginning of time (Titus 1:1–2)—that His Son, Jesus Christ—the second member of the God Family—would have to become a man and die for the sins of man; and that, BEFORE God had even created man. In addition, God knew each and every one of those whom He would decide to call to salvation in this day and age; and that, BEFORE any human being existed.

Paul says in verse 5 that true Christians were predestined for the “**adoption**” of children. A much better translation is “sonship,” [the German *Elberfelder Bible* says correctly, “Sohnschaft;” i.e. “sonship”]. As we explain at length in our booklet, *“Paul’s Letter to the Galatians—How to Understand It,”* God does not “adopt” us to become His children; rather, He is literally reproducing Himself in man. **He is giving man His very divine nature through His Holy Spirit** (2 Peter 1:4), so that man can, quite literally, become GOD—a full-fledged MEMBER of the very FAMILY of God.

But note that Paul says the Father chose us and predestined us **in Christ** before the foundation of the world. It is only **through Christ** that we can become God. As Paul wrote in Romans 8:29–30 (in the *New King James Bible*):

“For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.”

So we see that foreknowledge and predestination precede our calling. And after we are called and we respond to our calling, then we become chosen vessels of God, by obtaining justification through the blood of Jesus Christ for the remission of our sins. And when we remain faithful, we *will inherit* eternal life in the Kingdom and Family of God. (For more information on our calling, please read our free booklet, “*Are You Predestined to Be Saved?*”)

But this is not automatic. We must do our part when we are called. And so, Paul admonishes the Ephesians in verse 4 to remember the purpose of their calling—to **live holy and blameless in love**.

At the same time, Paul reminds his readers in verses 5 and 6 that our calling is not in accordance with our works—how we might have lived, what “good deeds” we might have done—but strictly because of **God’s will and His grace** or undeserved favor. And even though we must keep God’s commandments and live in a way that is pleasing to God, our qualification for the Kingdom is, in the strictest sense, **due to God’s grace**, not due to our own deeds—because it is only through God’s grace that we can even become accepted or qualified, and further, our acceptance is because of what His beloved Son has been doing for us, and is still doing for us today.

Paul continues in **Ephesians 1:7–8**:

“(Verse 7) In whom we have **redemption** through his blood, the **forgiveness of sins**, according to the riches of **his grace**;  
(Verse 8) Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence;”

It is through Jesus Christ’s sacrifice that we can have redemption; that is, in this context, forgiveness of our sins. The word “redemption” in Greek has the meaning of “loosing away.” Through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, sin and its penalty—death—have lost their hold over us IF we repent of our sins and accept Christ’s sacrifice as payment for

the remission of our sins (compare Romans 3:21–26). But as we will see, the concept of redemption is broader and more encompassing than just forgiveness of sin.

In general, sin is foremost defined as lawlessness or iniquity—the transgression of God’s law (1 John 3:4). God forgives us our sins when we repent of them and believe that Christ’s sacrifice is necessary, and also sufficient to obtain redemption and reconciliation with God. But all of this is accomplished through God’s grace—His favor and pardon for us—which is given to us as a gift. We did not and do not deserve it, but at the same time, God withholds His grace from us when we refuse to repent, because we are showing Him through our conduct that we do not want His gift.

Note in verse 7 that Paul does not use the common word for “sins,” but a different word, which is better translated as “trespasses.” The Greek word is “*paraptoma*” and is used in passages such as Matthew 6:14–15; Mark 11:25–26; 2 Corinthians 5:19; and Colossians 2:13. This Greek word describes mainly a *trespass against our fellow man*, while the word for “sin,” which is commonly rendered from the Greek word, “*hamartia*,” describes sin against God in the broadest sense, since all sin is ultimately against God who is the Lawgiver (James 4:11–12). In Ephesians 2:1–2, both Greek words are used.

We find both words also used in James 5:15–16, in the context of healing. Normally, we are to confess our sins to God and not to other people (Romans 14:10–12; Psalm 32:1–5), but when we have committed a trespass against our fellow man, we are to “confess” our fault to him to bring about reconciliation and peace. James tells us that we cannot expect healing if there are continuing lingering problems between us. Unresolved problems, especially between brethren, may prevent healing of physical sickness. For a thorough discussion of this issue, please read our free booklet, “*Sickness and Healing—What the Bible Tells Us*,” especially pages 50–53.

Paul also explains in verse 8 that it is through the gift of God—His grace—that we can **abound** in wisdom and prudence or understanding. We are told to grow in grace and knowledge of the Son Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18).

Paul goes on to say the following in **Ephesians 1:9–10**:

“(Verse 9) Having made known unto us the **mystery of his will**, according to his good pleasure which he hath **purposed in himself**: (Verse 10) That in the **dispensation** of the fullness of times he might gather together in one **all things in Christ**, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him:”

As we point out in our booklet, *“The Mysteries of the Bible,”* the Holy Scriptures speak about quite a few **mysteries**. Christ spoke in parables so that the multitudes would not understand the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but He would later explain them to His disciples (Matthew 13:11).

Here, in Ephesians 1:9, Paul addresses the **mystery of God’s will**. Man cannot understand God’s will, unless God reveals it. And so, this world is still in darkness as to the will and purpose of God, but God has revealed His will to His disciples. *God did not need a counselor* to teach Him what He should do—rather, God *purposed in His own mind* what His will was and is, and that He would reveal it to His followers “in the dispensation of the fullness of time”—that is, when the time had come to carry it out. (We will discuss later what is meant with the term, “dispensation.”) And so, Paul explains that in New Testament times, God would begin to gather together in one “**all things in Christ**, which are in heaven and which are on earth.”

The *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown commentary* explains this passage as follows:

“Greek, ‘sum up under one head’... The ‘good pleasure which He purposed,’ was ‘to sum up all things (Greek, ‘The whole range of things’) in Christ’... God’s purpose is to sum up the whole creation in Christ, the Head of angels... and of men... of Jews and Gentiles; of the living and the dead...; of animate and inanimate creation. Sin has disarranged the creature’s relation of subordination to God. God means to gather up all together in Christ; or as [Colossians 1:20] says, ‘By Him to reconcile all things unto Himself, whether things in earth or things in heaven...’”

*Albert Barnes’ Notes on the Bible* adds the following thoughts:

“‘All things’... It is remarkable that Paul has used here a word which is in the neuter gender. It is not all ‘persons,’ all angels, or all human

beings, or all the elect, but all 'things'... Paul did not use this word without design. All 'things' are placed under Christ... and the design of God is to **restore** harmony in the universe. Sin has produced disorder...

"The world is disarranged. The effects of transgression are seen everywhere, and the object of the plan of redemption is to put things on their pristine footing and **restore them** as they were at first. Everything is, therefore, put under the Lord Jesus, and all things are to be brought under his control, so as to constitute one vast harmonious empire. The amount of the declaration here is, that there is hereafter to be one kingdom, in which there shall be no jar or alienation; that the now separated kingdoms of heaven and earth shall be united under one head, and that henceforward all shall be harmony and love..."

As Paul says in verse 10, all of this is to occur "**in the dispensation** of the fullness of times," or, as the *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown commentary* explains, "'**Unto** the dispensation of the fullness of the times,' that is, 'which He purposed in Himself **with a view to...** the [future] administration belonging to... the fullness of the times.'"

*Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible* adds that the word "dispensation" ["administration"; "stewardship"; or "fellowship" in some translations (see also Ephesians 3:2, 9; Colossians 1:25; 1 Corinthians 9:17) "is the same as our word economy [and] signifies... 'the plan which the **master of a family**, or his steward, has established for the **management of the family**;' it signifies, also, a plan for the management of any sort of business."

*Young's Analytical Concordance to the Bible* defines the Greek word for "dispensation" as "law or arrangement of a **house**." The *Elberfelder Bibel* translates, "*Verwaltung*" (i.e., "administration"), but states in a footnote that the meaning could also be "*Haushalt*" (i.e., "**household**"). *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* states, under Number 3622: "administration (of a **household** or estate)."

*W.E. Vine, Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, explains that the Greek word for "dispensation" "primarily signifies the management of a **household or of household affairs**; then the management or administration of the property of others, and so a stewardship... A dispensation is not a period or epoch (a common, but erroneous, use of the word), but a mode of dealing, an arrangement or administration of affairs."

God the Father is indeed the **Master of the God Family**; Jesus Christ is the Son of God; and true Christians are members of the “**household of God**” (Ephesians 2:19; compare Galatians 6:9–10). They are the Father’s begotten children. They will BECOME born-again divine children at the time of their resurrection (compare 1 John 3:1–2).

### Continuing in Ephesians 1:11–12:

“(Verse 11) In whom also we have obtained **an inheritance**, being **predestinated** according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: (Verse 12) That we should be to the praise of his glory, who **first** trusted in Christ.”

As mentioned, God **predestined** us in accordance with His will, not because of any works that we might have done (compare Romans 9:10–13). Once we realize our calling and respond to it, we are to live righteously—to the praise of His glory, as we read in Matthew 5:16. But the fact that some have been predestined to be called in this day and age does not mean that others who are not being called at this time are lost. They will be called later. We who are being called at this time are merely the “**first**” who have trusted in Christ. We are firstfruits (James 1:18; Revelation 14:4), but others will certainly follow.

Paul also says in verse 11, according to the *Authorized Version* and the *New King James Bible*, that we have **obtained an inheritance**. This is an incorrect translation.

As *Vincent’s Word Studies* points out, “the verb means literally *to determine, choose, or assign by lot*. From the custom of assigning portions of land by lot, [the Greek word] acquires the meaning of *that which is thus assigned; the possession or portion of land*. An heir is originally one who obtains by lot. The [*Authorized Version*] here makes the verb active where it should be passive. The literal sense is *we were designated as a heritage... or... were made a heritage*.”

As the physical Israelites were a people of inheritance (Deuteronomy 4:20), acquiring their land by lot, so spiritual Israelites, as Abraham’s heirs and the spiritual people of God’s inheritance, will inherit the Kingdom of God and will rule on this earth.



We read in Romans 4:13–16 (*New King James Bible*): “For the promise that he would **be the heir of the world** was not to Abraham or his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith... so that the promise might be **sure to all the seed**, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all...”

Paul adds in Galatians 3:29 (*New King James Bible*): “And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and **heirs according to the promise.**”

Hebrews 11:9 tells us that Abraham “dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise,” and Hebrews 11:13 continues: “These all died in faith, not having received the promises.”

Hebrews 11:39–40 reiterates, and at the same time includes all Christians as heirs of the promises: “And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us” (*New King James Bible*).

Abraham will still receive the promise of eternal life and of becoming ruler and possessor of the inheritance. And every true Christian will share in this inheritance. Christ told Paul that He would use him “to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins **and an inheritance** among those who are sanctified by faith in Me” (Acts 26:18, *New King James Bible*).

As a true Christian, you belong to the people of God’s inheritance. And as such, you will “**inherit** the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matthew 25:34, *New King James Bible*). And so, the *Revised English Bible* translates Ephesians 1:11 as follows: “In Christ indeed we have been given *our share in the heritage*, as was decreed in his design...”

Continuing in **Ephesians 1:13–14**:

“(Verse 13) In whom ye also **trusted**, after that ye heard the **word of truth**, the **gospel of your salvation**: in whom also after that ye **believed**, ye were **sealed** with that **Holy Spirit of**

**promise**, (Verse 14) Which is the **earnest** of our inheritance until the **redemption of the purchased possession**, unto the praise of his glory."

Paul summarizes here in a few words the *mystery of salvation*, as revealed in the gospel to those **who believe**.

As we explain in our booklet, "*The Gospel of the Kingdom of God*," there is only **one gospel**—and it is clearly identified and described as the gospel of the Kingdom of God. But this gospel has many different aspects and components, and our salvation is most certainly part of it. In fact, *salvation, eternal life and the Kingdom of God or of heaven (as it is a kingdom ruled from heaven)* are used synonymously in Matthew 19:16–26. When we enter the Kingdom of God, we enter into eternal life and inherit our eternal salvation.

But in order to be able to do this, we must first hear the **word of truth**—the good news or **the gospel**. Once we hear, we must believe or **trust** Christ our Savior, realizing that there is no salvation in any other (Acts 4:12). Paul explains it this way in Romans 10:13–17 (*New King James Bible*):

"For 'whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.' How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!' But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, 'LORD, who has believed our report?' So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

Belief or trust in Christ must be accompanied by obedience in Him (compare also Matthew 7:21–23; John 14:24; 15:14). When we repent of our sins and *believe* in the gospel and His sacrifice, manifesting our faith through obedience, and subsequently get baptized, we will receive the *promised* gift of the Holy Spirit (Mark 16:15–16; Acts 2:38–39; 5:31–32; 8:12).

When we obtain the Holy Spirit, we are **sealed** by it. As long as the Spirit dwells in us, we are sealed as the begotten children of God. Nobody can snatch us out of God's hands.

We read that the Father set His seal on Jesus Christ (John 6:27). And so, God “also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a **guarantee** [or earnest; see discussion below]” (2 Corinthians 1:21–22, *New King James Bible*).

God knows those who are His, as 2 Timothy 2:19 says: “Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: ‘The Lord knows who are His,’ and ‘Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity’” (*New King James Bible*).

However, it is possible for us to lose out if we are not careful. Paul warns us in Ephesians 4:30: “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom [better: which] you were sealed for the *day of redemption*” (*New King James Bible*).

The Holy Spirit in us is our **earnest**—our down payment, our guarantee or surety—for the day of our **redemption** (compare again Ephesians 1:14). We saw earlier, in Ephesians 1:7, that Paul equated “redemption”—the concept of “loosing away”—with forgiveness of sin. But as mentioned, “**redemption**” includes more than that. In fact, forgiveness of sin is just the starting point.

In Luke 21:28 Christ tells His end-time disciples: “Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your *redemption* draws near” (*New King James Bible*).

The concept of redemption includes our change from mortal to immortal; from human to divine; from physical to spirit. Romans 8:23 says: “Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption [better: sonship], the *redemption* of our body” (*New King James Bible*).

As 2 Corinthians 5:4–5 says: “For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life. Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a *guarantee*” (*New King James Bible*; its margin says “down payment, earnest”). Compare also 1 Corinthians 15:44, 49–57.

But as mentioned, “redemption” *begins* with forgiveness of sin—the “transgressions” of the law—leading to the receipt of the “*promise of the eternal inheritance*” (Hebrews 9:15).

But Paul says even more in these two short verses in Ephesians

1:13 and 14. The Holy Spirit in us is not only the earnest or surety of our promised inheritance until the redemption of our bodies, but it is also the earnest of the “**purchased possession.**”

We don’t belong to ourselves anymore. We were bought at a price (1 Corinthians 6:20). Christ purchased us with His own blood (Acts 20:28). We—our body and our spirit—belong to God. **WE** are His purchased possession (compare again 1 Corinthians 6:20).

As the *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown commentary* states it: “God’s people [are] *purchased*... as His *peculiar*... possession by the blood of Christ.”

And as long as we don’t turn our back on God, both the Father and the Son live in us. They live in Their possession through the Holy Spirit (John 14:23).

Finally, Paul emphasizes again that all of this is occurring “to the praise” of God’s glory. This means that rather than glorying in ourselves, we are to glory in and praise God who makes all of this possible. As Paul said in Ephesians 3:20–21: “Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen” (*New King James Bible*).

Paul continues in **Ephesians 1:15–18**:

“(Verse 15) Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, (Verse 16) Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you **in my prayers**, (Verse 17) That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: (Verse 18) The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what **the riches of the glory** of his inheritance in the saints,”.

In these and the following verses, Paul gives us important **concepts of what to pray for**—not just for ourselves, but also for others, especially those dear to us: After Paul had heard of the faith in Jesus and the love of the brethren in Ephesus to **ALL** the saints—not just a selected few—he gave thanks to God for them in his prayers. He thanks

God for His decision to call those brethren in Ephesus.

And this was not just a one-time prayer for just the brethren in Ephesus. First, Paul said that he *did not cease* giving thanks for the Ephesian brethren in prayer. Second, he prayed in a similar way for the Corinthian brethren (1 Corinthians 1:4–9); the Philippian brethren (Philippians 1:3–6); the Colossian brethren (Colossians 1:3–12); and the Thessalonian brethren (1 Thessalonians 1:2–4; 2 Thessalonians 1:3–4).

Remember that Jesus Christ thanked God the Father that He had hidden things from some, but revealed them to others (Luke 10:21). And so we must also give thanks for each other.

Paul continues to point out his wish that the Father would give the brethren more of His Holy Spirit of wisdom, knowledge and understanding, so that they could really comprehend “the hope” of their calling and “**the riches of the glory**” of God’s inheritance which He is willing to share with the saints.

Paul expresses a similar thought in Romans 9:23–24, praying that God “might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, even us whom He called...” (*New King James Bible*).

Especially in times of trials and suffering, it is important to concentrate on and meditate about the “glory which shall be revealed in us” (Romans 8:18). Paul explains in 2 Corinthians 4:17:

“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”

### Continuing in **Ephesians 1:19–23**:

“(Verse 19) And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his **mighty power**, (Verse 20) Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, (Verse 21) Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and **every name** that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: (Verse 22) And hath put all things under his feet, and **gave him** to be the **head** over all things to the **church**, (Verse 23) Which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.”

Paul emphasizes that he persistently prays to God the Father to reveal to the brethren in Ephesus the correct comprehension of **“the exceeding greatness of His (i.e. the Father’s) power”** toward the believers. He reminds them that it is that same power with which He raised Jesus from the dead, and with which He set Him at His right hand in the “heavenlies”—that is, in this context, in the *third heaven* where God’s throne is.

Paul goes on to say that through God’s power, Christ was placed above all “power, and might, and dominion.” As we explain in our free booklet, *“Angels, Demons and the Spirit World,”* these expressions could refer to angelic ranks in the spirit world. Paul’s point is that Christ was placed over anything and everything created. He has been given all authority in heaven and on earth (Hebrews 1:1–4). All things are placed under His feet, and He is the Head over all things, including the Church, the “body of Christ” (Colossians 1:18).

Christ became the Head, as the Father **“gave [Him] to be the head over all things to the church.”** This is remarkable, as we also read that Christ, as the Head of the church, gave and *gives* the ministry to the church (Ephesians 4:11–16).

God is love, and love can be defined as a way of giving. And so, God who loved and loves the Son (Colossians 1:13), **gave** Him to the world (John 3:16) and He **gives** Him to the Church, because He loves us AS He loves the Son (John 17:23). Christ **gave** His life for the remission of sins, because He loves man, and He **gives** ministers to His church for edification and teaching and instruction of the brethren, because He loves us.

As Ephesians 1:21 says, Christ’s name is higher than every other name which has existed or does exist today or will exist in the future—and it is *only* through His name that man can be saved (compare again Acts 4:12).

Having said all this, it is clearly taught in Scripture that *Christ is, and always will be, subject to and under the authority of God the Father* (1 Corinthians 15:24–28; compare also 1 Corinthians 3:23; 11:3).

## Ephesians, Chapter 2

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Paul continues in Ephesians 2:1–3:

“(Verse 1) And you hath he **quickened**, who were **dead** in trespasses and sins (Verse 2) Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the **prince** of the power of the air, the **spirit** that now worketh in the children of disobedience: (Verse 3) Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, **fulfilling the desires** of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of **wrath**, even as others.”

As Paul addresses in verse 1, humankind, being cut off from God, is spiritually **dead** (Matthew 8:22). Before conversion, every Christian was also spiritually dead in their trespasses (committed against his fellow man) and sins (committed directly against God). But once a Christian responds to his calling, repents, believes in the gospel and the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, becomes baptized (with the laying on of hands by a true minister of God), and receives the Holy Spirit, he is “**quickened**,” “awakened,” or “made alive.”

Paul expresses it this way in Romans 6:6, 11: “... knowing this that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin... reckon yourselves to be... alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord...” (*New King James Bible*).

But it is important that we stay alive and awake, because it is possible to fall again into spiritual sleep. Later on, in Ephesians 5:14, Paul returns to this concept: “Therefore He says: ‘Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light’” (*New King James Bible*).

**The devil** is still very active, and Paul reminds the brethren in Ephesus (in verse 2) that they must fight or wrestle against the schemings of the devil and his demons—those wicked and evil spirits which rule in the darkness of this age. He also tells them that they cannot do it

without God's help (compare Ephesians 6:11–12).

Before our conversion, we lived like all the others do—following Satan the devil, the **prince of the power of the air** (verse 2), the spirit which influences man through his thoughts and evil attitudes which he “broadcasts” *though the air* and sends them into the minds of the people. His desire is to deceive man to be disobedient to God. He knows that disobedience or sin leads to death, unless repented of. In obeying the lusts and desires of the flesh, which are stirred up by Satan, mankind became “children” of “God’s wrath.”

Satan is not only called the “**prince**” (Ephesians 2:2) and “power of darkness” (Luke 22:53), but also the “ruler of this world” (John 14:30, *New King James Bible*) and the “god of this world” (2 Corinthians 4:4), who has deceived the whole world (Revelation 12:9). And men live or drift along in accordance with Satan’s “course” or “*Zeitgeist*” (“*aion*” in Greek, meaning “age”), following the dictates and ideas of others who are under the influence of the devil—and who are, too often, “willingly ignorant” or “forgetful” (*New King James Bible*) of their wrong-doing and their judgment to come (2 Peter 3:5).

Notice how the *Phillips* translation renders Ephesians 2:1–3:

“To you, who were spiritually dead all the time that you drifted along on the stream of this world’s ideas of living, and obeyed its unseen ruler (who is still operating in those who do not respond to the truth of God), to you Christ has given life! We all lived like that in the past, and followed the impulses and imaginations of our evil nature, being in fact under the wrath of God by nature, like everyone else...”

Man’s carnal **desires** (see Ephesians 2:3) are opposed to the way of God—in fact, they are described as enmity with God (James 4:4). As long as this enmity is not destroyed, God’s **wrath** is still over them (Matthew 3:7; John 3:36). As Paul says again in Ephesians 5:6: “Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience” (*New King James Bible*); compare also Colossians 3:5–10.

### Continuing in Ephesians 2:4–7:

“(Verse 4) But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith **he loved us**, (Verse 5) Even when we were dead in



sins, hath **quickened** us together with Christ, (**by grace ye are saved;**) (Verse 6) And hath **raised us up** together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: (Verse 7) That **in the ages to come** he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."

In verse 4, Paul emphasizes that **God loved us first** (1 John 4:19). He extended His mercy towards us when we were sinners and when we were counted as His enemies (Romans 5:10). When we were hostile towards Him, He sent His Son to die for us, so that through His death we could have life. He did it, not because of anything we might have done, but solely because of His **grace** (Ephesians 2:5)—His unmerited and undeserved favor and pardon for us.

Once we accept Christ's sacrifice, God "**quickens us**" and **raises us up** (verse 6), spiritually. He is making us alive and setting us aside—placing us into a different category of people. We are no longer *of* this world, although we still live *in* it. But we are now focusing and concentrating on "**the things which are above**, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God." We are no longer setting our minds on the things down here below (Colossians 3:1–2). As Christ is quite literally in the third heaven, so we have fellowship—in the Spirit—with Him and the Father in the third heaven (1 John 1:3; 1 Corinthians 1:9, compare Hebrews 12:22–24).

As pioneers and firstfruits, God is creating in us His righteous character, to the extent that we submit to Jesus Christ who is living in us through the Holy Spirit; so that in the wonderful world tomorrow—"**the ages to come**" (Ephesians 2:7)—His tremendous grace and kindness toward us can be seen by all, when we have become immortal Spirit beings and born-again members of the very Family of God (Revelation 3:9), ruling with and under Christ as kings and priests for one thousand years (Revelation 5:10; 20:6).

Paul continues in **Ephesians 2:8–10**:

"(Verse 8) For by grace are ye saved **through faith**; and that not of yourselves: it is the **gift of God**: (Verse 9) Not of works, lest any man should **boast**. (Verse 10) For we are **his**

**workmanship**, created in Christ Jesus **unto good works**, which God **hath before ordained** that we should walk in them."

Again, Paul shows in verse 8 that our calling is strictly based on God's grace and not on our works. He also says that we are saved by faith. Both concepts of **salvation and faith** have been terribly misunderstood. We discuss these concepts in our free booklet, "*Paul's Letter to the Galatians—How to Understand It.*"

Very briefly, Paul is referring to living faith—not dead faith. Living faith requires obedience. We cannot expect God's favors if we refuse to obey Him. Also, Scripture distinguishes between our faith in Christ and His sacrifice, and the very faith of Christ. Christ lives in us when we receive the Holy Spirit. Both our faith in Christ and Christ's faith in us are necessary for salvation.

In addition, salvation itself is a process. We were saved; we are being saved; and we will be saved. And this means that our salvation **can** be lost.

Paul states in verse 8, in the *Authorized Version*, that "it is **the gift of God.**" First, this refers to "faith." But not only the faith *of* Christ in us is a gift, bestowed on us when we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38)—even our belief *in* Christ is a gift of God (Philippians 1:29). Nobody can come to Christ unless the Father draws Him (John 6:44, 65). In fact, even repentance is a gift from God (Romans 2:4), and so is our ability to understand spiritual things (1 Corinthians 2:9–12). God must reveal Himself and His knowledge to us (Matthew 11:25, 27; 16:17).

So we see that the gift, spoken of by Paul in Ephesians 2:8, is not just referring to faith, but it speaks about the entire concept of salvation. [Please note that the words, "it is" in the phrase "it is the gift of God," are not in the Original.]

*Albert Barnes' Note on the Bible* states: "'It is the gift of God' - Salvation by grace is his gift. It is not of merit; it is wholly by favor."

We can clearly see, then, why God emphasizes the fact that we **have nothing to boast** about. If all that we have received is through God's *gift*, and not because of anything we have done, then why would anyone think he has something to be proud of?

As Paul says in Romans 3:25–27: "...God passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His

righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded..." (*New King James Bible*).

However, the gift of God's salvation does not leave us without responsibility. Even though we were predestined to be offered salvation in this day and age, we must accept the offer, and we must allow God to make us His "**workmanship**, created in Christ Jesus unto good works" (Ephesians 2:10). We must *do* good works (Galatians 6:10; Colossians 1:10; 2 Timothy 2:21); that is, we must allow Jesus Christ to do good works through us.

The *Ryrie Study Bible* explains correctly: "Salvation is by grace through faith. Faith involves knowledge of the gospel (Romans 10:14), acknowledgment of the truth of its message, and personal reception of the Savior (John 1:12). Works cannot save (Ephesians 2:9), but good works always accompany salvation (verse 10, James 2:17)."

But while we perform good works, we still have no cause to boast about or glory in ourselves, because Paul goes on to explain (in verse 10) that God has **before ordained** those good works for us to walk in them. This means that God provides opportunities for us to do good works, and it is our duty to respond by allowing Christ to work these good works through us. As we can see, all glory and praise belongs to God. That is why Jesus said in Matthew 5:16 that people will glorify GOD when they see our good works.

Note how the *Phillips* translation renders Ephesians 2:10: "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do those good deeds which God planned for us to do."

The *Amplified Bible* states: "For we are God's [own] handiwork... recreated in Christ Jesus... that we may do those good works which God predestined (planned beforehand) for us, (taking paths which He prepared ahead of time) that we should walk in them..."

It is true, as some commentaries point out, that when God calls us, He expects us to live a righteous life; and that in that sense, God has predetermined that His people should perform good works. But much more is involved in Paul's statement. We might compare it with John 5:36, where Christ said: "... **the works which My Father has given Me to FINISH**—the very works that I do—bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me."

The *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown commentary*, in referring to this passage in John 5:36, goes on to say: "'before ordained' — Greek, 'before made ready' ... God marks out for each in His purposes beforehand, the particular good works, and *the time and way* which [He] sees best. God both makes ready by His providence the opportunities for the works, and makes us ready for their performance."

This shows even less reason or cause to boast about "our" accomplishments. It is God who creates us anew. We are becoming a **new creation through Him**. Paul says in Ephesians 4:24 that we are to "put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness" (*New King James Bible*). Compare also 2 Corinthians 5:17 and Galatians 6:15. We are *God's* creation, and all glory and praise belongs to God!

#### Continuing in **Ephesians 2:11–13**:

"(Verse 11) Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; (Verse 12) That at that time ye were without Christ, being **aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:** (Verse 13) But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ."

Paul reminds the Ephesians in verse 11 that they were "Gentiles in the flesh" before their conversion; that is, they were physically **uncircumcised** and, based on Old Testament ritual law, unable to obtain, in that condition, full status in Israel. They were "aliens" and "strangers" from the community of Israel and the covenants of promise.

For instance, in Old Testament times, the stranger who lived in Israel and wanted to keep the Passover with Israel had to become circumcised. Before the New Testament Church understood that circumcision was no longer required (compare Acts 15:1, 5–9), no uncircumcised person could become a member of the Church.

As Paul says in verse 12, God gave **Israel** the covenants and the promises. We read in Romans 9:4–5:

“... who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption [better: sonship], the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises, of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came...”

But Paul is speaking in Romans 9 foremost about the Church of God—the **spiritual Israel of God** (Galatians 6:16). Christians—Jews and Gentiles—must become spiritual Israelites. While physical circumcision is no longer important, spiritual circumcision is mandated. It is only those who are the true children of promise who belong to Israel (Romans 9:6–8; Galatians 4:28).

Paul makes clear in Galatians 3:7: “Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham” (*New King James Bible*).

And he states in Galatians 3:29 that “if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (*New King James Bible*).

When Christ died, He “made us nigh” or reconciled us to the Father (Ephesians 2:13). This is true for ancient Israelites as well as Gentiles. Even though Jesus Christ—the God of the Old Testament—gave ancient Israel the law, the covenants and the promises, Israel turned their back on God, and they too became those without Christ, having no hope, and being without God in the world.

But this is especially true for Gentiles who did not even have *physical* access to the commonwealth of Israel and who were never parties to the covenants and recipients of the promises, and who did not even know the true God and who had no hope or knowledge of the resurrection (see by comparison Psalm 16:9; Joel 3:16; Jeremiah 17:13; Ezekiel 37:11–14).

The *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown commentary* makes the following remarks regarding Paul’s statement in Ephesians 2:12 that the Gentiles were “without God”:

“... ‘without God’ — *Greek*, ‘atheists,’ that is, they had not ‘God’ in the sense we use the word, the Eternal Being who made and governs all things (compare Acts 11:15, ‘Turn from these vanities unto *the living God* who made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things therein’), whereas [ancient Israel] had distinct ideas of God and immortality. Compare also [Galatians 4:8:] ‘Ye knew not God ... ye did service unto them which are no gods’...”

The commentary is also referring to 1 Thessalonians 4:5 in the context ("... the Gentiles... do not know God...").

*Albert Barnes' Notes on the Bible* states:

"All Christians may in like manner be reminded of the fact that, before their conversion, they were 'without Christ'... [The Jews] had his law, his temple, his sabbaths, and the ordinances of his religion... To all these the pagans had been strangers... The word rendered here as 'commonwealth'—*politeia*—means properly citizenship, or the right of citizenship, and then a community, or state... they were strangers to the privileges of the people of God.

"...they were without any proper ground of hope... No hope of life in a future world can be founded on a proper basis which does not rest on some promise of God, or some assurance that he will save us... they had no knowledge of the true God. This was... once true of all who are now Christians. They had no God. They did not worship him, or love him, or serve him, or seek his favors, or act with reference to him and his glory..."

Paul's point in Ephesians 2:11–13 is that Gentiles, being cut off from Israel, had no hope of salvation, but neither did physical Israel as long as they rejected Christ. However, spiritual Israelites are the true seed of the fathers—Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; and the covenants of promises, as well as sonship, the law, and the glory, pertain to them. All true Christians—Gentiles or Jews—were reconciled to God through the blood of Christ, and have been brought near to God the Father.

Paul continues in Ephesians 2:14–17:

"(Verse 14) For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the **middle wall of partition** between us;  
(Verse 15) Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even **the law of commandments contained in ordinances**; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace;  
(Verse 16) And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the **enmity** thereby:"

Many teach that Paul said Christ came to do away with the law of God, and they use scriptures like Ephesians 2:15 or Colossians 2:14 to

prove their point. In **Colossians 2:14**, Paul uses similar wording when he says that God made Christ alive, having forgiven us all trespasses, “Blotting out the **handwriting of ordinances** that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.”

Please note that the *New King James Bible* says here, “requirements,” instead of “ordinances,” but the Greek word is the same in Ephesians 2:15 and Colossians 2:14, and should be consistently translated.

In both passages, Paul uses the word “**ordinances**.” This word does not refer in any way to the Ten Commandments or the statutes and judgments defining and magnifying the Ten Commandments. Sin is defined as the transgression of the law. Christ said He did not come to abolish the law. He said that if we want to enter into life, we have to keep the commandments, and James said that if we break one of the commandments, we are guilty of having broken all of them.

“The law of commandments **contained in ordinances**” in Ephesians 2:15 and the “handwriting of **ordinances**” in Colossians 2:14 is not a reference to the Ten Commandments. The Greek word for “ordinance” is “*dogma*” and refers to a “**decree**.” In Luke 2:1, it is used to describe a decree of Emperor Augustus; Acts 17:7 refers to decrees of Caesar; and in Acts 16:4, it describes the decrees issued by the apostles regarding decisions made during the ministerial conference in Acts 15. In Colossians 2:20, Paul says that the Gentiles in Colossi were still *subject to ordinances or decrees* (in Greek, “*dogmatizomai*”; the *New King James Bible* says, “requirements”), which were, in that case, based on “the commandments and doctrines of **men**” (verse 22).

We see, then, that the word for ordinances or decrees was never used to describe laws that were given **directly** by God.

*Vincent’s Word Studies* explains that the “ordinances” or decrees **identify** the nature of the “law of commandments” mentioned in Ephesians 2:15, stating:

“The middle wall of partition, the enmity, was dissolved by the abolition of the law of commandments... Law is general, and its contents are defined by *commandments, special injunctions, which injunctions in turn were formulated in definite decrees*. Render the entire passage [in Ephesians 2:14–15]: *brake down the middle-wall of partition, even the enmity, by abolishing in His flesh the law of commandments contained in ordinances.*”

The *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown commentary* agrees, stating that according to the Greek, it should read: “the law of the commandments (consisting) in ordinances.”

As we explain at length in our free booklet, “*And Lawlessness Will Abound,*” the word “law” is used in the Bible in many different ways, and the context shows how it is to be understood in a particular passage. For instance, the Bible speaks of the law of the sacrifices; the law of our sinful nature; the law of the Ten Commandments; the law of righteousness, etc. Here, the reference to commandments consisting or contained in ordinances defines what law Paul is referring to.

Surprisingly, then, Paul is not talking about ANY law, which God gave the people. Rather, he is talking about **human laws, commandments and decrees.**

These laws or ordinances included restrictive pharisaical decrees—*inventions and traditions of men*—as well as ascetic oppressive ordinances of Gentile philosophers. In both cases, following these ordinances leads to sin, as they are contrary to the law of God.

Christ said about the man-made rules of Judaism that people did away with the commandments of God in order to follow their own traditions (Mark 7:7–13). (For a full explanation of those man-made rules of Judaism, please read our free booklets, “*Paul’s Letter to the Galatians,*” and “*God’s Commanded Holy Days.*”)

In addition, Paul told the Gentiles that they violated God’s laws by adhering to the practices taught by their philosophers, which were “empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles [or rudiments, *Authorized Version*] of the world, and not according to Christ” (Colossians 2:8, *New King James Version*).

Paul also said in Colossians 2:14 that Christ blotted out the **handwriting** of ordinances, that was against us, and nailed it to the cross.

Paul is referring to a “handwriting” containing sins we committed *by following decrees, traditions and philosophies of man—contrary to the Word of God.* In the Greek, the phrase for “handwriting” means literally, “certificate or acknowledgment of debt in the handwriting of the debtor.”

The phrase “of ordinances” or “decrees” [in “handwriting of ordinances” in Colossians 2:14] should be translated as “in” or “consisting in” ordinances or decrees (compare *Vincent’s Word Studies* and the



*Jamieson, Fausset and Brown commentary*).

Paul is referring to the fact that Christ blotted out the handwriting in—or consisting in—ordinances which was against us. This wording indicates the *basis* for the certificate of debt—we incurred it because we kept man’s ordinances, which were contrary to God’s law.

But through Christ’s death, we obtained forgiveness of our sins—He took the certificate of debt out of the way and nailed it to the cross, thereby abolishing, nullifying, and extinguishing it (Colossians 2:14).

*Albert Barnes’ Notes on the Bible* explains: “It is said that there is an allusion here to the ancient method by which a bond or obligation was cancelled, by driving a nail through it, and affixing it to a post.”

In the same way, Paul is saying in **Ephesians 2:15** that Christ abolished in His flesh, and through His death, the “law of commandments **contained in human decrees or dogma,**” which were contrary to the Law of God.

As he states in verse 14, these human laws had not only created **enmity between God and man**, but also **between Jews and Gentiles**. This was even compounded by the fact that in Old Testament times, God did not call the “uncircumcised” Gentiles, in general, to the truth (see again Ephesians 2:11–13).

In perhaps alluding to the *wall*, which separated the court of the Gentiles from the court of the Israelites in the Temple, Paul compared the human traditions and rules with a “**middle wall of partition**” (Ephesians 2:14). But Jesus Christ broke down and abolished that barrier through His supreme sacrifice. We also recall that the veil of the temple was torn from top to bottom when Jesus died—indicating that all true Christians have direct access to the Father in heaven.

We read that in God’s Church—the BODY of Christ—there is no longer Jew nor Gentile, but they are all one in Christ (Galatians 3:26–29).

Through Christ’s death, we **were reconciled** to the Father (Ephesians 2:16; Colossians 1:19–20). Christ is our peace (Ephesians 2:14), who has made true Christians—of Jewish and Gentile origin—**ONE** in Him (same verse), “as to create in Himself one new man from the two [Jew and Gentile], thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity” (Ephesians 2:15–16, *New King James Bible*).

*Albert Barnes’ Notes on the Bible* comments that Christ did not only

put to death, or literally, “having slain” “the enmity between Jews and Gentiles, but [also] the enmity between the sinner and God. He has by that death removed all the obstacles to reconciliation on the part of God and on the part of man. It is made efficacious in removing the enmity of the sinner against God, and producing peace.”

Christ removed the handwriting, consisting in human ordinances, by annulling the certificate of debt, which we incurred by violating God’s laws.

### Continuing in Ephesians 2:17–22:

“(Verse 17) And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. (Verse 18) For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. (Verse 19) Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but **fellow citizens** with the saints, and of the **household of God**; (Verse 20) And are built upon **the foundation of the apostles and prophets**, Jesus Christ himself being the **chief corner stone**; (Verse 21) In whom all the **building** fitly framed together groweth unto a **holy temple** in the Lord; (Verse 22) In whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit.”

Since Christ removed the enmity and preached and gave peace to those who were near (Jews) and far off (Gentiles) (compare verse 17), all true Christians have access to the Father through the one and the same Spirit (verse 18). As such, they are no longer strangers and foreigners to the household of God, but **fellow citizens** with all the other saints (verse 19). Their citizenship is written down in heaven (Philippians 3:20, *New King James Bible*). This is especially true for Gentiles who were, as Paul had explained, cut off from the commonwealth of Israel. But now, as true Christians, they became part of spiritual Israel—the Church—the body of Christ, “**the household of God**.”

The German *Menge* Bible includes the annotation that the term “**household of God**” means, “members of the Family of God” (“*Mitglieder der Gottesfamilie*”).

As Ephesians 2:20 states, the Church is built upon the New

Testament **apostles** and the Old and New Testament **prophets**. Christ is the **chief corner stone** of the building—He is the originator and finisher of the Church. Nobody can lay any other foundation than the one, which is laid—Jesus Christ.

God placed His people in the Church to be a part of the **spiritual holy temple**; and they must *individually* grow so that the *entire* temple can grow—with everyone doing his or her part.

Those who hide their talents or refuse to place their light on the hill, but put it under a basket (Matthew 5:15), will be cast out of the building. They don't give light to all who are in the house (same verse), but rather disseminate darkness. They are unprofitable servants who refuse to grow and bring fruit to be of value to others. They are not doing the good works, which God prepared beforehand for them that they should walk in them and carry them out.

But if they are doing their part—growing and producing fruit for the benefit of others—they are being built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit (Ephesians 2:21–22). They are **collectively** the temple of God, and they are also **individually** the temple or habitation of God. Both God the Father and Jesus Christ are living *IN* true converted Christians through the Holy Spirit (compare John 14:23–24).



# Ephesians, Chapter 3

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Paul continues in Ephesians 3:1–7:

“(Verse 1) For this cause I Paul, the **prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles**, (Verse 2) If ye have heard of the **dispensation** of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: (Verse 3) How that **by revelation** he made known unto me **the mystery**; (as I wrote afore in few words, (Verse 4) Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) (Verse 5) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is **now revealed** unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; (Verse 6) That the Gentiles should be **fellow heirs**, and of the same body, and partakers of his **promise in Christ by the gospel**: (Verse 7) Whereof I was made a **minister**, according to the **gift of the grace** of God given unto me by the effectual working of **his power**.”

Paul wrote this letter while **imprisoned** in Rome (verse 1). He reminds the Gentiles that he was sent to them, after the Jews had rejected him and the gospel message, and that he was arrested because the Jews persecuted him. He appealed to Caesar in Rome, and while he still communicated with the leaders of the Jews in Rome, he again made clear that due to their unbelief, he was sent to proclaim the gospel to the **Gentiles** (Acts 28:17–19, 25–28).

Paul reminds the Ephesians in chapter 3, verse 2, that he proclaimed to them the “**dispensation**” or administration or his stewardship of God’s grace; and that the knowledge of the fact that Gentiles should be fellow heirs and part of the same body—the Church—was **revealed** to Paul (verses 3 and 5). This understanding was a **mystery** (verse 3), and it had not been made known in the past. Even the early New Testament Church had not understood, at first, that God had given the gift of repentance to Gentiles. But as verse 5 says, now God, through

His Spirit, had made known this mystery to His holy apostles and prophets (For instance, Paul and Barnabas were apostles and prophets, compare Acts 14:14; 13:1–2).

Some mysteries were not revealed to God's people in Old Testament times (compare Daniel 12:8–9; Matthew 13:16–17). Other mysteries were, to an extent (1 Peter 1:10–12; compare Deuteronomy 29:29). It is always a matter of God's timing. There are certain mysteries, which will be hidden until the very end (Acts 1:6–7; Matthew 24:36), while many other mysteries have been revealed to Christ's disciples in this day and age (Matthew 13:34–35, 51–52; Romans 16:25–27).

Paul also reminded the Ephesians in verse 6 that this truth is contained **in the gospel**, which Jesus Christ preached and which is also to be found in the pages of the Old Testament, but in order to *understand* it, it must be **revealed**—the mystery of the gospel must be unlocked (compare Ephesians 6:19). Paul calls the fact that Gentiles should be co-heirs with Christ and partakers of the promise of salvation and eternal life the **"mystery of Christ."** Christ "owns" or possesses the key to unlock this mystery; He is the Revelator.

Further, it is only through Him, living in His disciples, that they can inherit eternal life and God's glory.

This is why Paul says in Colossians 1:25–27 (*New King James Bible*) that Paul was made a minister "according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God, **the mystery** which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been **revealed** to His saints. To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of the mystery among the Gentiles: which is **Christ in you**, the *hope of glory*."

Paul also said in Ephesians 3:7 that it was because of **grace** that he became a minister. It was God's gift to him, as in turn Christ gives ministers as a gift to His Church. But God's ministers must be effective, and so God gives them **power** to fulfill their ministry.

Continuing in **Ephesians 3:8–9**:

"(Verse 8) Unto me, who am less than the **least of all saints**, **is this grace given**, that I should preach among the Gentiles the **unsearchable riches** of Christ; (Verse 9) And to

**make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery,**  
which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in  
**God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:"**

In verse 8, Paul calls himself **the least of all the saints**. This is not just idle talk—Paul really meant it. He knew that before his conversion, he had persecuted the saints and caused their death, and he never forgot that. He says in 1 Timothy 1:15 (*New King James Bible*): "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." He also states in 1 Corinthians 15:9 (*New King James Bible*): "For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God."

But as Ephesians 3:8 says, Paul understood the **miracle of grace**. That is why he emphasizes God's grace so much, because he himself experienced it in such abundance. He **KNEW** what he had done to God and His people; but he also **KNEW** what God is willing to do for us.

He says in 1 Timothy 1:16 (*New King James Bible*): "However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life."

And he says in 1 Corinthians 15:10 (*New King James Bible*): "But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."

Paul knew what God had given him, and he was anxious to show God through his conduct, how thankful he was for God's mercy and grace. At the same time, he understood that whatever he was able to do was not because of him, but because of God's power in him.

And so, Paul understood that God gave him grace or special favor to entrust him with preaching the gospel—and to do so especially among the Gentiles. As Ephesians 3:8 says, the gospel message includes the proclamation of the **"unsearchable riches of Christ."**

We remember that Paul spoke in Ephesians 1:7 and 2:7 about the "riches" and the "exceeding riches" of God's grace. In Ephesians 3:16, he mentions the "riches" of God's glory (compare, too, Philippians 4:19). In Colossians 1:27, he says (*New King James Bible*): "To them

[the saints] God willed to make known what are the **riches of the glory** of the mystery among the Gentiles...”

There is obviously a connection between God’s exceeding riches of God’s grace and His glory. God is willing to bestow **both** on His disciples. They are to inherit God’s glory (Romans 9:23) as a gift—an undeserved special favor. It is bestowed on them, by grace, not because of works.

Paul says in Romans 8:18 that our present sufferings are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us; and he emphasizes in 2 Corinthians 4:17: “For this momentary light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison” (*New American Bible*).

These riches of God’s grace and God’s glory, to be bestowed on His people, are truly **unsearchable**, as we read in Ephesians 3:8. Paul uses this phrase only one more time, in Romans 11:33, when he talks about the mystery of God’s calling (compare Romans 11:25): “Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!” (*New King James Bible*)."

As Ephesians 3:9 shows, Paul was very conscious of God’s command to preach the gospel to all men, and so he was anxious to **make all men see** what is God’s mystery. He knew, of course, that most would reject the gospel message, being blinded and deceived by the god of this world. But that did not discourage him from preaching the Word, hoping that it would fall on fertile ground.

In addition, Paul might have had foremost in mind the members of the church of God—all disciples should come to the understanding that there is neither Jew nor Greek, male nor female, slave nor free, but all are one in Christ. After all, the mystery which Paul is addressing here is that the “Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body” (Ephesians 3:6, *New King James Bible*).

Paul speaks in verse 9 of the need to explain the “**fellowship** of the mystery.”

*Adam Clarke’s Commentary on the Bible* explains:

“The [Greek] word which we properly translate fellowship, was used among the Greeks to signify their religious communities; here it may intimate the association of Jews and Gentiles in one Church or body, and their agreement in that glorious mystery which was now so



fully opened relative to the salvation of both. But instead of [the Greek word for] fellowship, [the word for] dispensation or economy, is the reading of... [some] of the best printed editions of the Greek text..."

*The Jamieson, Fausset and Brown commentary* agrees: "The oldest manuscripts read, 'economy,' 'dispensation'... To make all see how it hath seemed good to God at this time to *dispense* (through me and others, His *stewards*) what heretofore was a mystery."

In using again the term, "dispensation," which signifies the work of the *master* of the *family* or of the *head* of the *household*, Paul reminds everyone in Ephesians 3:9 that **God the Father created all things through or by Jesus Christ**. He makes this point here, as he will soon be talking about the **God Family** in much more detail.

In verse 9, he impresses on the reader's mind that God IS and has ALWAYS BEEN a Family—consisting of the Father and Jesus Christ (but with spiritually begotten children, as will be explained). God created everything through Jesus Christ (compare Colossians 1:15–16; John 1:3; Hebrews 1:1–2). Christ existed before He became a man—before the world was created. Christ had no beginning—He has always existed as the SECOND member of the God Family.

Paul continues in **Ephesians 3:10–11**:

"(Verse 10) To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, (Verse 11) According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:"

This statement is most amazing! **God uses His church to explain to angels the manifold wisdom of God!** Peter confirms that God has hidden from His angels certain aspects of His plan, and that "angels desire to look into" those aspects (1 Peter 1:12).

The "principalities and powers," mentioned in Ephesians 3:10, might also include "evil" angels. The *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown commentary* writes regarding the phrase, "powers in heavenly places":

"... the various orders of *good* angels primarily, as these dwell 'in the heavenly places' in the highest sense... Secondly, God's wisdom in redemption is made known to *evil* angels, who dwell 'in heavenly

places' in a lower sense, namely, the air," or better, who rule through the air, compare again, regarding "principalities and powers," Ephesians 2:1–2, and also Ephesians 6:12 and Colossians 2:15.

In addition, Paul explains in Ephesians 3:11 that God's plan of salvation for mankind was an "eternal purpose," which God "purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord," showing that God the Father had decreed—before the foundation of the world and before "time began"—that man, yet to be created, would have the potential to inherit eternal life and God's glory (Titus 1:1–2; 1 Corinthians 2:7); and that this potential could ONLY be obtained through the death of Jesus Christ for the remission of sin. God the Father and Jesus Christ had purposed to create man, and they knew through all eternity that this purpose would have to include the death of the Son so that man could attain eternal life.

### Continuing in Ephesians 3:12–13:

"Verse 12) In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith **of** him. (Verse 13) Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory."

As we explain in great length in our booklet, *"Paul's Letter to the Galatians,"* on pages 26–29 and also on page 10, Paul is addressing here, indeed, the faith **OF** Christ—not only our faith **IN** Christ. We can have boldness and access to God the Father with confidence, because it is the faith **OF** Jesus Christ—the very faith that Christ had and has—which dwells in us.

It is because of Christ's faith in the Ephesian brethren that they are not to faint or lose heart when considering the trials and tribulations which Paul had to endure; knowing and believing that all things work out for good for those who love God and do His commandments, and that our sufferings are necessary for our glory. (For a full discussion on this subject, please read chapter 6 of our free booklet, *"Human Suffering—Why... And How Much Longer?"*).

Paul said in Ephesians 3:13 that his suffering was their glory. He explained in 2 Corinthians 12:9: "And he said to me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness [or suffering]. Most gladly therefore I rather glory in my infirmities, that

the power of Christ may rest upon me.”

Paul had to learn to become **reliant** on Christ, rather than self-reliant. And his ability to cope with trials, knowing they were necessary for his own salvation, was to encourage the brethren to follow his example, so that they, too, would be able to inherit God’s glory. Compare again 2 Corinthians 4:17 (*New King James Bible*): “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, IS WORKING FOR US a more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”

In addition, Paul was also telling them that they could glory in Paul’s sufferings, knowing that he was suffering righteously as a prisoner for the Gentiles (Ephesians 3:1). *Albert Barnes Notes on the Bible* points out, regarding Ephesians 3:13:

“‘Which is your glory’ - Which tends to your honor and welfare. You have occasion to rejoice that you have a friend who is willing thus to suffer for you; you have occasion to rejoice in all the benefits which will result to you from his trials in your behalf.”

As they could glory in Paul, so Paul gloried in the faithful and loyal brethren, knowing that all of this was made possible through the grace and power of God working in all of them (compare 1 Thesalonians 2:19–20).

Paul continues in **Ephesians 3:14–15**:

“Verse 14) For this cause I bow my knees unto the **Father** of our Lord Jesus Christ, (Verse 15) **Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,**”

In verse 14, Paul recognizes the source of his power and strength, as well as the Originator of his salvation, and so he re-emphasizes the need to pray to **God the Father**—who is also the Father and God of our Lord Jesus Christ. He continues to point out the fact that **God is a Family**, and that the **NAME** of that Family; i.e., the *Family name*, is “God.” We read in John 1:1 that in the beginning was the **WORD**—the **LOGOS**—the Spokesman, Jesus Christ, and that the **WORD** was with God—the Father—and that the Word **WAS** God.

Both beings were and are **GOD**—both were and are members of the God Family. And so, the Family in heaven consists of God the Father

and Jesus Christ the Son, and the family on earth consists of all spirit-begotten children or disciples of God. The angels are clearly not part of the God Family, as God is not reproducing Himself through angels. But by extension, we might include in the term “family in heaven” the saints who have been seated, figuratively speaking, with Christ in the heavenlies, and whose NAMES have been written down in heaven, as well as the “spirits of just men made perfect” (Hebrews 12:23). (For more information on the “spirit in man,” please read our free booklet, *“The Theory of Evolution—A Fairy Tale for Adults.”*)

*Albert Barnes’ Notes on the Bible* comments as follows:

“It does not properly refer to angels, for he is not speaking of them but of the family of the redeemed... They are all of one family. They all have one father, and are all of one community. The expression is taken from the custom in a family, where **all bear the name of the ‘head’ of the family.**”

And so, we read in Revelation 22:4 that the name of the Father—“God”—will be written on the foreheads of the saints. Compare also Revelation 14:1.

*Adam Clarke’s Commentary on the Bible* adds:

“Paul... says family, because they are all one, and of one. And all this family is named - derives its origin and being, from God, **as children derive their name from him who is the father of the family.**”

Quoting from our free booklet, *“The Gospel of the Kingdom of God”*:

“... Spiros Zodhiates writes regarding John 1:18 [‘No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son (God) who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.’]: ‘The word (for only-begotten) *monogenees* actually is a compound of the word *monos* = “alone,” and the word *genos* = “race, stock, family.” Here we are told that He who came to reveal God—Jesus Christ—is of the same family, of the same stock, of the same race, as God. There is ample evidence in the scriptures that the **Godhead is a Family**’...

“God is a Family, and when He created man, He began His awesome work of adding to His Family. He wanted to bring children into His Family. Note how the NIV translates Hebrews 2:11: ‘Both the one who makes man holy [God] and those who are made holy [that’s us] **are of the same family**’—that is, the Family of God.”

Paul continues in Ephesians 3:16–21:

“(Verse 16) That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened **with might by his Spirit** in the **inner man**; (Verse 17) That Christ may dwell in your hearts **by [or: through] faith**; that ye, being **rooted and grounded in love**, (Verse 18) May be able to **comprehend** with all saints what is the **breadth, and length, and depth, and height**; (Verse 19) And to know the **love of Christ**, which passeth knowledge, that ye **might be filled with all the fullness of God**. (Verse 20) Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly **above all that we ask or think**, according to the **power** that worketh in us, (Verse 21) Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus **throughout all ages**, world without end. Amen.”

Paul reminds his readers in verse 16 that it is God the Father who must give us power and **strength**, and He does so by the gift of His **Holy Spirit** dwelling in us. It is both the Father and the Son—Jesus Christ—who live in us through the Holy Spirit, but we must have **the faith** (compare verse 17) that they do—which faith is not only our faith *in* God, but also the very faith *OF* Christ in us. And with God’s Spirit in us, we receive **the love of God and of Christ**, which is being poured out into our hearts, as well as **spiritual understanding**, both of which the world cannot comprehend (verse 18).

The terms, as used by Paul in verse 18, “breadth ... length ... depth ... height,” are explained by the *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown commentary* as referring to “the full dimensions of the spiritual temple, answering to ‘the fullness of God.’” Based on this explanation, verse 19 would then also show that our understanding must include the *purpose* of the Church—the spiritual temple of God—as well as its responsibility and *commission*.

We are also to be **rooted and grounded** in love, as verse 17 states. *Albert Barnes’ Notes on the Bible* writes:

“‘That ye being **rooted**’ - Firmly established - as a tree is whose roots strike deep, and extend afar. The meaning is, that his love should be as firm in our hearts, as a tree is in the soil, whose roots strike deep into the earth. ‘And **grounded**...’ - ‘founded’ - as a building is on a

foundation. The word is taken from architecture, where a firm foundation is laid, and the meaning is, that he wished them to be as firm in the love of Christ, as a building is that rests on a solid basis."

Verse 16 shows that God creates in us a new man—the **inner man**—so that we can be ultimately filled with ALL the **fullness of God** (compare verse 19)—so that we can become fully God—full-fledged born again God beings—members of the very Family of God.

*Vincent's Word Studies* states:

"*Fullness of God* is the fullness which God imparts through the dwelling of Christ in the heart; Christ, in whom the Father was pleased that all the fullness should dwell (Colossians 1:19), and in whom dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead (Colossians 2:9)."

*The Jamieson, Fausset and Brown commentary* adds:

"filled with — rather, as *Greek*, 'filled even unto all the fullness of God' (this is the grand goal), that is, filled... with the divine wisdom, knowledge, and love; '*even as God is full*'..."

*Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible* writes:

"Among all the great sayings in this prayer, this is the greatest. To be Filled with God is a great thing; to be filled with the Fullness of God is still greater; but to be filled with All the fullness of God... utterly bewilders the sense and confounds the understanding."

Paul reminds us in verse 20 that God is willing and able to do for us—by **His power** working in us—what we ourselves **might not even think of**; but God knows what we need, although we sometimes don't realize our **needs** as distinguished from our wants and desires.

Verse 21 emphasizes that the Church of God is called upon to give glory to God the Father, and the Church is to do it through Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church. And this will continue to occur **throughout all ages** or, as the *New King James Bible* puts it, "forever and ever."

*Vincent's Word Studies* explains that the phrase means literally, "*unto all the generations of the age of the ages*," and adds; "Eternity is made up of ages, and ages of generations."

This shows that the **Church will never end**, or, as *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible* says, "the church will abide for ever." Christ said that the gates of hell (death) would not prevail against His Church (compare Matthew 16:18)—the reason is, that His Church will always exist—the members of His Church will become immortal God beings,

incapable of dying. And Christ and His Church will *always* give glory to God the Father—the *Highest* in the Family of God (compare Isaiah 9:6–7; Revelation 22:5; 1 Corinthians 15:24–28).

Paul concludes the third chapter in verse 21 with the word “Amen,” which means, “So be it; and so it will certainly be,” or, “So be it. So let it be! And so it will be.” It is a strong confirmation that everything, which Paul has written, is true and will always be true.





# Ephesians, Chapter 4

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Paul continues in Ephesians 4:1–6:

“(Verse 1) I therefore, the **prisoner** of the Lord, beseech you that ye **walk worthy** of the vocation wherewith ye are called, (Verse 2) With **all lowliness** and **meekness**, with **longsuffering, forbearing one another in love**; (Verse 3) Endeavoring to keep the **unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace**. (Verse 4) There is **one body**, and **one Spirit**, even as ye are called in **one hope** of your calling; (Verse 5) **One Lord, one faith, one baptism**, (Verse 6) **One God and Father** of all, who is **above all, and through all, and in you all**.”

After having described our future in the Kingdom of God, Paul reminds us in verse 1 that we have to **walk worthy** of our “vocation” or better, “calling.” He emphasizes that he is a **prisoner**—quite literally because of persecution due to his obedience to Christ—and also, that he is a “slave” of Jesus Christ, obeying his master, as we must.

He shows, beginning in verse 2, what is meant to walk worthy of our calling: We have to walk with **all lowliness** or “humility” (compare Acts 20:18–22; 1 Peter 5:5; Philippians 2:3).

We also have to walk with **meekness** (compare Matthew 5:5). “Meekness relates to the manner in which we receive injuries. We are to bear them patiently, and not to retaliate, or seek revenge” (compare *Albert Barnes’ Notes on the Bible*).

We also have to walk with **longsuffering** (compare 1 Corinthians 13:4). It literally means “long-mindedness, never permitting a trial or provocation to get to the end of your patience” (*Adam Clarke’s Commentary on the Bible*).

We have to be **willing to forbear one another in love**. According to *Adam Clarke’s Commentary on the Bible*, this means: “**Sustaining one another** - helping to support each other in all the miseries and trials of

life: or, if the word be taken in the sense of **bearing** with each other, it may mean that, through the love of God working in our hearts, we should bear with each other's infirmities, ignorance, etc., knowing how much others have been or are still obliged to bear with us."

*John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible* adds: "... overlooking the infirmities of one another, forgiving injuries done, sympathizing with, and assisting each other in distressed circumstances, the spring of all which should be love..."

Walking worthy of our calling also means, as is stated in verse 3, to endeavor "**to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.**" Romans 14:17 says: "... the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and **peace** and joy in the Holy Spirit" (*New King James Bible*). And 2 Corinthians 13:11 adds: "... be of one mind, live **in peace**; and the God of love and peace will be with you" (*New King James Bible*).

Paul is emphasizing here that we have to be unified or become "one."

Jesus said that He wants His disciples to become "**one**" as God the Father and He are "one" (John 17:22–23).

Paul explains the cause for this required "oneness" or **unity** in verses 4–6 of Ephesians 4: True Christians are not to be divided spiritually, but they are to be united in **one body** (compare verse 4)—the spiritual body of Jesus Christ, the Church.

There is only "**one**" **Spirit** (verse 4); that is, God's Holy Spirit does not teach one person one thing and another person something differently.

We all have the same **hope** of our calling (verse 4)—the hope of our resurrection as immortal Spirit beings in the Kingdom of God. True Christians are not divided in their understanding as to what their future will be.

And so, there is "**one Lord**" (verse 5)—Jesus Christ—the Head of the Church, and neither is He divided (compare 1 Corinthians 1:13).

So then, it follows that there is only "**one**" faith (Ephesians 4:5)—the very same faith of Christ that must live in us. It is that one faith that enables us to be single-minded in our understanding—one Christian does not believe one thing, while another Christian believes something else.

In addition, there is only **one** correct concept of **baptism** (verse

5) which is necessary for salvation. Each individual Christian was baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Note that even those who had been baptized in the name of John the Baptist were required to be baptized in the name of Christ in order to be able to receive the Holy Spirit (compare Acts 19:1–6).

Furthermore, there is only **one God the Father** (verse 6; compare 1 Corinthians 12:6). As mentioned before, He is the Highest in the God Family. He is “**above all.**” He is the Father of Jesus Christ and of every Spirit-begotten Christian, and He lives **in us** through the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9, 14). It is **through God the Father** that everything exists (Romans 11:36; Hebrews 2:10; Revelation 4:11).

It is God the Father who is over all of us; who works in all of us; and who lives in all of us, if we are true Christians.

Since there is such oneness, *we, as individual Christians, must endeavor to uphold unity and peace and harmony with each and every member of the body of Christ, as we all are called to become born again immortal members in the very Family of God.*

#### Continuing in **Ephesians 4:7**:

“(Verse 7) But unto every one of us is given grace according to the **measure** of the gift of Christ.”

*The Jamieson, Fausset and Brown commentary* writes:

“Though ‘one’ in our common connection with ‘one Lord, one faith... one God,’ yet ‘each one of us’ has assigned to him his own particular gift, to be used for the good of the whole...”

God has given to each of us a certain **measure** of talents and abilities, and He wants us to use those. Not everyone is equally talented, and not everyone receives the same measure of the Holy Spirit. When a member is ordained to the office of deacon or elder, an extra measure of the Holy Spirit is given to him, to enable him to fulfill his responsibilities. The same is true for ordinations to higher ranks and functions within the ministry, such as Pastor or Evangelist. But to whom much is given, of whom much is required. Ministers will receive a stricter judgment from God (James 3:1).

Paul continues in **Ephesians 4:8–10**:

“(Verse 8) Wherefore he saith, When he **ascended** up on high, he led **captivity captive**, and gave **gifts** unto men. (Verse 9) (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first **into the lower parts of the earth**? (Verse 10) He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might **fill all things**).”

In verse 8, Paul alludes to a passage in Psalm 68:18, where it says, among other things, that “the LORD” received **gifts among men or for men**, to be distributed to them (compare *the Jamieson, Fausset and Brown commentary*). This psalm refers to the Messiah, Jesus Christ, the “LORD” of the Old Testament, who fulfilled this prophecy.

Paul also states that Christ ascended to heaven and that He led “**captivity captive**.”

*John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible* states:

“[This] is expressive of Christ’s conquests and triumph over sin, Satan, the world, death, and the grave; and indeed, every spiritual enemy of his and his people, especially the devil, who leads men captive at his will, and is therefore called captivity, and his principalities and powers, whom Christ has spoiled and triumphed over; the allusion is to the public triumphs of the Romans, in which captives were led in chains, and exposed to open view.”

In Verse 9, Paul states that Christ “descended first into the **lower parts of the earth**.” Some have claimed that this verse proves that Christ went to “hell”—as this concept of “hell” is also misunderstood—after He died and before He was resurrected, to preach to the spirits in prison. Christ did no such thing. He was dead and in the grave for three days and three nights, without any consciousness (For proof, please read our free booklet, “*Do We Have an Immortal Soul?*”).

The expression, “lower parts of the earth,” can just refer to the grave (compare Psalm 63:9).

Notice, too, what *Albert Barnes’ Notes on the Bible* writes:

“‘Into the lower parts of the earth’ — To the lowest state of humiliation. This seems to be the fair meaning of the words. Heaven stands opposed to earth. One is above; the other is beneath. From the one

Christ descended to the other; and he came not only to the earth, but he stooped to the most humble condition of humanity here...

"Some have understood this of the grave; others of the region of departed spirits; but these interpretations do not seem to be necessary. It is the 'earth itself' that stands in contrast with the heavens; and the idea is, that the Redeemer descended from his lofty eminence in heaven, and became a man of humble rank and condition."

Similarly the explanation of *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*:

"'But that he also descended'—The meaning of the apostle appears to be this: The person who ascended is the Messiah, and his ascension plainly intimates his descension; that is, his incarnation, humiliation, death, and resurrection."

Paul also states in verse 10 of Ephesians 4 that Christ might **fill all things**. This reminds us of Ephesians 1:22–23, where he said that the fullness of Christ might dwell in His body—the Church—and that He fills all in all. Christ is the active living Head of His Church, and we have received of His fullness (John 1:16). He will be ruling over this earth in the near future. Even though He led "captivity captive," He is still allowing Satan to stay on his earthly throne—but only until He returns. Satan's fate is sealed, and he will soon be dethroned (compare Romans 16:20).

### Continuing in **Ephesians 4:11–16**:

"(Verse 11) And he **gave some**, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; (Verse 12) For the **perfecting** of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the **edifying** of the body of Christ: (Verse 13) Till we all come in the **unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God**, unto a perfect man, unto the **measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ**: (Verse 14) That we henceforth be **no more children**, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; (Verse 15) But **speaking the truth in love**, may grow up **into him** in all things, which is the head, even Christ: (Verse 16) From whom the whole body fitly joined

together and compacted by that **which every joint supplieth**, according to the **effectual working** in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."

As Paul had introduced this chapter with the concept of unity and oneness, so he continues here with this theme, showing in verse 11 that Christ **gave ministers** with special ranks and offices to the Church in order to create unity in His body. *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible* says that "He established several offices in his Church; furnished these with the proper officers; and, to qualify them for their work, gave them the proper gifts."

One of the responsibilities of the ministry is the "**perfecting**" of the saints (verse 12); that is, as the *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown commentary* puts it, "*correcting in all that is deficient, instructing and completing in number and all parts.*"

Another responsibility is "**edifying** of the body of Christ" (verse 12); that is, "building it up; that is, in the knowledge of the truth" (*Albert Barnes' Notes on the Bible*).

The purpose is to come to the **unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God** (verse 13). It is not our knowledge, but Christ's knowledge, which we have to embrace. We are to "grow in the... knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18).

We are also to come to the **measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ** (Ephesians 4:13); that is, our goal is to become like Christ (compare 1 John 3:2).

*Albert Barnes' Notes on the Bible* explains:

"The word '**stature**'... refers to the growth of a man. The stature to be attained to was that of Christ. He was the standard... in moral character. The **measure** to be reached was Christ; or we are to grow until we become like him... The phrase 'the measure of the fulness,' means, probably, the 'full measure.'"

Christ gave His ministry to His Church so that its members can grow to adult and mature persons; rather than remaining immature **children** who are being tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine taught by false teachers and ministers (verse 14). Rather, they are to learn to "**speak**" (verse 15) or better, "hold" or "follow" **the truth**, rather than error and deceit (compare the

*Jamieson, Fausset and Brown commentary*).

They are to uphold and speak the truth **in love** (verse 15)—not with hatred and a desire to condemn, as the Church itself is to be edified “in love.” We are to grow up **INTO the Head**, Jesus Christ (verse 15)—becoming totally “one” with Him. To do this, it is *necessary to be an active part within the Church, individually fulfilling our responsibilities as good and faithful servants* (verse 16; compare Matthew 25:20–21).

### Continuing in **Ephesians 4:17–19**:

“(Verse 17) This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as **other Gentiles** walk, in the vanity of their mind, (Verse 18) Having the understanding **darkened**, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the **blindness** of their heart: (Verse 19) Who being **past feeling** have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness **with greediness**.”

According to Paul, “**other**” or **unconverted “Gentiles”** walk “in vanity of mind” (compare Romans 1:21), but the converted Gentiles in Ephesus—as any converted person—must not live this way any more. He explains that unconverted Gentiles have their understanding “**darkened**” (verse 18) and live in alienation from God (compare Colossians 1:21) through their ignorance and **blindness**, or better, hardness (compare Mark 3:5). The Greek word means, literally, “the hardening of the skin so as not to be sensible of touch.” In other words, their ignorance and hardness led to their life in **darkness**.

Verse 19 shows that they reached the point of being “**past feeling**”—the ultimate result of a long process of “hardening,” or habit of sin (compare the *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown commentary*). Paul warns that this can happen to us too, if we are not careful. We can reach the point when our conscience does not bother us anymore when we sin (compare Proverbs 30:20; 1 Timothy 4:2). This is what happened to them. They “**gave themselves over**”—completely surrendered—to a lifestyle of lasciviousness and uncleanness “**in** (so the Greek) **greediness**”—in an eager, voluntary, and deliberate grasping after more and more uncleanness.

## Continuing in Ephesians 4:20–24:

“(Verse 20) But ye have not so **learned Christ**; (Verse 21) If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: (Verse 22) That ye put off concerning the former conversation [conduct] the **old man**, which is **corrupt** according to the **deceitful lusts**; (Verse 23) And be **renewed** in the spirit of your mind; (Verse 24) And that ye put on the **new man**, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”

When we are taught the gospel of the Kingdom of God, then we are also taught, and we have to **learn**, how to live a life pleasing to God (compare verse 20). We are taught *how Christ lived*, whose example we are to follow. Once Christ lives in us through the Holy Spirit, we continue to learn even more perfectly how to live a Christian life.

*Albert Barnes' Notes on the Bible* states: “You have been taught a different thing by Christ; you have been taught that his religion requires you to abandon such a [wrong] course of life.”

As true Christians, we have to put off the “**old man**” (verse 22)—that carnal selfish person that we were before conversion (compare Romans 6:1–4, 6). This old man was “*being corrupted*,” marking “the *progressive* condition of corruption” (compare *Vincent's Word Studies*). This occurred because of “**deceitful lusts**” or “lusts of deceits” (compare Hebrews 3:13).

We have to **be renewed** in our mind (Ephesians 4:23). The word “renewed” describes a continued renewal (compare 2 Corinthians 4:16; Colossians 3:10); and it can only happen if the Holy Spirit in us is continuously being renewed (Titus 3:5; Psalm 51:10).

We must put on the “**new man**” (Ephesians 4:24; compare again Colossians 3:9–10)—an entirely new righteous and holy personality, being created by God. In other words, we are to become a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15).

Putting on the new man really means, putting on Christ (Galatians 3:27; Romans 13:14). We are to become as Christ is.

## Continuing in Ephesians 4:25–32:



“(Verse 25) Wherefore **putting away lying**, speak every man **truth** with his neighbor: for we are members one of another. (Verse 26) Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your **wrath**: (Verse 27) **Neither give place to the devil**. (Verse 28) Let him that stole **steal no more**: but rather let him **labor**, working with *his* hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth. (Verse 29) **Let no corrupt communication** proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of **edifying**, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. (Verse 30) **And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God**, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. (Verse 31) Let all **bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking**, be put away from you, with all **malice**: (Verse 32) And be ye **kind** one to another, **tenderhearted, forgiving** one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.”

Beginning in verse 25, Paul lists many of the things, which we have to put off or put away. Regarding what we need to “**put off**,” compare also Colossians 3:5–8; 1 Peter 2:1–2.

Paul is also listing some of the things, beginning in verse 25, that we need to put **on**. Regarding what we need to “**put on**,” compare also Colossians 3:12–14.

In addition, we are told to **put on** God’s armor of light (Romans 13:12; Ephesians 6:11–17; 1 Thessalonians 5:8). God offers His armor to us, but we must accept it and use it. And when we do, we **don’t grieve** the Holy Spirit in us (Ephesians 4:30); rather, the fruit of God’s Spirit in us will become obvious (Galatians 5:22–23). We are told that we must walk in the Spirit, following its lead (Romans 8:14; Galatians 5:25;). This means that we must examine ourselves to see if Christ really LIVES in us through the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 13:5). If not, we must do everything possible to see to it that Christ is formed in us (Galatians 4:19).

As Paul points out in Ephesians 4:25, 26, 29 and 31, when we **put off the old man**, we put away lying and wrath, as well as stealing, bad language and evil speaking, bitterness, anger and malice. Rather than living as this world does, we will be different. We won’t be like those

anymore who are “lovers of themselves, lovers of money... unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal... headstrong, haughty” (2 Timothy 3:1–4).

When we replace the old man with the new man, then there is no **room for the devil** (Ephesians 4:27). When we obey God, humbly submitting ourselves to Him, the devil must flee from us (James 4:10, 7).

And as Paul continues to show in Ephesians 4:25, 28 and 29, when we **put on the new man**, we speak only the truth, and we work willingly and earn money so that we can readily give to others who are in need. We will use words of edification—words that encourage others—rather than words that tear down or destroy. We will be kind, tenderhearted and forgiving, realizing that God has forgiven us because of what Christ did for us (Ephesians 4:32).

# Ephesians, Chapter 5

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Paul continues in Ephesians 5:1–4:

“(Verse 1) Be ye therefore followers of God as **dear children**: (Verse 2) And **walk in love**, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savor. (Verse 3) But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; (Verse 4) Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks.”

Paul encourages us in verse 1 to be followers of God the Father because we are **His begotten children**, and, as he continues to explain in verse 2, we must **WALK in love**, following **Christ’s example** who first loved us. He proved His love for us by dying for us, so that we could ultimately inherit eternal life. As Christ’s offering was a sweet-smelling savor, so our lives, as living sacrifices (Romans 12:1), must also be a sweet savor or sweet-smelling aroma to God (2 Corinthians 2:15).

Walking in God’s love is opposite to selfish passion and desires, as love is giving, not getting.

Hence, Paul warns in verse 3 against fornication, uncleanness or covetousness because these are all opposed to true love. For instance, fornication—a pre- or extra-marital sexual relationship—does not reflect the love of God to be bestowed on a husband or a wife, but rather is selfish gratification of one’s own senses. Also, filthiness or **foolish talking and jesting** (verse 4) are opposed to God’s way of love, as they are incompatible with a holy lifestyle that God’s children are supposed to exhibit.

*Vincent’s Words Studies* explains “filthiness,” “foolish talking” and “jesting” as follows:

“Filthiness [means] Obscenity. Foolish talking [means] Talk which

is both foolish and sinful... It is more than random or idle talk... The sense of the word [for “**Jesting**”]... is *polished and witty speech as the instrument of sin.*”

*Adam Clarke’s Commentary on the Bible* adds that “**jesting**” includes “words that can be easily turned to other meanings; double entendres; chaste words which, from their connection, and the manner in which they are used, convey an obscene or offensive meaning.”

Rather, Paul encourages us in verse 4 to give God thanks for placing us into His very Family and perfecting us.

### Continuing in **Ephesians 5:5–7**:

“(Verse 5) For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any **inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God**. (Verse 6) Let no man **deceive you** with vain words: for because of these things cometh the **wrath of God** upon the children of disobedience. (Verse 7) Be not ye therefore **partakers** with them.”

In verse 5, Paul reiterates some very basic, foundational facts about the **kingdom**: It belongs to God the Father and Jesus Christ, because God IS the kingdom, but we can have a part in it. We must **inherit** it, but we must not think that we will inherit it when we are flagrantly disobeying God. Compare 1 Corinthians 6:9–10; Galatians 5:19–21.

In particular, Paul emphasizes in Ephesians 5:5 whoremongers and unclean persons; that is, in accordance with *John Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible*, “anyone that is guilty of fornication, adultery, incest, etc.”

He also refers to a covetous man who is an idolater. *Albert Barnes’ Notes on the Bible* says:

“That is, he bestows on money the affections due to God; see [Colossians 3:5]. To worship money is as real idolatry as to worship a block of stone.” After all, Christ said that we cannot serve God and mammon (Matthew 6:24).

Paul stresses in verse 6 that it is easy to be **deceived** in this regard. In fact, today many think that their salvation and eternal life are assured, if they only believe in God, no matter how they live. But Paul states that because of sinful conduct, **God’s wrath** will be poured out

(Romans 1:18) upon the “**children of disobedience**” (Ephesians 2:1–3; Colossians 3:6).

Paul warns in Ephesians 5:7 that we must not **participate** in such evil and God-defying conduct (Revelation 18:4).

#### Continuing in Ephesians 5:8–14:

“(Verse 8) For ye **were** sometimes **darkness**, but now **are ye light** in the Lord: **walk** as children of light: (Verse 9) (For **the fruit** of the Spirit is in all **goodness** and **righteousness** and **truth**;) (Verse 10) **Proving** what is acceptable unto the Lord. (Verse 11) And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather **reprove** them. (Verse 12) For it is a **shame** even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret. (Verse 13) But all things that are reproved are made manifest by **the light**: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light. (Verse 14) Wherefore he saith, **Awake** thou that sleepest, and **arise** from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.”

Paul explains in verse 8 that in times past, we *were* darkness—not only, that we lived in darkness. But now, we *are* **light**, and as such, we must **walk** as the children of light (John 12:36). Others must be able to see that we are no longer walking in darkness, but rather, that we are reflecting God’s light (Isaiah 2:5; 1 John 1:7; Matthew 5:16).

When we walk in the light, then this will be manifested in our life. The **fruit** will show it (Ephesians 5:9). Notice, it does not say “fruits” in Ephesians 5:9, but “fruit”—the same terminology as is used in Galatians 5:22. When we *are* light in Jesus Christ, and when we allow God’s Spirit to change us, then the fruit of the Spirit will be made apparent.

Here, in Ephesians 5:9, Paul emphasizes the qualities of **goodness** (3 John 1:11), **righteousness** (1 John 3:10) and **truth** (Ephesians 4:25) as being part of that fruit of the Spirit. When we are filled with God’s goodness, righteousness and truth, and when we walk righteously, the *fruits* of righteousness will then be made manifest as well (Philippians 1:11).

Paul states in Ephesians 5:10 to **prove** what is acceptable to the

Lord. Our daily walk needs to be subject to our continued **examination** as to what is pleasing to God, and what is not (Romans 12:2). After all, we must not allow others to deceive us into believing that bad is good and that wrong is right (Isaiah 5:20).

When we do this, we won't participate in the works of darkness (Ephesians 5:11); we won't have fellowship with those who live in darkness, and we won't live as they do; but rather, we **will reprove** their works by living differently. If the opportunity arises, we may have to do so with words (1 Peter 3:15), but more often, we "reprove" by our deeds—by how we live. John 3:20 shows us that those who live in darkness will not enjoy our company for long *if we are light*, as they don't want their evil lifestyle to be reproved or questioned.

The *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown commentary* states:

"Not only 'have no fellowship, but *even* reprove them,' namely, in words, and in your deeds, which, shining with 'the light,' virtually reprove all that is contrary to light... 'Have no fellowship,' does not imply that we can avoid all intercourse..., but 'avoid such fellowship as will defile yourselves'; just as light, though it touch filth, is not soiled by it."

Rather than doing the **shameful things**, which are done by them in secret (Ephesians 5:12)—things that should not be named by or occurring among true Christians (Ephesians 5:3)—we *are* to be light (Ephesians 5:13). We are to **show** others, by the way we live, just what kind of lifestyle is acceptable to God. Adultery, fornication, homosexuality and other sexual transgressions are sinful and wrong! And so are transvestism, bestiality, incest, and other terrible violations of God's law! We are not to compromise in this regard, or even try to tolerate, excuse or justify such sins!

True Christians—those who walk in the light—reprove, in that sense, the works of darkness. *Vincent's Word Studies* writes that the last part of verse 13 should be rendered as follows:

"... *everything that is made manifest is light.*' A general proposition, going to show that manifestation can come only through light..."

Paul had stated in Ephesians 5:8 that we must **walk** as children of **light**. Now he explains, in verse 14, that we are no longer spiritually dead or asleep, but we ought to be **awake** (Romans 13:11; 1 Thessalonians 5:6; 1 Corinthians 15:34). We are to **arise** from sleep (Isaiah 60:1).

And as we are willing to walk in the light, Christ will give us **His light** (John 8:12), shining upon us (Ephesians 1:18), showing us the way.

### Continuing in **Ephesians 5:15–20**:

“(Verse 15) See then that ye walk **circumspectly**, not as fools, but as wise, (Verse 16) **Redeeming** the time, because the days are evil. (Verse 17) Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. (Verse 18) And be not **drunk with wine**, wherein is **excess**; but be filled with the Spirit; (Verse 19) Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; (Verse 20) **Giving thanks always for all things** unto God and the Father **in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ**;

Paul tells us that we must walk God’s way of life, and that we must do so “**circumspectly**” (verse 15); that is, carefully, exactly, accurately. We must **redeem** the time (verse 16; Colossians 4:5); that is, we must take opportunity to live as wise people, and not as fools. The Greek word for “redeem” means, “to purchase; to buy up.” It is used here in the context of rescuing or recovering our time from waste; to improve it for great and important purposes.

When we walk circumspectly and redeem the time, then we will not participate in orgies and **become drunk** (Ephesians 5:18; compare Luke 21:34). Paul is not advocating abstinence of alcohol—in fact, he recommends to Timothy to drink a little wine because of his frequent sicknesses (1 Timothy 5:23)—but he is warning against the **excess** of it (1 Peter 4:3–4).

Rather than being filled with wine, we are to be filled with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18), and if we are, then we will concentrate on spiritually uplifting things, and we will **give thanks to God always for all things** (verse 20; Colossians 3:17; 1 Thessalonians 5:18). This would include giving thanks even for adversities, knowing that “*all things* work together for good” if we love God by walking in His ways (Romans 8:28).

Further to that, we are to thank God **in the name of Jesus Christ**,

as Paul states in Ephesians 5:20. As we explain in our free booklet, *“Teach Us to Pray!”*, Christ is our Mediator in heaven, representing us before God the Father. When we pray to the Father and give Him thanks in Christ’s name, we are praying with Christ’s authority, knowing that Christ will communicate, on our behalf, our thoughts and requests to the Father.

Paul continues in Ephesians 5:21–28:

“(Verse 21) **Submitting yourselves** one to another in the fear of God. (Verse 22) **Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands**, as unto the Lord. (Verse 23) For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the savior of the body. (Verse 24) Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. (Verse 25) **Husbands, love your wives**, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; (Verse 26) That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by [correct: in] the word, (Verse 27) That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. (Verse 28) So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.”

In verse 21, Paul begins to introduce principles regarding the Christian marriage. Roles and functions of husband and wife are different, but at the same time complementary, and not exclusive.

Even though it is the foremost responsibility for the **wife to submit** to her husband as to the Lord (verse 22; Colossians 3:18)—that is, submitting to him when his requests are in conformity with Christ’s teachings and not contrary to the will of God (compare *Albert Barnes’ Note on the Bible*)—so the **husband is to love his wife** as Christ loves the Church (Ephesians 5:25).

And still, Paul introduces this section in verse 21 with the admonition to **submit one to another** in the fear of the Lord. Even though the husband is the head of the wife (1 Corinthians 11:3), as Christ is



the head of the husband, he is not to act selfishly and pursue just his own interests. Rather, he has to have the mind of Christ, and if he does, then he will also look out for and submit to the interests of his wife—as his wife will to the interests of her husband (Philippians 2:5, 4).

When a husband loves his wife in that way—as Christ loves the Church and gave Himself for it—then it will be easier for the wife to submit to her loving husband. Christ is the Savior of the Church (Ephesians 5:23), sanctifying and cleansing it to present it spotless (Ephesians 5:26–27). It is that kind of love that a husband ought to have for his wife. As Christ has the welfare of the Church in mind, so should the Christian husband look after the welfare of his wife.

Paul emphasizes in verse 28 that the husband loves himself, when he loves his wife. The reason is that both are “one flesh” (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:4–6).

*Albert Barnes’ Notes on the Bible* states:

“... a husband should have the same care for the comfort of his wife which he has for himself. He should regard her as one with himself; and as he protects his own body from cold and hunger, and, when sick and suffering, endeavors to restore it to health, so he should regard and treat her.

“He that loveth his wife loveth himself—(1) Because she is one with him, and their interests are identified. (2) Because, by this, he really promotes his own welfare, as much as he does when he takes care of his own body. A man’s kindness to his wife will be more than repaid by the happiness which she imparts; and all the real solicitude which he shows to make her happy, will come to more than it costs. If a man wishes to promote his own happiness in the most effectual way, he had better begin by showing kindness to his wife.”

Continuing in **Ephesians 5:29–33**:

“(Verse 29) For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: (Verse 30) For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. (Verse 31) For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. (Verse 32) This is a great mystery: but I

speaking concerning Christ and the church. (Verse 33) Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so **love his wife** even as himself; and the wife see that she **reverence** her husband."

Paul is drawing here an analogy between the husband and wife relationship and the relationship between Christ and the Church—and he calls it a great **mystery** (not "sacrament," as the *Vulgata* wrongly renders this passage). We comment on this passage, as follows, in our free booklet, *"The Mysteries of the Bible"*:

"We read in Ephesians 5:25–32 about Paul's admonition to Christian husbands, as well as an analogy, which is a mystery to most people... Paul is addressing here the mystery of the relationship between Christ and His Church. He emphasizes that those who are called must come out of the ways of this world in order to be joined with Christ. Christ must be continuously living within them (1 John 2:15–17; Romans 12:2; Galatians 2:20).

"The true purpose and function of the Church is a great mystery to most people. The Church is not a building. Instead, the Church is a spiritual organism—the spiritual 'body of Christ'—consisting of those in whom God's Spirit dwells. Still, the Church is organized. Many think they don't need the Church in order to be saved. Others have joined a religious organization, thinking that they have become a part of the true Church of God. You need to know why Christ has established His Church, where it is today, and what your responsibility is pertaining to Christ's true Church."

As mentioned, the Bible speaks of many mysteries, but they are all in some way connected. Here, in Ephesians 5:32, Paul is addressing the mystery of Christ and the Church; earlier, he had addressed the mystery of God's Will and of Christ, discussing the human potential to become members of the very Family of God. And the Church is fulfilling a vital part in this regard.

To elaborate further on this analogy, Paul indirectly refers to the creation of the first man and his wife and applies it to Christ and the Church (Ephesians 5:30–31). In Genesis 2:23, Adam says about Eve: "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man (*New King James Bible*)."

In Ephesians 5:30, Paul states that the Church members are "members

of His [Christ's] body, of His flesh, and of His bones" (*New King James Bible*). As the woman, Eve, was taken out of the man, Adam, so the Church—the virgin—is taken out of or created by the Man and Second Adam, Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:47, 49). The Church has been begotten by His Spirit; the Church is His body, and He lives in each member. We are Christ's possession; He bought us with His blood. Our body, flesh and bones have become His; we are truly members of HIS body; of HIS flesh; and of HIS bones. Paul had said earlier that we are God's "purchased possession."

In the last verse (verse 33) of chapter 5, Paul returns to his topic of the proper husband and wife relationship and encourages both mates to fulfill their respective main responsibilities, which—if applied—will guarantee the success of the marriage: The husband must **love** his wife as himself, and the wife must show "**reverence**" for her husband.

*Albert Barnes' Notes on the Bible* states the following regarding the word, "reverence":

"... it was the special duty of the wife to show respect for her husband as the head of the family, and as set over her in the Lord... The word rendered '*reverence*,' is that which usually denotes '*fear*'... She is to fear; i.e., to honor, respect, obey the will of her husband. It is, of course, not implied that it is not also her duty to love her husband, but that there should be no usurping of authority; no disregard of the arrangement which God has made; and that order and peace should be secured in a family by regarding the husband as the source of law..."

The Greek word for "reverence" is indeed a word, which is also used to describe the fear of God (compare Luke 12:5; Luke 23:40; Acts 13:16; 1 Peter 2:17; Revelation 11:18; 14:7; 15:4; 19:5). The wife is to fear or respect her husband, as he is her head; she is to submit to him as to the Lord. In other words, the wife is to fear to disobey her husband if there is no godly reason or justification to do so.

In general, we are told to fear God who loves us and wants to give us life, but not fear those who hate us and want only death for us (Matthew 10:28; Philippians 1:27–28). In addition, we are to fear God and show Him reverence, [including those who are in a God-given position over us, as long as they carry out their God-given position in harmony with God's will], but we are not to fear those in that same way who are opposed to God's will.

For an in-depth study of this vitally important subject, please read our free booklet, *"The Keys to Happy Marriages and Families."*

## Ephesians, Chapter 6

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Paul continues in Ephesians 6:1–9:

“(Verse 1) Children, **obey your parents in the Lord**: for this is right. (Verse 2) Honor thy father and mother; which is the **first commandment with promise**; (Verse 3) That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest **live long** on the earth. (Verse 4) And, ye fathers, **provoke** not your children **to wrath**: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

“(Verse 5) **Servants**, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, **as unto Christ**; (Verse 6) Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; (Verse 7) With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: (Verse 8) Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.

“(Verse 9) And, ye **masters**, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there **respect of persons** with him.”

Paul continues to address right and proper relationships between the Christian family and within the body of Christ. After having discussed the Christian marriage, he goes on to discuss the **Christian family**, pointing out that the Ten Commandments are still in force and effect and that they help us, if obeyed, to live a godly life.

Referring, in Ephesians 6:2, to the first commandment “with promise,” he commands of the **children to obey their parents** “in the Lord”—that is, not against the will of God. The promise is that of long life. This can be understood quite literally—many children who

are brought up to honor, respect and obey their parents will be blessed with long physical life—but more importantly, it refers to eternal life in the Kingdom of God and rule over this earth.

At the same time, Paul admonishes **fathers** in Ephesians 6:4 not to act improperly toward their children; i.e. with wrath or provocation to anger (Colossians 3:21), but rather, to train them up in the right way, with “nurture” or “discipline,” and with admonition (compare Deuteronomy 6:7); that is, with encouragement or, when necessary, reproof and restraint (compare 1 Samuel 3:13). For an in-depth study on the subject of correct child-rearing, please read our free booklet, *“The Keys to Happy Marriages and Families.”*

Paul wants to point out that as the physical marriage foreshadows the spiritual marriage between Christ and His Church (Revelation 19:7), so the Christian family also foreshadows our entrance into the Family of God as the Father’s beloved children and the brethren of the Firstborn, Jesus Christ. As the children are to obey their parents, so we must obey God, and as God the Father makes us perfect, so parents are to strive to help their children to become more and more perfect, and to avoid any behavior and conduct that might induce them to forsake the way of God.

Please read our free aforementioned booklet (*“The Keys to Happy Marriages and Families”*) for a thorough discussion on the Christian family.

Turning to **Christian servants and their masters**, in Ephesians 6:5, Paul admonishes the servants to obey their masters as unto Christ. This admonition should also be applied today for the employee-employer relationship. Servants or employees are to obey the instructions of their bosses, as long as they do not contradict the will of Christ. Paul reiterates what he said about the husband-wife relationship: Christians are to obey those over them in authority **with “fear”**—recognizing that we are **serving Christ** who is our Head. It is Christ who will reward us and, when necessary, punish us for our conduct or misconduct (Ephesians 6:8), and to whom we have to give account (2 Corinthians 5:10; Colossians 3:23–25).

When speaking in Ephesians 6:5 of serving their masters with **“fear and trembling,”** he is not referring to “slavish terror, but an anxious eagerness to do [our] duty, and a fear of displeasing” (compare *the*

*Jamieson, Fausset and Brown commentary*). That commentary refers in the context to passages such as 1 Corinthians 2:3 and 2 Corinthians 7:15, speaking of “fear and trembling” by both the minister towards the brethren and the brethren toward the minister.

The commentary goes on to say that employees are to serve their employers with “**singleness of heart**” (Ephesians 6:5); that is, “without double-mindedness, or eye service, which seeks to please outwardly, without the sincere desire to make the master’s interest at all times the first consideration.” Compare Luke 11:34.

In Ephesians 6:6, we read that servants are not to serve their masters just with eye service (compare Colossians 3:22); that is, only so long as these have their eyes on them. They are to be Christ-pleasers rather than (just) men-pleasers (compare Galatians 1:10; 1 Thessalonians 2:4).

At the same time, Paul is telling **Christian masters** or employers, in Ephesians 6:9, to behave appropriately towards their servants. As Christ is the Head or Master of the husband, so He is also Master of the employer. But Paul says here that “your Master *also*” is in heaven, showing that Christ is the Master of employers and employees. *Vincent’s Word Studies* states that the correct rendering should be: “both their master and yours is in heaven.” The same is, of course, true, for the Christian marriage and family: Christ is not just the Head of the husband and father, but also of the wife and the children.

In God’s eyes, both servants and masters (as well as husbands and wives or parents and children) are spiritually alike. As they are all part [or, insofar as young children are concerned, a future part, compare 1 Corinthians 7:14] of the body of Christ, there is no spiritual difference or distinction between employers and employees or males and females—whether they are “bond or free” (compare 1 Corinthians 7:22; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 3:28; Colossians 3:11).

And so, employers are not to **threaten** their employees (Ephesians 6:9) and, in general, they are to behave in doing “**the same things unto**” the employees, as the employees were asked to behave towards their employers; that is, employers ought to fear (to offend and mistreat their employees), and they need to be concerned to serve their needs. After all, Paul had introduced the entire section with the admonition of “submitting to one another in the fear of God” (Ephesians 5:21).

*Albert Barnes’ Notes on the Bible* states:

"The 'same things,' here seem to refer to what he had said in the previous verses. They were to evince toward their servants the same spirit which he had required servants to evince toward them - the same kindness, fidelity, and respect for the will of God. He had required servants to act conscientiously; to remember that the eye of God was upon them, and that in that condition in life they were to regard themselves as serving God, and as mainly answerable to him. The same things the apostle would have masters feel. They were to be faithful, conscientious, just, true to the interests of their servants, and to remember that they were responsible to God. They were not to take advantage of their power to oppress them, to punish them unreasonably, or to suppose that they were freed from responsibility in regard to the manner in which they treated them."

Colossians 4:1 adds: "Masters, give your bondservants what is just and fair, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven" (*New King James Bible*).

The *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown commentary* addresses employers or masters in this way: "Show the same regard to God's will, and to your servants' well-being, in your relation to them, as they ought to have in their relation to you. Love regulates the duties both of servants and masters..."

Paul concludes this section in Ephesians 6:9 by saying that there is **no respect of persons** with God; in other words, God is not a respecter of persons (compare Acts 10:34; Romans 2:11; Galatians 2:6; Colossians 3:25; 1 Peter 1:17; see also Deuteronomy 10:17 and 2 Chronicles 19:7). And so, we too—including employer and employee—must act without being a respecter of persons (James 2:1).

*Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible* summarizes: "If both masters and servants would consider their relation and obligation to God and the account they must shortly give to him, they would be more careful of their duty to each other."

Paul continues in **Ephesians 6:10–17**:

"(Verse 10) Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. (Verse 11) **Put on the whole armor of God**, that ye may be able to stand against the **wiles** of the



devil. (Verse 12) For we wrestle not against **flesh and blood**, but against principalities, against powers, against **the rulers** of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness [or better: wicked spirits] in high places. (Verse 13) Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to **stand**. (Verse 14) **Stand** therefore, having your **loins girt** about with truth, and having on the **breastplate** of righteousness; (Verse 15) And your **feet shod** with the preparation of the gospel of peace; (Verse 16) Above all, taking the **shield** of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked [one]. (Verse 17) And take the **helmet** of salvation, and the **sword** of the Spirit, which is the word of God:"

In these vitally important passages, Paul is reiterating the fact that we must **put off** the old man and **put on the new man**. In order to conquer Satan and his demons—wicked spirits in high places of authority—we must be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. We cannot be victorious on our own, but with God's help, we can overcome the evil spirit world.

And so, Paul tells us twice (in verse 11 and verse 13) that we must "put on" the "**whole armor of God**." This armor is also called the "armor of light." We read in Romans 13:12: "... Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light" (*New King James Bible*). We can only walk in the light, if we put on the armor of light. This armor is actually provided to us by Jesus Christ, as we read in Romans 13:14 that we are to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts" (*New King James Bible*).

This armor is also called the "armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left" (2 Corinthians 6:7). It is only possible to live a righteous life—to walk in the light—when we have put on the armor of God. (As we will discuss further below, certain aspects of the armor of God are also described in 1 Thessalonians 5:8 and numerous passages in the Old Testament).

As Paul had explained in Ephesians 6:5–7 that servants actually serve Christ when they serve their masters, so he now explains that the opposite is true as well: When we are tempted **to fight** against our adversaries,

we should realize that it is not really them we ought to fight, but evil spirits which may influence their human “servants” to persecute us. The Bible makes it clear that it is not our responsibility or duty to fight other people with the sword or other weapons (Matthew 26:52). Rather, we are told to love our enemies and do good to those who persecute us (Matthew 5:44). In fact, (only) when you do this, are you called “sons of your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:45). To act and feel this way is part of our education or “nurturing” to become perfect (Matthew 5:48). In 2 Corinthians 10:4, Paul reiterates that the weapons of our warfare are not physical or carnal, but spiritual—the armor of God.

When we put on the whole armor of God and use it perfectly (Ephesians 6:13 says, “having done all”), we will be able to withstand Satan and to **stand** in the evil day (compare verse 11). This ability to “stand” (mentioned three times by Paul, in verses 11, 13 and 14) could be a reference to a very troublesome trial, which might come upon us individually, or it could also refer to the “hour of trial” or the time of the Great Tribulation, which will be experienced by the whole world (compare Revelation 3:10). Luke 21:36 encourages us to watch and pray always that we may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to *stand* before the Son of Man. See also Malachi 3:2; Colossians 4:12; and Revelation 6:17.

Beginning with Ephesians 6:13, Paul lists the whole spiritual armor of God, which every Christian must put on to conquer the “wiles” (verse 11) of Satan. “Wiles” literally describe “schemes thought out for deception.” The Greek word is only used again in Ephesians 4:14, where it is rendered as “deceive” (*Authorized Version*) or “deceitful” (*New King James Bible*).

*Albert Barnes’ Notes on the Bible* explains:

“The word rendered ‘wiles’ (*‘methodeia’*), means properly that which is traced out with ‘method;’ that which is ‘methodized;’ and then that which is well laid - art, skill, cunning... It is appropriately rendered here as ‘wiles,’ meaning cunning devices, arts, attempts to delude and destroy us. The wiles ‘of the devil’ are the various arts and stratagems which he employs...” A stratagem is a maneuver designed to deceive or outwit an enemy in war.

But Satan is not alone in his fight against us; he is the ruler over a *kingdom of demons* (Matthew 12:26). *Albert Barnes’ Notes on the Bible*

comments: “There can be no doubt whatever that the apostle alludes here [in Ephesians 6:12] to evil spirits. Like good angels, they were regarded as divided into ranks and orders, and were supposed to be under the control of one mighty leader.”

And so, we must fight against the “world-rulers of this darkness” (compare *Vincent’s Word Studies*); compare again John 14:30; 2 Corinthians 4:3–4; and 1 John 5:19.

We can only do this successfully when we have put on the **armor of God**. Commentaries are divided on whether Paul alludes here to the armor of a Greek or a Roman soldier, but the differences are negligible for our understanding.

Paul lists, as part of the armor of God, a girdle or a belt around the waist or loins; the breastplate; the “greaves,” covering and protecting the shin and feet; the shield; the helmet; and the sword.

*Adam Clarke’s Commentary on the Bible* gives us the following information, based on the **Greek** armor:

“... **Girdle**; this went about the loins, and served to brace the armor tight to the body, and to support daggers, short swords, and such like weapons, which were frequently stuck in it. This kind of girdle is in general use among the Asiatic nations to the present day...”

“... **Breast-Plate**; this consisted of two parts, called... wings: one covered the whole region of the thorax [chest] or breast, in which the principal viscera [internal organs] of life are contained; and the other covered the back, as far down as the front part extended...”

“... **Greaves** or brazen boots, which covered the shin or front of the leg; a kind of solea was often used, which covered the sole, and laced about the instep, and prevented the foot from being wounded by rugged ways, thorns, stones, etc...”

“... **Shield**; it was perfectly round, and sometimes made of wood... but often made of metal...”

“... **Helmet**; this was the armor for the head, and was of various forms, and embossed with a great variety of figures. Connected with the helmet was the crest or ridge on the top of the helmet, adorned with several emblematic figures; some for ornament, some to strike terror... Paul seems to refer to one which had an emblematical representation of hope...”

“... **Sword**; these were of various sizes, and in the beginning all of

brass. The swords of Homer's heroes are all of this metal..."

The *Nelson Study Bible* adds, describing the **Roman** armor:

"Soldiers **girded** themselves with a belt, from which hung strips of leather to protect the lower body..."

"The **breastplate** of Roman times went completely around the body, so that the back of a warrior was also protected. The breastplate was made of hard leather or metal..."

"The Roman soldier's **feet were shod** with hard, studded shoes..."

"A Roman soldier's **shield** typically measured two and a half feet by four feet... Flaming arrows could not penetrate the fireproof shield of the ancient Roman soldier..."

"The intricately designed Roman **helmet** protected the soldier's head and also made him look taller and more impressive..."

"The **sword**... is the only offensive weapon..."

With this background, let us now focus on the characteristics of the spiritual armor of God. Beginning in verse 14, Paul makes the following association:

Our loins or waist must be girt about or girded with **truth** (verse 14).

Our breastplate is the breastplate of **righteousness** (verse 14).

Our feet must be shod with the **preparation of the gospel of peace** (verse 15).

Our shield must be the **shield of faith** (verse 16).

Our helmet is the **helmet of salvation** (verse 17).

Our sword is the **sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God** (verse 17).

For a soldier, the **girdle** was very important (Isaiah 5:27). And so it must be for a Christian. Christ Himself is described in Isaiah 11:5 as the One whose "righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins." We need to be girded with righteousness and faithfulness, but also, following Paul's analogy, with **truth**. *The Life Application Bible* states: "Satan fights with lies, and sometimes his lies sound like truth; but only believers have God's truth, which can defeat Satan's lies."

In addition, we must have and be protected by the breastplate of **righteousness**. Again, we read in Isaiah 59:17 that Jesus Christ "put on righteousness as a breastplate..."

Righteousness and truth are often joined (compare Ephesians

5:9). And righteousness and truth are associated with faith and love. Therefore we read in 1 Thessalonians 5:8 that we need to put on “the breastplate of faith and love.” It is “faith working righteousness by love” (compare the *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown commentary*).

As true Christians, we will have footgear prepared and ready to spread the **gospel of peace**. Even though Paul describes the armor of a soldier, he emphasizes that God’s armor is given to us for the purpose of proclaiming and spreading peace, not war (Luke 1:79).

In Romans 10:15, Paul quotes from Isaiah 52:7, stating: “How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace...”

The gospel message, which needs to be proclaimed in all the world as a witness, includes the Good News that Christ will bring peace to this war-stricken world (Isaiah 2:1–4), and that God’s disciples can already experience His peace in this life (John 14:27; 16:33).

*The Life Application Bible* comments:

“Satan wants us to think that telling others the Good News is a worthless and hopeless task—the size of the task is too big and the negative responses are too much to handle. But the foot gear God gives us is the motivation to continue to proclaim the true peace that is available in God—news everyone needs to hear.”

With the shield of **faith**, we can overcome Satan’s attacks. 1 John 5:4 tells us that our faith—which is God’s faith in us—“is the victory that overcometh the world,” and with it Satan, the god of this world. 1 Peter 5:8–9 tells us that we have to resist Satan “stedfast in the faith.” God told Abraham that He was his shield (Genesis 15:1).

With God’s shield of faith we are able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one; without it, we are in danger of quenching the Holy Spirit in us (1 Thessalonians 5:19).

*Albert Barnes’ Notes on the Bible* explains the “fiery darts” as follows:

“The fiery darts that were used in war were small, slender pieces of cane, which were filled with combustible materials, and set on fire; or darts around which some combustible material was wound, and which were set on fire, and then shot ‘slowly’ against a foe. The object was to make the arrow fasten in the body, and increase the danger by the burning; or, more frequently, those darts were thrown against ships, forts, tents, etc., with an intention to set them on fire. They were in common use among the ancients...”

“By the ‘fiery darts of the wicked,’ Paul here refers, probably, to the temptations of the great adversary, which are like fiery darts; or those furious suggestions of evil, and excitements to sin, which he may throw into the mind like fiery darts. They are—blasphemous thoughts, unbelief, sudden temptation to do wrong, or thoughts that wound and torment... In regard to them, we may observe: That they come suddenly, like arrows sped from a bow; They come from unexpected quarters, like arrows shot suddenly from an enemy in ambush; They pierce, and penetrate, and torment..., as arrows would that are on fire; They... enkindle the worst passions, as fiery darts do a ship or camp against which they are sent.

“The only way to meet them is by the ‘shield of faith;’ by confidence in God, and by relying on his gracious promises and aid. It is not by our own strength; and, if we have not faith in God, we are wholly defenseless. We should have a shield that we can turn in any direction, on which we may receive the arrow, and by which it may be put out.”

In addition to the shield of faith, we must have the helmet of **salvation**, as the returning Christ will wear the helmet of salvation (Isaiah 59:17). Satan wants to make us doubt God and His promises. The helmet protects our minds from doubting God. 1 Thessalonians 5:8 says that we must put on “for an helmet, the hope of salvation.”

*Albert Barnes’ Notes on the Bible* explains:

“The idea is, that a well-founded hope of salvation will preserve us in the day of spiritual conflict, and will guard us from the blows which an enemy would strike. The helmet defended the head, a vital part; and so the hope of salvation will defend [and protect his mind]... A soldier would not fight well without a hope of victory. A Christian could not contend with his foes, without the hope of final salvation; but, sustained by this, what has he to dread?”

Romans 5:5 points out the connection between hope and the love of God: “Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit...” (*New King James Bible*).

All of the parts of the armor of God are connected: We are to proclaim truthfully the gospel of peace and salvation (Romans 1:16) and hope and believe that we will be inheriting salvation in the Kingdom of God and that we will be given the opportunity to teach others how to live in peace, as we are already living today righteously and peacefully.

Finally, we need to use the sword of **the Spirit**, which is the Word of God (compare Hebrews 4:12; Revelation 1:16; 19:15; compare also Isaiah 49:2).

It is through the Holy Spirit that God reveals the truth of His Word to us. Without God's Holy Spirit, we cannot understand God's Word (compare 1 Corinthians 2:9–12). And we must use God's Word through the power of the Holy Spirit in us (Matthew 10:19–20).

The *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown commentary* explains:

"The two-edged sword, cutting both ways... is in the *mouth* of Christ... Christ's use of this sword in the temptation is our pattern as to how we are to wield it against Satan [compare Matthew 4:4, 7, 10]."

*Albert Barnes' Notes on the Bible* adds:

"It was with this weapon that the Saviour met the tempter in the wilderness... It is only by this that Satan can now be met. Error and falsehood will not put back temptation; nor can we hope for victory, unless we are armed with truth... we should study the Bible, that we may understand what the truth is... We should not depend on our own reason, or rely on our own wisdom..."

"Had Eve adhered simply to the Word of God, and urged his command, without attempting to 'reason' about it, [she] would have been safe... So we shall be safe if we adhere to the simple declarations of the Bible, and oppose a temptation by a positive command of God. But, the moment we leave that, and begin to parley with sin, that moment we are gone. It is as if a man should throw away his sword, and use his naked hands only in meeting an adversary."

Continuing in **Ephesians 6:18–20**:

"(Verse 18) Praying always with **all prayer and supplication in the Spirit**, and **watching thereunto** with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; (Verse 19) **And for me**, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the **mystery of the gospel**, (Verse 20) For which I am an **ambassador in bonds** [the *New King James Bible* says here: "in chains"]: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak."

*Albert Barnes' Notes on the Bible* points out:

"Prayer crowns all lawful efforts with success and gives a victory when nothing else would. No matter how complete the armor; no matter how skilled we may be in the science of war; no matter how courageous we may be, we may be certain that without prayer we shall be defeated. God alone can give the victory; and when the Christian soldier goes forth armed completely for the spiritual conflict, if he looks to God by prayer, he may be sure of a triumph. This prayer is not to be intermitted. It is to be always. In every temptation and spiritual conflict we are to pray."

Compare Luke 18:1; 21:36; Romans 12:12 [in the *New King James Bible*]; and 1 Thessalonians 5:17.

We are to pray to God, the Father of spirits, **in the Spirit** and in truth, as the Father IS Spirit or "a Spirit" in the sense of a "Spirit Being" (John 4:24). It is actually Jesus Christ, our Mediator, who lives in us through the Holy Spirit, and "who IS the Spirit," who is representing us before the Father (compare 2 Corinthians 3:17 and Romans 8:26–27. Note that in Romans 8:26–27, the *Authorized Version* translates "itself" and "it" in respect to the Spirit, while the *New King James Bible* states, "Himself" and He." While it is normally correct to associate the word "it" or "itself" with the Holy Spirit—as the Holy Spirit is not a person—it might be correct to use the words "Himself" and "He" in Romans 8:26–27, as the reference here is to Jesus Christ, who is THE Spirit).

For more information on this important subject, please read our free booklet, *"Is God a Trinity?"*

When we pray to God the Father, it is important that we pray in the name of Jesus Christ or in Christ's name. The meaning and significance of this concept is discussed, at length, in our free booklet, *"Teach Us to Pray,"* especially on pages 82–86.

Earlier in his letter, in chapter 1 and verse 16, Paul had pointed out that he was praying for the Ephesian brethren and that he did not cease to give thanks for them and for their calling. Now, in Ephesians 6:18, he is encouraging the brethren to pray with **perseverance** for all the saints. We should be diligently praying for others for their physical and spiritual help (Job 42:8; Colossians 4:12; 1 John 5:16). Paul also admonishes the brethren to pray **for him**, so that God would give him the wisdom and boldness to make known the **mystery of the gospel**. The gospel is the good news of the Kingdom of God, but all of this is



a mystery to most people.

Paul's choice of wording is remarkable, as he points out, in Ephesians 6:18, the close connection between **watching and praying** (compare, for example, Matthew 26:41 and Mark 13:33). But here and in other places, Paul equalizes the same, saying that we must be watching "thereunto" in prayer. See Colossians 4:2. Compare too 1 Peter 4:7.

In addition, there are different kinds of prayers. Here, in Ephesians 6:18, Paul is emphasizing prayers and "**supplications**." While prayer is a more general term, supplication is more specific.

*Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible* points out:

"There is a difference between prayer and supplication. Some think the former means prayer for the attainment of good; the latter, prayer for averting evil. Supplication however seems to mean prayer continued in, strong and incessant pleadings, till the evil is averted, or the good communicated."

Compare 1 Timothy 5:5; Philippians 4:6; and Hebrews 5:7.

1 Timothy 2:1 breaks it down even further, distinguishing between prayer, supplication, intercession and giving of thanks.

The *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown commentary* states:

"'supplications' — a term implying the suppliant's *sense of need*, and of *his own insufficiency*... 'prayers' — implying devotion... 'intercessions' — properly the *coming near to God* with childlike confidence, generally *in behalf of another*."

We should never underestimate the power of prayer. It IS important that we pray for the ministry that God would enable them to do the job to which they are commissioned.

In Ephesians 6:20, Paul reminds the brethren again of the fact that he writes this letter, while imprisoned; and that he is imprisoned because of his preaching of the gospel. But rather showing a temptation to become discouraged and to give up, he asks the brethren to pray for him so that he can continue to preach the gospel with all **boldness** and power.

Paul is referring to himself as an "**ambassador in bonds**"; that is, an ambassador who is imprisoned. This is a rather astonishing contradiction in terms, as in this world an ambassador enjoys immunity and is generally safe from imprisonment. But this is not true for the most important kind of ambassador—that for Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20). As Christ's true ambassadors, we can expect persecution and

even imprisonment (John 15:18–20; 16:33).

In the Greek, the word for “bonds” or “chains” (in the *New King James Bible*) is in the singular. The *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown commentary* explains:

“Christ’s ‘ambassador is in a chain!’ The Greek is singular. The Romans used to bind a prisoner to a soldier by a *single chain*, in a kind of free custody. So... Acts 28:20, ‘I am bound with this *chain*.’ The term, ‘bonds’ (plural), on the other hand, is used when the prisoner’s hands or feet were bound together (Acts 26:29); compare Acts 12:6, where the plural marks the distinction.”

Concluding, in **Ephesians 6:21–24**:

“(Verse 21) But that ye also may know my affairs, and how I do, **Tychicus** [pronounced as *Ty-ke-kus*], a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, shall make known to you all things: (Verse 22) Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that ye might know our affairs, and that he might comfort your hearts. (Verse 23) Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (Verse 24) Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.”

Paul sends **Tychicus**, a faithful servant and minister to the Ephesian brethren to report about Paul’s situation and to comfort them. Tychicus is also mentioned in 2 Timothy 4:12, Titus 3:12, Colossians 4:7, and in Acts 20:4. Note that it says in Acts 20:4, in the *Authorized Version*: “...and of Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus.”

*Adam Clarke’s Commentary on the Bible* states:

“Tychicus - of Asia - This person was high in the confidence of... Paul. He styles him a beloved brother, and faithful minister in the Lord, whom he sent to the Ephesians, that he might know their affairs, and comfort their hearts... He sent him for the same purpose, and with the same commendations, to the Colossians... Paul seems also to have designed him to superintend the Church at Crete in the absence of Titus... He seems to have been the most intimate and confidential friend that Paul had.”

Paul concludes with his wish in Ephesians 6:23 that God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ would grant the brethren in Ephesus peace, love and faith, and he ends in verse 24 with his further wish that grace or favor would be granted to all those **who love Jesus Christ with sincerity**. It is not enough to say that we love Jesus, but we need to show our love by our action (2 Corinthians 8:8: "... to prove the sincerity of your love"). It is also not enough to have temporary fleeting love; rather, the Greek for "in sincerity" means, "in incorruption," describing a permanent and enduring love (compare 1 Corinthians 9:25; 1 Peter 3:4—the *New King James Bible* renders the term as, "imperishable" and "incorruptible.").

Those who truly love God and His Son Jesus Christ will experience God's grace. Those who do not love Christ will experience God's curse (1 Corinthians 16:22).

Another understanding of the last several words in Ephesians 6:24 is also possible; namely, that we are to love Christ who lives in immortality and imperishable glory (compare James 2:1 and 1 Timothy 1:17; compare Titus 2:11–14). As the *New Bible Commentary: Revised* points out, "The Epistle which began with the church's blessings 'in heavenly places' (1:3), where the enthroned Christ rules (1:20)... concludes fittingly on the same note..."



# Conclusion

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Paul's letter to the Ephesian Christians is filled with explanations about our Godly calling, the nature of God, our fight with Satan, our change from carnal beings to becoming a new creation, and so much more. It is filled with encouragement and hope, but it also includes the warning and the admonition not to let down or to give up.

In this booklet, we have addressed many biblical concepts, as referred to in the letter to the Ephesians. Actually, there are too many to list in this brief summary; but important concepts included the following:

We discussed the concepts of "saint"; "heavenly places"; "predestination"; "redemption"; as well as the difference between "sins" and "trespasses"; "the mystery of God's will"; "the dispensation of the fullness of times"; "our inheritance"; and "the gospel of your salvation."

We discussed Paul's statements that we are "being sealed with the Holy Spirit as a guarantee"; and that we are God's "purchased possession."

We explained "the riches of God's glory"; the role of Satan the devil; "God's wrath"; our salvation by grace; our responsibilities as "God's workmanship"; the alienation of Gentiles from the "commonwealth of Israel"; "the law of commandments contained in ordinances"; our true "citizenship"; and the biblical teaching that God IS a Family and that God is reproducing Himself through man.

We discussed the purpose of the Church and the God-given DUTY of the true Church of God today to boldly preach the Gospel of the Kingdom of God in all the world as a witness; Paul's call for unity; what it means to walk worthy and unworthy of our calling; how to be filled with all the fullness of God; and what is conveyed with the statement that Jesus led captivity captive and that He descended into the lower parts of the earth.

We discussed the difference between light and darkness; that true Christians must reflect and manifest God's light in their lives and that they must reject the darkness of this world in all its different forms.

We addressed the Christian relationship between husbands and wives; parents and children; and employers and employees; as well as the “whole armor of God”; and, finally, the importance of prayer in our daily lives.

And that is not all by far.

But knowing and understanding all of these biblical concepts is not enough. We must respond by how we live. It must become obvious to all that we are no longer darkness, but that we are now becoming light, “putting on” the new man—Jesus Christ—and God’s armor of light; and that we are truly heading toward our inheritance of the Kingdom of God, which the Father has predestined and prepared for us before time began.

Do we do that? We must, if we want to fulfill our incredible human potential to become GOD—to become a Spirit being in the very Family of God, ruling all nations. That is the reason why we exist; why God created us.

**He wants us to be in His very Family. How much do we want to be there?**







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**The following booklets are available, upon request:**

Europe in Prophecy: The Unfolding of End-Time Events

The Theory of Evolution — a Fairy Tale for Adults?

The Gospel of the Kingdom of God

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Is God a Trinity?

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The Great Tribulation and the Day of the Lord

God's *Commanded* Holy Days

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