



EPHESIANS, LETTER TO THE

The opening chapter of Ephesians unfolds the rich dimensions of God’s grace in Christ in sonorous tones that evoke a liturgical setting. This characteristic and the probability that Ephesians was written as a circular letter to be read by several churches may account for the lack of personal address so characteristic of Pauline letters. Ephesians employs a wealth of imagery, and much of it belonging to either the cosmic, heavenly dimension or the horizontal, earthly dimension. But overarching the entire letter is a prevailing theme of unity, the reconciliation of all things in Christ.

The Cosmic Dimension. Ephesians takes the big view of God’s redeeming action in Jesus Christ. The letter enlists imagery that reaches for the broadest categories of time and space. The humble, struggling Christian communities of Asia Minor are revealed as engaged in a redemptive drama that is both staggering in its cosmic dimensions and compelling in its call for participation.

The majesty of Christ is chiefly portrayed in imagery of heavenly kingship. God has raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand “in the heavenlies” (Eph 1:20). The image of Christ’s being seated at the “right hand,” the place of kingly power and privilege, echoes Psalm 110:1, which speaks of a royal figure who will be seated at God’s right hand and whose enemies

God will make into the king's royal footstool. It is an image of royal exaltation that assumes a sovereign's triumph over hostile powers. Ephesians carries forward this kingly and militaristic image by speaking of God's placing "all things under his feet" (Eph 1:22), and though the image of a footstool and "things under his feet" are nearly synonymous, a different OT text is now being employed. It is Psalm 8:6, where humankind is regaled as crowned with "glory and honor," its dominion over God's creation symbolized by "all things" placed "under their feet." Christ is the fulfillment of Israel's national kingship and Adam's creational rule, he is the sovereign over a new creation that has been secured by God's mighty redemptive power. But the "things" placed in submission under Christ's feet are not earthly animals but wayward spiritual beings enumerated as "rule and authority and power and dominion and every name named" (Eph 1:21). Christ is imaged as the triumphant, cosmic warrior-king and heavenly "Adam." As the climax of the biblical drama in which Israel has failed in its role of a new Adam amidst the errant nations, with Israel's king bearing the crown of the Adamic ideal, Christ now fulfills Israel's redemptive role and is given universal reign. He is the one Lord over all things, the cosmic reconciler.

The stature of Christ as Lord of the cosmos is staggering in its immensity. "All things" in heaven and earth are "headed up," or "summed up" in him (*anakephalaioō*, Eph 1:10). More pointedly, God has given Christ as "head over all things *for* the church" (Eph 1:22), God's new redemptive society—a bold claim for the Christian communities precariously planted in a few urban seedbeds of the northeastern Mediterranean world. The Greek grammar of Ephesians 1:22 is ambiguous in itself, but probably complements the preceding image of headship: The church is the "fullness" of Christ, the concentrated expression of Christ's sovereign rule, who in turn is the one "who fills all in all," or, to paraphrase, he "fills the cosmos with his sovereign rule." These images of heavenly enthronement and cosmic "filling" strike a fine balance between Christ's immanence and transcendence. The cosmic Lord and reconciler of all things is also Lord over the church.

The picture of the enthroned Christ "in the heavenlies" is a clue that we have stepped into a drama in which the height of conflict and triumph are in the past. The vanquished opponents, the cosmic powers and dominions, are now "under his feet." The events of Christ's cross, death (Eph 1:20; 2:16) and resurrection (Eph 1:20; 2:6) have faded into the background, and the focus has shifted to the drama of exaltation and enthronement. Ephesians 4:8–10 pans the preceding scenes of the drama through imagery borrowed from Psalm 68:18: Christ is depicted as a mighty warrior who "ascended on high," took "captivity captive" and gave gifts to people (with the image of "receiving gifts from people" in Ps 68:18 now turned on its head). In Psalm 68 the warrior is God, who drives his armed chariotry from Sinai and gallantly ascends the temple mount of Zion, his royal palace. That picture is now tipped on end, transposed onto a vertical plane of earth and heaven, with Christ triumphantly ascending to the heavenly temple "mount." The picture is further interpreted: "When it says, 'He ascended,' what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is the same one who ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things" (Eph 4:9–10 NRSV). Here the "lower parts of the earth" is not an allusion to "hell" (as in 1 Pet 3:19); the phrase "of the earth" simply unpacks what is meant by "lower parts" ("lower parts, that is, the earth"). A two-storied universe is envisioned, with Christ descending to earth in his incarnation and then ascending "far above the heavens" to take his heavenly throne. The point of this brief sketch is that the ascended Christ has given gifts to outfit and enable the church, "the body of Christ" (Eph 4:12), to be built up and



prosper. He has distributed his booty; in his triumph he divides “the spoil with the strong” (Is 53:12).

The “heavenly realms,” or “heavenlies,” is a distinctive image of Ephesians, though it is consistent with Jewish cosmology of the period. It represents both the upper reaches of the cosmos as well as the realm of spiritual beings and divine transcendence. As part of the cosmos the “heavenlies” share in both the present evil age and in the age to come. Thus we read of “principalities and powers” in the heavenlies (Eph 3:10; 6:12) controlled by “the ruler of the power of the air” (Eph 2:2), as well as believers who were once “dead” and followers of the ruler of this world (Eph 2:1–2) but are now “seated in the heavenlies” with Christ (Eph 2:6). The throne of God and Christ should probably be envisioned as situated in the highest reaches of heaven. The Ephesian believers, though their feet are firmly planted on the soil of western Asia Minor, are already “raised up” and occupying a transcendent position with Christ who is “over” all things and “far above the heavens” (Eph 4:10). It is a powerful image, perhaps shaped on the anvil of liturgical vision and imagination, in which worshipers share in the heavenly voices of praise and partake of the heavenly blessings (Eph 1:3). It is a parallel and spiritual world. We are invited to imagine a heavenly realm that is hierarchical and bears its own mysteries, including “families” of created beings (probably angels both good and evil) somehow analogous to those on earth (Eph 3:15). But it is also a fearsome realm, still inhabited by malignant pockets of the defeated forces of evil, cosmic powers “of this present darkness,” “spiritual forces of evil” who assail the church (Eph 6:12).

The Earthly Dimension. Ephesians 2:11–22 views this great story along more horizontal lines, speaking of the human condition before and after Christ’s work, with an emphasis on the reconciling work of Christ as it culminates in a new human community made up of formerly disparate peoples. The entire passage may be viewed as a narrative that utilizes vivid images drawn from the story of Israel.

The recipients of this letter are seen from the perspective of one who stands within historic Israel and speaks to people who realize that they have been overwhelmingly blessed by their inclusion in the newly constituted people of God. Viewed through Israelite eyes, the human family is divided in two: Israel and the Gentiles, the chosen people of God and the wayward nations, the true humanity and the beastly empires of Daniel’s vision (Dan 7). The status of “Israelite,” determined by birth, was sealed by circumcision, a ritual cutting off of male genital flesh.

There follows a series of exclusionary images. The Gentile audience was formerly scorned as “uncircumcision” (*akrobystia*) by those who proudly called themselves “the circumcision” (*peritomē*, Eph 2:11). They were “without Christ;” that is, they were outside of the chosen people in whom the Messiah, the true king and deliverer of Israel, was rooted. They were “separated from the commonwealth of Israel,” like impoverished outsiders who gazed longingly across the border at the privileged people in their fair land. They were “*aliens* to the covenants of promise” (see FOREIGNER), having no access to the series of historic divine transactions that promised the blessings of a true humanity, a justly ordered society, a restored creation and the abiding and glorious presence of the one God. They were “without hope and without God (*atheioi*) in the world,” a people separated from the Creator and covenant God, listless vagabonds upon the earth with no future worth living for. Viewed from the ramparts of Zion, they were “far off” (Eph

2:13), over the horizon. These images form a picture of irrevocable exclusion, of particularized privilege, of clearly marked insiders and outsiders.

This division climaxes in the central image of a “dividing wall” (*mesotoichon*) that symbolizes the “hostility” between these two partitions of humanity (Eph 2:14), an enmity sharpened by “the law with its commandments and ordinances” (Eph 2:15). We may visualize the Herodian temple and the wall that divided the Court of the Gentiles from the inner courts of Israel. In the microcosm of the temple, this wall represented the Jewish vision of the world and its nations, where the law served as an “impenetrable fence and iron wall” separating Israel from the nations (*Letter of Aristeas* 139).

But the unexpected has taken place. As if in a military assault, Christ, the Messiah of Israel, has “broken down” (see TEAR DOWN) the dividing wall, he has “put to death” the hostility, by abolishing the “law with its commandments and ordinances” (Eph 2:14–16). The goal of “making peace” and “reconciling” the two groups has been achieved through Christ’s death. This event is briefly alluded to by images of “the blood of Christ” (Eph 2:13) and “his flesh” (Eph 2:14); the divisive “circumcision in flesh by human hands” (Eph 2:11) has been overcome by Christ’s own fleshly mutilation (cf. the “circumcision of Christ,” Col 2:11). With this victory achieved, Christ “came” and “proclaimed peace” to those “far off” (Gentiles, cf. Deut 20:10) and to those “near” (Israel, cf. Is 57:19). As in the OT, images of divine triumph merge into images of creation: the triumph of Christ over “hostility” leads to the creation of “one new man” (Eph 2:15), “one body” (Eph 2:16), “one new humanity in place of the two” (Eph 2:15 NRSV). Jew and Gentile are joined in the body of Christ, the New Adam, to become, as it were, a “third race” fitted for life in the new creation. The cosmic reconciliation has its counterpart in the reconciliation of Jew and Gentile into one.

But then the metaphor shifts: The Gentiles are “no longer strangers and aliens” but “fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God” (Eph 2:19). And the household of God is a temple. The mythic stories of the ancient Near-Eastern gods, who struggled and triumphed over the forces of chaos, followed a progressive pattern of conflict, victory, exaltation, housebuilding and celebration. This archetypal story pattern may be broadly observed in Ephesians, with significant elements appearing in this passage. Christ has triumphed over the barrier of hostility between Jew and Gentile (in addition to the hostility between God and humanity) and now proceeds to build his house, his temple. The foundation consists of “apostles and prophets” of the early church, with Christ himself as the * “cornerstone” (Eph 2:20). This structure grows organically into a “holy temple” (Eph 2:21) built of redeemed humanity, “a dwelling place for God” (Eph 2:22, cf. the “fullness” indwelling the “body” in Eph 1:23). The central symbol of God’s dwelling within the “body” of Israel, the Jerusalem temple, is figuratively assaulted, torn down and replaced by this new temple built of sanctified “building blocks” of Jews and Gentiles. The image of “access” (*prosaḡōgē*, Eph 2:18; 3:12) to God also fits within this temple imagery, for the term is used in the Greek translation of the OT for approaching God in the sanctuary with sacrifices (e.g., LXX Lev 1:3; 3:3; 4:14), and in Greek literature it is used of the right of an audience with a king. Paul speaks of “bending his knees” as he approaches the divine throne with his petitions (Eph 3:14).

Images of the Church. A good deal of the imagery of Ephesians may be categorized as images of the church. We have observed the images of “one new man” (Eph 2:15–16) and the related images of “household” and “holy temple” (Eph 2:19–22). And the image of the church as Christ’s

“body” has been introduced (Eph 1:23). The relationship between this body imagery, which is further developed in Ephesians 4–5, and the Adamic imagery is frequently overlooked. The archetypal pattern of “old Adam” and “new Adam,” old humanity and new humanity, is ever shaping this language. Thus when the readers are instructed to “put off” (*apothesthai*) the “old man” (*palaion anthrōpon*), corrupt and deluded by its lusts (Eph 4:22 NRSV), and to “put on” the “new man” (*kainon anthrōpon*), distinguished by righteousness and holiness (Eph 4:24), a corporate image of an old and new humanity is being invoked. Believers are part of a new Adamic community that is “created in the likeness of God” (Eph 4:24). By contrast, the character of the old humanity is itemized in a list of degrading vices that are to be given up-or risk loss of the inheritance of the kingdom of God (Eph 4:25–32; 5:3–5).

The image of a corporate “body of Christ” (Eph 1:23; 2:16; 3:6; 4:4, 12, 16, [25]; 5:23, 30) is closely related to this Adamic imagery, for in the Pauline thought-world Christ is the new Adam, the true imprint of the divine image. The body of Christ is an organic, growing entity, whose head is Christ (Eph 4:15). Paul even speaks as a personal trainer who leads the body of Christ in a body-building program (Eph 4:16, 29; 5:29). From the “head” the whole body is “joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly,” and Christ “promotes the body’s growth in building itself up in love” (Eph 4:16 NRSV).

The image of Christ as *“head” (Eph 1:22; 4:15; 5:23) in Ephesians poses a problem of interpretation. If we are to understand it as a “head” attached to a “body,” this “body” metaphor should certainly be distinguished from 1 Corinthians 12, where members constitute various parts of the body of Christ, including the head (1 Cor 12:21) and parts of the head (ear, eye, nose; 1 Cor 12:16–17). The image of Christ as “head” in Ephesians should not be understood as part of the image of the “body of Christ” but as a separate christological (rather than ecclesiological) image indicating the sovereignty of Christ. Otherwise we would have to imagine a headless body, since Christ serves as “head of all things” in Ephesians 1:22–23.

The relationship between Christ and the church is developed in a metaphor of the church as the bride of Christ (cf. 2 Cor 11:2). Christ’s love for the church transcends human examples of a husband’s love for his wife: Christ “gave himself up for her”—an allusion to the cross (Eph 5:25). This was to sanctify the church for himself as a bride. The imagery of cleansing her through “the washing of water by the word” evokes the Christian rite of baptism, and secondarily the prenuptial bath of Jewish marital custom. The washing, and indeed the entire metaphor of a bride, undoubtedly owes something to Ezekiel 16:8–12, where Jerusalem is depicted as an abandoned newborn girl who is saved and nurtured by God, and in her nubility bathed in water and taken by God as his wife. In the marriage ceremony of Ephesians 5:17, the church is presented to Christ in splendor as a clear-skinned maiden, “without a spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind—yes, so she may be holy and without blemish” (NRSV).

The church as the “household” of God (Eph 2:20) is an image rooted in the social reality of the early Christian communities, which commonly met in household settings. In Ephesians 5:21–6:9 the conventional form of a “household code,” well known in the ancient world, is adapted to Christian use as instructions are given for the proper behavior of husbands and wives, parents and children, slaves and masters in family households newly constituted under the Lordship of Christ.

In a memorable display of imagery, the people of God are exhorted as the army of Christ to be prepared for spiritual warfare. The enemy is not palpable “flesh and blood” but a formidable

array of elusive but hostile spiritual powers: the “devil,” or the “evil one,” the “rulers” and “authorities,” the “cosmic powers of this present darkness” and the “spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” Against such enemies conventional weaponry is useless; they must take up the “whole armor of God” (Is 59:17–18; cf. Wis 5:17–20): the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, shoes for proclaiming the gospel of peace, the shield of faith to extinguish flaming arrows, the helmet of salvation and, finally, the defensive weapon of the “sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Eph 6:14–17). The church, like Israel when it entered the land, still has its battles to fight. Its spiritual enemies—though decisively defeated at the battle of the cross—continue to attack and resist the people of God.

Mystery. Ephesians lets its readers in on a cosmic secret, a “mystery” (*mystērion*, Eph 1:9; 3:3, 4, 9; 5:32; 6:19), a chapter of God’s eschatological plan that was laid “before the foundation of the world” (Eph 1:4), that was formerly concealed and now has been revealed in Christ. This mystery has been made known to Paul by a revelation (Eph 3:3)—though it has also been revealed to other apostles and prophets by the Spirit (Eph 3:5)—and the opening two chapters of Ephesians have unfolded Paul’s understanding of the mystery (Eph 3:4). The essential outline of the mystery is that Gentiles are now fellow heirs, members of the same body, sharers in the promise with believing Israelites who have followed Jesus Christ (Eph 3:6). But the mystery includes a “vertical” dimension, the union of Christ with his church, a “great mystery” (Eph 5:32). The mystery has not been revealed to the cosmic powers (cf. 1 Cor 2:6–8), but the curtain is now being lifted and the mystery disclosed to them. The “rulers and authorities” are spectators as the wisdom of the Creator God’s cosmic drama is now being acted out in the story of the church (Eph 3:9–10).

Power. Imagery of power is abundant in Ephesians, perhaps as an explicit response to the religious environment of Ephesus and other cities of Asia Minor where sorcery and evil spirits were a common and ominous feature of popular religion. This spiritual climate may have elicited the multiple names of the dark forces enumerated in Ephesians: “powers” (Eph 1:21), “rulers” (Eph 1:21; 6:12), “authorities” (Eph 1:21; 3:10; 6:12), “dominions” (Eph 1:21), “cosmic powers” (Eph 6:12) and the “ruler of the power of the air” (Eph 2:2). These names evoke a cosmos inhabited by a multitiered and malignant hierarchy of evil power. Formerly these names would have struck terror in the hearts of many recipients of this letter. But Ephesians begins with a joyous affirmation of the power of God in Christ to perform his will, work redemption and secure his blessings for his people in the face of any and every opposition that can be named. In Ephesians 1:19 the theme of power is explicitly emphasized: “the immeasurable greatness of his power ... the working of his great power.”

The greatest display of God’s power was when he raised Christ from the dead and exalted him to his right hand in the heavenly realms, leading captivity captive (Eph 4:8), subjecting all powers to his sovereign control (Eph 1:20–22). Later we read that God’s power is displayed in God’s grace working in Paul (Eph 3:7), and that God’s power can strengthen believers by the Spirit (Eph 3:16) and accomplish “far more than all we can ask or imagine” (Eph 3:20 NRSV). Finally, in facing their spiritual enemies, believers are to “be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power” (Eph 6:10). The same divine power that enabled Christ to triumph over his enemies is active within the church, and that power will allow it to “stand” firm in the face of spiritual assault. Images of divine power emerge in God’s “raising up” those who were “dead” in their sins and seating them in the heavenlies with Christ (Eph 2:5–6), in Christ’s breaking down the dividing



wall, abolishing the law, putting to death the hostility between Jew and Gentile (Eph 2:14–16) and in his building a new temple (Eph 2:20–21). And it is the “armor of God,” the weaponry of the powerful divine warrior, that is employed by the church in its battle against the spiritual powers (Eph 6:10–17).

Other Imagery. A variety of other images may be briefly reviewed. Believers must no longer be immature “children,” who are “tossed to and fro by waves and blown about by every wind of doctrine” or trickery or craftiness (Eph 4:14). The picture is of a boat at sea in the hands of inexperienced sailors. Incapable of holding their course, they are subject to whatever forces of wind and wave beat upon them or carry them along (cf. Heb 13:9; Jas 1:6; Jude 12, 13). An opposite, positive image, one of stability, is that of being “rooted and grounded in love” (Eph 3:17).

In Ephesians, Paul is memorably imaged as a prisoner “in the Lord” (Eph 4:1), or a prisoner “for Jesus Christ” (Eph 3:1; see PRISON). Even more strikingly, he is an “ambassador in chains” (Eph 6:20). As an official representative of his heavenly Lord, Paul has not been granted diplomatic immunity. The calling card of his diplomatic mission is inscribed with a logo of suffering. So even now Caesar’s instruments of power are the means by which this ambassador of the heavenly Lord boldly delivers the good news of the mystery of reconciliation.

The imagery of family is a constant in Paul’s letters. In the first half of Ephesians we repeatedly find imagery that evokes a picture of a father with extravagant and immeasurable “riches” (Eph 1:7, 18; 2:7; 3:8, 16) who lavishes them on his adopted children (Eph 1:5), his heirs (Eph 3:6) who will one day receive his inheritance (Eph 1:14, 18; cf. 5:5).

The vivid image of a sleeper awakened, rising from the dead, and greeted by the morning light of Christ, the dawn of a new creation, is memorably set out in verse structure (Eph 5:14), perhaps as a line from an early Christian baptismal hymn. The brilliant light of Christ is an image that finds company in the repeated theme of “glory” in the doxological language of chapter one (Eph 1:6, 12, 14, 17, 18) and in the prayer language of chapter three (Eph 3:13, 16, 21). The prayer that the “eyes of your heart be enlightened” (Eph 1:18), while odd to modern Western ears, speaks of the illumination of the heart as the perceptive seat of practical reason and wisdom, not of the emotions. And it is fitting that the people of God are “children of light” and not “darkness” (Eph 5:8), their works the “fruit of light” (Eph 5:9) rather than the “unfruitful works of darkness” (Eph 5:11), which are performed in the shadows but will be exposed by the light (Eph 5:12–13).

In Ephesians it is as if a narrative world of triumph and reconciliation embracing heaven and earth is constructed and then filled in with various images that furnish, populate and dramatize the action within this new world. A new creation is emerging, and its outline may be seen in the church, whose unity is celebrated in a litany of oneness in Ephesians 4:4–6: “one body ... one Spirit ... one hope ... one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all” (NRSV).

See also ARMOR; COSMOLOGY; ENEMY; EXALTATION, ENTHRONEMENT; HEAVEN; TRIUMPH.



BIBLIOGRAPHY. G. B. Caird, *Paul's Letters from Prison* (NCB; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976); A. T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 1990); idem, *Paradise Now and Not Yet* (SNTSMS 43; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).¹

EPHESIANS

AD 60

Living Heaven on Earth

What a prayer Paul prayed for the church at Ephesus! It was no less than a vision of the final purpose of God, a revelation given of the glory that made the world with a word (1:15–19, 3:14–20).

Everything God does for us is already prepurposed in the Savior's amazing accomplishment. Set in His lovely Son are the full requirements of redemption for our human race; caught up in Christ we are chosen, called, and step-by-step conformed to His likeness (1:3–14). Salvation, like revival, is a gift of God's mercy, neither earned nor deserved.

Trust the Son, and good works waiting in the wings will surely follow to show His life as both imputed and imparted (2:8–10). Here is reconciliation for the fractures of the world (2:11–22); seeing the unity of the Spirit by His ministry gifts that can lead to unity of understanding (4:10–15); putting off the habits of the past to put on the new clothes of Christ (4:17–32); and living like a real family whose Daddy is the Uncreated God (5:1–33, 6:1–9).

Christ was dead, truly dead; dead for the sin of the world, bound in grave clothes and buried in the tomb, the rock on the door, and the keepers before it to discourage any human effort at attempted resuscitation or a faked miracle. Dead three days, beyond all human hope; and then the promised power of the Father reached into the grave near Gethsemane and Golgotha, and the Son stepped into the light of the resurrection morning, alive forevermore. God raised up His beloved Christ; not just restored to His former level of human expression, but far above, in a soaring triumph that passes and surpasses all levels of authority and dignity and majesty to the very right hand of the Father. God made Christ sit, Paul says, and has put all things under His feet (1:19–22).

You, too, were dead, really dead; dead in your own trespasses and sins, bound in your own grave clothes and buried in your own tomb, captive to every worldly snare, hellish force, and driving devil's voice; dead, without emergency backup, death contingency plan, or chance to

¹ Ryken, L., Wilhoit, J., Longman, T., Duriez, C., Penney, D., & Reid, D. G. (2000). In [*Dictionary of biblical imagery*](#) (electronic ed., pp. 237–241). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.



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stage some self-engineered recovery (2:1–3). Then the resurrection power of God flowed from heaven and lifted you out of darkness into His marvelous light, and raised you by that same power of the Father into His presence, to put you now, miracle of miracles, right into the Church which is His body, far above all principality and power and every name that is named. This is a truth no demon ever wants to have made known. This is what the underworld fears above all—a redeemed and revived humanity. Put on the armor of God (6:10–19); in hell they know that this is war.

God made Christ sit.
And He has made you alive.
God made us sit.

There is no greater vision of revival than this in all of the epistles.

Eph 1:10, 19–23 Gather together all things into one

The triumphant Christ is reconciling all things in heaven and earth. All power, rule, and authority, whether human institutions or spiritual wickedness in high places, are beneath His feet, and this great victory is communicated to His Church as a witness of His supremacy! (*JZ*)

Eph 1:16–23 A revival of the call to intimacy
A3h A3

Three things are required for the revival of the call to intimacy. One of those is found in this passage. A revival of the call to intimacy begins when brethren pray for the spirit of wisdom and revelation, for the intimate knowing of Him to come upon their fellow saints. As this divine intervention occurs, the eyes of the believer's heart are opened and a revelation of the hope of this calling to intimacy is made known. Great frustration could be alleviated if we would know how to pray and believe for this aspect of revival.

Eph 1:22–23 All things under His feet

We must always recognize that a meeting-house is simply a place where Christ's people gather to worship. A meeting-house is not the Church. The Church is planted in our hearts through the blood of Jesus Christ (Matt 16:18). The first thing in every assembly is to see that He, the Holy Ghost, is installed as the Chairman. The reason why we have so many dried up missions and churches today is because they have not the Holy Ghost as Chairman. They have some man in His place. Man is all right in his place—when he is filled with the power of the Holy Ghost. It is not the man who does the work but the Holy Ghost sent by Jesus to work through this tabernacle of clay. Jesus Christ is the Archbishop of these assemblies and He must be recognized. (*WS*)

First Things First

Ephesians lists blessings God already achieved for us. He has already blessed us with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places. Plainly then, everything God has provided for us is already ours! Consistent use of the Greek *aorist* tense is significant here,



indicating completed action in the past. The emphasis is squarely on what God has done *for us*, rather than what He has accomplished *in us*. We can summarize this in several different ways:

- **The objective undergirds the subjective.** The saving work of God in Christ is an objective fact. It never changes. Our subjective response to the gospel may be fickle and uncertain. What God has done for us always undergirds what He does in us.
- **Facts supersede feelings.** The fact of what God did for us in Christ is more important than our feelings toward the work of God in our lives. Feelings come and go; facts remain, unchanging.
- **Imputation precedes impartation.** What God has imputed to us is foundational to what He imparts to us. The work God counts to our credit makes possible the work that He effects for our benefit. What He does for us precedes what He does in us.
- **Standing outweighs state.** Our standing in Christ is permanent. Based on the work of God for us in Christ, it can never be threatened. Our state may vary according to circumstances: we may rejoice one day and grieve the next. But our standing does not alter.
- **The indicative undergirds the imperative.** The indicative describes what is; the imperative describes what ought to be. God's statements about who we are always undergird His commands about what we should do. Until we know who we are, we cannot do what we should.
- **Kerygma predates charisma.** The *kerygma* (preaching) of God's Word leads to repentance and new life; the *charismata* (signs, wonders and gifts of the Spirit) confirm the preached Word.
- **Promise precedes precept.** Promises direct our attention primarily to the Lord; then, with our eyes on Him and His enabling power, we can obey His precepts. To attempt the precepts without faith in the promises is to program ourselves for failure.
- **Principle undergirds practice.** Understanding and believing the principles laid down in God's Word gives us a basis for putting into practice the commands which the Scriptures contain.
- **Relationship transcends fellowship.** Our relationship with God is totally dependent on what He did for us in Christ by adopting us as His children. Our fellowship is contingent on our day-by-day walking in the light. The relationship is unchanging; our fellowship may vary dramatically in sweetness according to our degree of yieldedness to the Lord.
- **Faith outweighs fervor.** Faith is fundamental; it is there day and night. Fervor comes and goes like the morning mist. Paul shows these clearly in Ephesians. First the objective facts; second the subjective experience. To enjoy revival, it is critical we put first things first. (BC)

Eph 2:1–10 By grace we are saved A3

The posture of anyone seeking to enter into or minister in revival is vital. Revival does not come forth when one attacks the problems from beneath. Revival erupts when one dares to recognize that we are seated in heavenly places far above the problems. Revival comes from above and not beneath. It is the expression of the hand of God through a revivalist full of faith, reaching down to the slumbering souls, awakening them, lifting them up out of their sleep, all the while seeing



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the future revival and potential harvest as present reality. Above and not beneath. It is through this faith that gracious power is released unto salvation, deliverance, healing, miracles, and service unto the Lord. God awaits our cooperation with Him in this.

Eph 2:19–21 Jesus our cornerstone

Although many scholars interpret these verses from the perspective of the early Church, a spiritual principle for building enduring revival is found here. Lasting national, church, and ministerial revival depends on the type of ministry and its foundations. The two primary ministry gifts necessary to lay a solid foundation for revival and harvest are gifts of the apostle and the prophet. These two ministries, with the numerous variations seen in the leaders of the Bible, are the only kinds that can successfully accomplish such a huge task. Perhaps this is why they are such a major threat to Babylon (Rev 18:20–24).

Eph 2:20 Jesus is the chief cornerstone

There are many God-ordained movements seeking to reestablish the Church on biblical foundations. Some of these will drift into dogmatic extremes as has happened with every previous movement, but even if they drift off course at times, they will accomplish much. Even so, we must understand that to be culture-centered, church-centered, or even kingdom-centered, is idolatry. We must be King-centered. Our calling is to grow up into Christ, not the Church and not the kingdom. We are not called to follow the kingdom, but to follow the King. We preach about His kingdom and His ways as a reflection of His character, but our loyalty is to Him. We are loyal to His kingdom and His Church because they are His, but in our devotion they must never be exalted above Him. Allowing a doctrine or ideal to become central is what causes so many movements to drift off course. *(RJ)*

Eph 3:8 No extraordinary Christians

There are no extraordinary Christians anywhere—just ordinary Christians saved by an extraordinary Savior. *(FK)*

Extremes of God

Ephesians 3:18–19

“That you may be able to grasp with all the saints what is the breadth and depth and length and height.” Some of us are afraid of the depths, we are afraid to get out too deep into deep water.... We want just enough to be respectable and we don’t want to be considered peculiar or extreme. But listen. It is the extreme people who are useful, who stand out as the people of God. It is the lukewarm that are of no use, they are a hindrance. And Jesus said it—you read it—He would that we would be cold or hot, not lukewarm. The people who are trying to avoid extremes are the people who are a curse to the kingdom of God. We ought to go into the deep places. The riches of His grace are able, my brother and sister, to do all this and more for you.... God has been doing these things for some of us. We have been entering into a new experience. We have been



climbing up into higher ground. We have been getting out of the darkness into the light. Our sighs have been changed to songs. (GS)

Eph 3:19 To know the love of Christ

Not a word have I to say against real spiritual revivals, but I warn you excitable people that principle is the main matter, not passion. Give me a man who does not depend upon a preacher, nor drink, in inspiration from warmhearted friends and crowded meetings, but has an inward, vital experience by which he knows the Lord for himself, and has had personal dealings with a personal Savior. Such a man will follow the Lamb though every preacher should die, and every outward ministry should be struck dumb at once. The indwelling power of the Holy Spirit rises superior to all disadvantages, like a spring, which cannot be kept under, do what you may. (CHS)

Eph 3:19 All the fullness of God

If we do not receive and come into a greater awareness of God's love in order to be filled with His fullness, then we will not turn to Him so that times of refreshing may come from His presence (face) (Acts 3:19). Then we will duplicate the error of Israel in the wilderness—they could not enter (into the Promised Land) because of unbelief (Heb 3:19). Unbelief (lack of faith) comes because we do not know the love of God for us. (Steve Thompson, pastor and author, Morningstar Ministries, Moravian Falls)

Eph 4:5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism

Charles H. Spurgeon wrote: It is sad to think how much our glorious cause has been impeded by the different fallings out amongst the disciples of the Lamb. We have loved one another ... up until now, with a true heart, and ... I am not afraid but that we shall always do so. At the same time, I am jealous over you, lest there should come in by any possibility any root of bitterness to trouble you. Let us ... throw around you the bands of a man, let us unite you together with a three-fold cord that cannot be broken. Let us entreat you to love one another; let us entreat you by your one Lord, one faith, one baptism, to continue as one; let us beg of you, by our great success, to let our unity be commensurate therewith. Remember, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! The devil wants you to disagree, and nothing will please him better than for you to fall at ears among yourselves. The Moabites and Ammonites cut down one another. Do not let us do that.

Eph 4:13 Fullness of Christ

George Fox, an evangelist from the Society of Friends, England, wrote: When I was brought up into His image in righteousness and holiness, and into the paradise of God, He let me see how Adam was made a living soul; and also the stature of Christ, the mystery that had been hidden from ages and generations: which things are hard to be uttered, and cannot be borne by many. For of all the sects in Christendom (so called) that I discoursed with, I found none who could bear to be told that any should come to Adam's perfection, into that image of God, that righteousness and holiness, that Adam was in before he fell; to be clean and pure, without sin, as he was. Therefore, how shall they be able to bear being told that any shall grow up to the measure of the



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stature of the fullness of Christ, when they cannot bear to hear that any shall come, whilst upon earth, into the same power and Spirit that the prophets and apostles were in?

Eph 4:30 Do not grieve the Holy Spirit

Charles H. Spurgeon wrote: If we do not honor the Holy Spirit, we cannot expect Him to work with us; He will be grieved and leave us to find out our own helplessness. Moreover, I fear that however generally the doctrine of the necessity of the Spirit's work may be believed as a matter of theory, it is not acted upon; and what is not believed in practice is in fact not believed at all... Without the Spirit of God, we can do nothing; we are as ships without wind, or chariots without steeds; like branches without sap we are withered; like coals without fire we are useless; as an offering without the sacrificial flame we are unaccepted. I desire to both feel and confess this fact whenever I attempt to preach. I do not wish to get away from it, or conceal it, nor can I, for I am often made to feel it to the deep humbling of my spirit.... To our hand, the Holy Ghost is the force, to our eye He is the light. We are but the stones, He is the sling; we are the arrows, He the bow. Confess your weakness, you will be fit to be strengthened; own your emptiness, it will be a preparation for receiving the divine fullness.

Eph 5:1–7 Be imitators of God **A1h WINES**

God is a God of revival, of life! The believer is commanded to imitate Him in every aspect of His character, including revival. Living a life that denies the fallen nature of sins such as fornication, covetousness, foolish talking, and inconvenient and crude joking does this.

Eph 5:8 Walk in light

Only as we return to the presence of the living God, can we hope to find reality. In the beginning was reality, before there was anything false or evil. God calls us to go beyond the physical world, the world of man's thoughts, fears, and imagination. We are called to reality; beyond all the sham, shame, sickness, and sin which the enemy has built up around mankind and around the Church. We are called to live and breathe, to abide, and to walk in the realm of the life of the Spirit of God. (PR)

Eph 5:14–20 Awake, you who sleep **A1h WINES**

Getting revival from a spiritual slumber requires diligent spiritual responsibility. Revelation to help us endure evil times will not be granted if an awakening does not occur. This responsibility requires a type of wisdom that circumspectly tests all aspects of Christian living against anything that drains away the important; therefore, redeeming the time is possible. These things are mandatory and part of how God's will is acted out. This responsibility is compared to avoiding excessive drinking of wine, in contrast to being constantly filled with the Spirit. The believer is to wake up and be responsible, and live a life of purposed, directed praise aimed at reminding himself of God's thankworthy deeds through psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.

Eph 5:16 Redeeming the time

Once while traveling, William Booth's car was stopped and detained. He took advantage of the opportunity and exhorted some idle factory workers. He said, "Some of you men never pray, you



gave up praying long ago. But I'm going to say to you; won't you pray for your children, that they may be different?" Within minutes, seven hundred men knelt in silent prayer. *(Paul Smith, pastor of The Peoples Church, Canada, and author)*

Be Filled with the Spirit

Ephesians 5:18

The Spirit-filled life is not just a life endowed with the gifts of the Spirit in the Church. We must read this verse in context, where God puts the text on Spirit-filled life next to marriage, then raising of children, and finally, how to be a good employee. The Spirit-filled life is not meant only for church service but for every realm of life. The Spirit-filled life is not just someone who believes in tongues; many ... need to learn how to speak with the Spirit's guidance in English first.

The word, "filled" or *pleroma*, carries some very powerful definitions from the original language. The word means to man a ship with someone who is capable of steering it. The word means to put a qualified person in the driver's seat. You can have a plane that is full of people, but it is when the pilot gets on board that it is now "filled." It has the right man to steer the vessel. The Spirit-filled life has God in charge. Many look to a certain pastor or prophet for their life.

The word also means to furnish a house with possessions. The day you were saved, you were bought with a price, but it is the Holy Spirit who must furnish you. It is to take that which is empty and fill it up. He will furnish you with His gifts, His fruits, His endowment of power.

The word also means to cover the ground with fertile soil. It is to take normal ground and cover it with soil which can produce. It gives something potential that it would not have had before. The day the Holy Spirit comes into your life, He can do what you could never do for your life.

To be Spirit-filled means I am able to grow and move forward in my walk with Christ because the right Man is steering the vessel. It means the believer has a potential that he has never had before. It also means having gifts and furnishings available that you could never have afforded or have had. *(TD)*

This Is War!

Ephesians 6:12

There is a wicked war raging between heaven and hell. The battleground is the mind of man. The spoil of war is your soul. No one is exempt. Satan wants to drag you to hell; but God is wooing you to heaven.

There are warning signs. God does not want any of us to perish; He wants all of us to come to repentance. He always sends warning signs of impending danger.

Though He was grieved that He had ever made man on the face of the earth, He warned Noah, though no one believed him. God sent angels to bring Lot and his family



from Sodom, just before its violent destruction. Likewise, He sends His messengers to warn you.

Attack. From the time we are born, there are at least three things working against us at all times: the world with its temptations; the flesh, full of our own selfish cravings; and the devil, subtle, slanderous, fierce, and deceitful. Some have not heeded the warning signs and have ended up in the midst of a full-fledged attack.

There is a refuge. A refuge is a shelter or protection from danger. To Noah, God sent the ark; to the jailer, God sent Paul and Silas; to Saul, He sent a blinding light along with enough power to throw him to the ground; to sinners, God the Father sent Jesus Christ, His only Son. Jesus has come to destroy the works of the devil. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (Ps 46:1).

Personally, I thank God for the battle—it keeps me alert. I read one time that Christians grow drowsy in the sunshine, but never fall asleep in the fire or in the water.

We are all involved in the longest war known to man. Revival focuses awareness on the battle between good and evil. So, remember the warning signs, beware of attack, and seek refuge. *(SH)*

We Wrestle Not—the Eye of the Tiger

Ephesians 6:12

Mario Murillo wrote: I am not going to avoid my enemy. There is a Mafia proverb: keep your friends close but keep your enemies closer. Why was wrestling the particular form of combat chosen? He did not say we box or tae kwon do with a devil. Wrestling is the only form of hand-to-hand combat where you never lose physical contact with the adversary, where you can boldly tell him: I'm going to take you—I'm going to squander you, ruin you in Jesus' name. Not on my own volition, but as a man of God, this is my posture: I am against you, Satan—on all fronts. I will be vigilant. When you come after me I will be ready for you. I will be faithful to God. I set you on public record. I will learn the skill of turning your attacks to God's advantage. When you attack, I will grow.

A Vietnamese phrase, "eye of the tiger," refers to a soldier wounded in battle who comes back to fight. The enemy hit me with his best shot; now I'm back. The fierceness of a soldier, once wounded but now recovered, is phenomenal. Christians who have never been attacked cannot have the eye of the tiger. They never will. You can tell when a preacher is a hollow, wimpy counterfeit or somebody who has been honed through fire. Develop the eye when you go through attack.

Eph 6:12 We wrestle not against flesh and blood

How do we go about reclaiming areas of influence in any nation? We take back territory from Satan from the place of prayer. With the power of the Holy Spirit, through the mighty weapons of spiritual warfare listed in Ephesians 6:10–20, 2 Corinthians 10:1–6 and James 4:7–10, we are



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told how to pull down demonic strongholds. We must pray against enemy influence in every area we become aware of.... Going with the gospel to every person (Mark 16:15) is like God's infantry. Discipling nations (Matt 28:18–20) is His air force. And intercession for nations (Dan 9, Neh 9, Ezra 9 and Col 3:1) is like intercontinental ballistic missiles. Praying is a very powerful part of the spiritual warfare we enter into to recapture this world for Jesus Christ. (LC)

Eph 6:18 Praying always

Do you need nothing? Then, you do not know your poverty. Have you no mercy to ask of God? Then, may the Lord's mercy show you your misery! A prayerless soul is a Christless soul. Prayer is the lisping of the believing infant, the shout of the fighting believer, the requiem of the dying saint falling asleep in Jesus. It is the breath, the watchword, the comfort, the strength, the honor of a Christian. If you be a child of God, you will seek your Father's face, and live in your Father's love. Pray that this year you may be holy, humble, zealous, and patient; have closer communion with Christ, and enter more often into the banqueting-house of His love. Pray that you may be an example and a blessing unto others, and that you may live more to the glory of your Master. (CHS)

John Wesley

Witness to an Encounter

John Wesley wrote of his talks with those who had encountered the Lord Jesus while in trances.

I talked largely with Ann Thorn and two others, who had been several times in trances. What they all agreed in was: 1) that when they went away, as they termed it, it was always at the time they were fullest of the love of God; 2) that it came upon them in a moment, without any previous notice, and took away all their senses and strength; 3) that there were some exceptions, but in general, from that moment, they were in another world, knowing nothing of what was done or said by all that were round about them.

About five in the afternoon, I heard them singing hymns. Soon after, Mr. B. came up and told me Alice Miller (fifteen years old) had fallen into a trance. I went down immediately and found her sitting on a stool and leaning against the wall, with her eyes open and fixed upward. I made a motion as if going to strike, but they continued immovable. Her face showed an unspeakable mixture of reverence and love, while silent tears stole down her cheeks. Her lips were a little open, and sometimes moved; but not enough to cause any sound.

I do not know whether I ever saw a human face look so beautiful; sometimes it was covered with a smile, as from joy, mixing with love and reverence; but the tears fell still though not so fast. Her pulse was quite regular. In about half an hour I observed her countenance change into the form of fear, pity, and distress; then she burst into a flood of tears and cried out, "Dear Lord; they will be damned! They will all be damned!" But in about five minutes, her smiles returned, and only love and joy appeared in her face.



About half an hour after six, I observed distress take place again; and soon after she wept bitterly and cried out, "Dear Lord, they will go to hell! The world will go to hell!" Soon after, she said, "Cry aloud! Spare not!" And in a few moments, her look was composed again and spoke a mixture of reverence, joy, and love. Then she said aloud, "Give God the glory." [At] about seven, her senses returned. I asked, "Where have you been?"

"I have been with my Savior."

"In heaven or on earth?"

"I cannot tell; but I was in glory."

"Why then did you cry?"

"Not for myself, but for the world; for I saw they were on the brink of hell."

"Whom did you desire to give glory to God?"

"Ministers that cry aloud to the world; else they will be proud; and then God will leave them, and they will lose their own souls."

The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the EPHESIANS

Author: Paul

Date: A.D. 60, 61

Theme: The Glorious Church

Key Words: Glory, Body, Heavenly Places

Background. Ephesus was a principal port on the west coast of Asia Minor, situated near present-day Izmir. It was one of the seven churches to whom Jesus addressed His letters in Revelation 2 and 3, a relevant fact for studying this epistle since it was originally circulated to approximately the same group of churches.

Although Paul had been to Ephesus earlier (Acts 18:21), he first came there to minister in the winter of A.D. 55. He ministered there for over two full years (Acts 19:8–10), developing so deep a relationship with the Ephesians that his farewell message to them is one of the Bible's most moving passages (Acts 20:17–38).



Occasion and Date. While imprisoned in Rome, Paul wrote Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon. Confined and awaiting trial (3:1; 4:1; 6:20), the apostle writes this encyclical letter—one to be read by several congregations. Ephesians is probably the same letter referred to in Colossians 4:16 as being presently at Laodicea while being circulated.

It appears that after writing Colossians, Paul was deeply stirred by an expanding revelation about the church. Now seeing the church as Christ's body and as God's instrument to confound and overthrow evil powers, he writes an elaboration of these themes.

Purpose. Ephesians unveils the "mystery" of the church as no other epistle. God's "secret" intention is revealed: 1) to form a body to express Christ's fullness on Earth (1:15–23); 2) to do this by uniting one people—both Jew and Gentile, among whom God Himself dwells (2:1–3:7); and 3) to equip, empower, and mature this people to the end that they extend Christ's victory over evil (3:10–20; 6:12–20).

Content. The throbbing message of Ephesians is "to the praise of His (God's) glory" (1:6, 12, 14). The word "glory" occurs eight times and refers to the exceeding excellence of God's love, His wisdom, and His power. The magnificent goal is in Jesus' announced commitment to build a glorious, mature, and ministering church, "not having spot or wrinkle" (5:27).

Ephesians unfolds the process by which God is bringing the church to its destined purpose in Christ. Basic maturing steps are taken toward the church's appointed engagement in battle with dark powers: 1) before the church is called to *war*, she is taught to *walk*; and 2) before being called to *walk*, the church is taught where she *stands*.

The epistle divides into two sections: 1) the Believer's Position, chapters 1–3, and 2) the Believer's Practice, chapters 4–6. In chapter 1, the recurrent term "in Christ" sums up the Christian's position, as having been given "every spiritual blessing." Several of these blessings are enumerated: chosen, blameless (1:4), adopted, accepted (1:5, 6), forgiven, predestined, and sealed (1:7, 11, 13).

With sweeping strokes, this foundational series of statements moves to a bold, new assertion, declared in Paul's first of two prayers in this letter. He prays that each Christian may perceive God's grand purpose in raising Christ to triumph—that now the church may know Christ's victorious fullness as we resist evil and face life's trials (1:5–2:10). Chapter 2 describes how God's grace has formed a united people among whom He can dwell in His fullness and glory. Through this people His high purpose is to be unveiled. Grasping the message of Ephesians requires understanding two words from chapter 3—"dispensation" and "mystery" (vv. 2, 3). The apostle declared that God's "secret" in planning the church is hidden no longer (3:3, 4—*now the "mystery" is known*). He has designed the church to administer ("to dispense") Christ's fullness everywhere (3:2, 9), ministering as a living body, spreading over the Earth and penetrating "the heavens." God's "manifold wisdom" now demonstrates His glory in the church (3:10, 11), a manifestation that eventually will issue in the believer's strengthening (3:14–20), maturing (4:15), confrontation, and victory (6:10–20). However, the church cannot approach this without a practical understanding of how this present glory of God's grace and presence is to affect everyday living.



The great call to “walk worthy of the calling” introduces this letter’s second section (chs. 4–6). Systematically, Paul presents the ethical and moral implications of Spirit-filled living (4:1–6:9). The maturing process of the believer’s “equipping” (4:11–16) and the appeal to help each other forward (“speaking the truth in love”) will bring growth in the disciplines essential to the triumphant spiritual warrior’s life (6:10–20).

Personal Application. In short, Ephesians discloses awesome blessings of grace (“accepted in the Beloved,” 1:6) and awesome dimensions of spiritual authority over evil (“according to the power that works in us,” 3:20). But this awaits the believer’s first accepting the disciplines of unity (4:1–16), purity (4:17–31), forgiveness (4:32), and walking in the fullness of the Holy Spirit (5:1–21). With this, relationships at every point must be in order (5:2–6:9), the idea being firmly established that true spiritual power flows from true obedience to the divine order in relationships and personal conduct.

Christ Revealed. Ephesians has been called “The Alps of the New Testament,” “The Grand Canyon of Scripture,” and “The Royal Capstone of the Epistles,” not only because of its grand theme, but because of the majesty of Christ revealed here. Chapter 1: He is the Redeemer (1:7), the One in whom and by whom history will ultimately be consummated (1:10); and He is the Resurrected Lord who not only has risen over death and hell, but who reigns as King, pouring His life through His body, the church—the present expression of Himself on Earth (1:15–23). Chapter 2: He is the Peacemaker who has reconciled man to God and who makes possible reconciliation of man to man as well (2:11–18); and He is the Chief Cornerstone of the new temple consisting of His own people to be indwelt by God Himself (2:19–22). Chapter 3: He is the Treasure in whom life’s unsearchable riches are found (3:8); and He is the Indweller of human hearts, securing us in the love of God (3:17–19). Chapter 4: Jesus is the Giver of ministry-gifts to His church (4:7–11); and He is the Victor who has broken hell’s ability to keep humankind captive (4:8–10). Chapter 5: He is the Model Husband, unselfishly giving Himself to enhance His bride—His church (5:25–27, 32). Chapter 6: He is the Lord, Mighty in Battle, the resource of strength for His own as they arm for spiritual warfare (6:10).

The Holy Spirit at Work. As with Christ, the Holy Spirit is revealed in widely varied ministry to and through the believer. In 1:13 He is the Sealer, authorizing the believer to represent Christ; in 1:17 and 3:5 He is the Revealer, enlightening the heart to perceive God’s purpose; in 3:16 He is the Empowerer whom Christ gives to strengthen within; in 4:3, 4 He is the Spirit of Unity desiring to sustain the bond of peace in the body of Christ; in 4:30 He is the Spirit of holiness who may be grieved by insistence on carnal pursuits; in 5:18 He is the Fountain, from which all are to be continuously filled; in 6:17, 18 He is the Giver of the Word as a sword for battle and the heavenly Assistant given to aid us in prayer and intercession until victory is won.

Outline of Ephesians *Opening greeting 1:1, 2*

- I. The believer’s position in Christ 1:3–14
 - A. Blessings of full redemption 1:3–8



- B. Partnership in God's purpose 1:9–14
- II. The apostle's prayer for insight 1:15–23
 - A. For hearts that see with hope 1:15–18
 - B. For experience that shares Christ's victory 1:19–21
 - C. The church: Christ's body 1:22, 23
- III. The believer's past, present, and future 2:1–22
 - A. The past order of the living dead 2:1–3
 - B. The new order of God's loving life 2:4–10
 - C. The past separation and hopelessness 2:11, 12
 - D. The new union and present peace 2:13–18
 - E. The church: Christ's building 2:19–22
- IV. The apostle's ministry and message 3:1–13
 - A. The stewardship Paul has been given 3:1–7
 - B. The stewardship each believer is given 3:8–13
- V. The apostle's prayer for power 3:14–21
 - A. For strength by the Holy Spirit 3:14–16
 - B. For faith and love by Christ's indwelling 3:17–19
 - C. The church and God's glory 3:20, 21
- VI. The believer's call to responsibility 4:1–16
 - A. To pursue unity with diligence 4:1–6
 - B. To accept grace and gifts humbly 4:7–11
 - C. To grow in ministry as part of the body 4:12–16
- VII. The believer's call to purity 4:7–5:14
 - A. To refuse worldly mindedness 4:17–19
 - B. To put off the old and put on the new 4:20–32
 - C. To progress in untainted love 5:1–7
 - D. To shine as undimmed light bearers 5:8–14
- VIII. The believer's call to Spirit-filled living 5:5–6:9
 - A. To pursue God's will and wisdom 5:15–17
 - B. To maintain the fullness of the Holy Spirit through worship and humility 5:18–21
 - C. To conduct all relationships according to God's order 5:2–6:9
- IX. The believer's call to spiritual warfare 6:10–20
 - A. The reality of the invisible conflict 6:10–12
 - B. Armor for the warrior 6:13–17
 - C. The action involved in warfare 6:18–20 *Concluding remarks 6:21–24*

1:3 Spiritual blessing refers to divine privileges and resources available now, that is, chosen, adopted, forgiven. 1 Cor. 12:1 uses the same Greek word for “spiritual” in referring to the gifts of the Holy Spirit, evidencing that they are among the “blessings” included.

1:5 Predestined does not suggest a fatalism that excludes some while including others, but assures an appointed plan and guaranteed destiny for all the redeemed.



1:6 Accepted is literally “graced with grace.” “In Christ” is a recurring term designating the sphere in which all salvation is realized and the realm in which God’s kingdom purposes are fulfilled—in the circle of the King’s (Christ’s) reign.

1:7 This letter repeatedly insists that the ground of all grace is the reconciling death of Jesus Christ on the Cross (2:16), at the expense of **His** redeeming **blood** (2:13). Through this alone God offers forgiveness (4:32). Forgiveness is possible because Christ loved the church and gave Himself to provide it (5:25-27).

1:9 Mystery was formerly a divine secret, but in the NT is now a fully disclosed truth for understanding and application.

1:10 Dispensation is not a restricted period of time. The Greek word refers to the administration or management of a household. Paul is speaking of God’s arrangement or “dispensing” of the affairs of history.

1:11 Counsel of His will signifies God’s eternal and unchangeable plan. Repeated reference to God’s will (vv. 1, 5, 9, 11) establishes the confidence of strong purpose and solid ground for living.

1:13 You were sealed is seen by some as referring to justification, but that term is not used here and the emphasis is different. Justification brings acceptance; sealing brings authority (John 3:33, 34). This verse, therefore, may refer to Acts 19:1-6, where the Ephesians, who had already believed, received the fullness of the Holy Spirit after Paul taught and ministered to them.

1:14 Guarantee literally means “deposit,” “down payment,” or “first installment.” The Holy Spirit invested in us is God’s title to possessing us entirely and forever.

1:16 For insight into the weight and dimension of prayer life in the early church, study the content of Paul’s two prayers recorded in this letter (vv. 16-23; 3:14-21).

KINGDOM DYNAMICS

1:17 The Spirit of Revelation, PROPHECY. In this text, Paul says he prays for people to receive “the spirit of wisdom and revelation,” with the dual objective of their knowing Christ and understanding God’s purpose and power in their lives. Such “revelation” refers to an unveiling of our hearts that we may receive insight into the way God’s word is intended to work in our lives. It may be used of teaching or preaching that is especially anointed in helping people see the glory of Christ and His purpose and power for them. But in making such a biblical use of the term as it appears here in Eph. 1, it is wise to understand its alternate and grander use.

The word “revelation” is used in two ways in the Bible. It is important to distinguish them, not only to avoid confusion in studying the Word of God, but to assure the avoidance of a destructive detour into humanistic ideas and hopeless error. The Holy Scriptures are called “the revealed Word of God.” The Bible declares that God’s “law” (Deut. 29:29) and the “prophets” (Amos 3:7) are the result of His revealing work,



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essentially describing the whole of the OT as “revealed.” In the NT, this word is used of writings as well (Rom. 16:25; Eph. 3:3; Rev. 1:1)—writings that became part of the closed canon of the Holy Scriptures (see “The Content of God’s Word Is Completed,” Prov. 30:5, 6).

Wisdom and understanding, as well as sound, practical speech, recommend that today’s believer both know and clearly express what is meant when he or she speaks of “revelations.” The Holy Spirit does indeed give us revelation, as this text teaches. But such prophetic insight into the Word should never be considered as equal to the actual giving of the Holy Scriptures. As helpful as insight into God’s Word may be, the finality of the whole of the revelation of God’s Holy Word is the only sure ground for building our lives (Matt. 7:24-29).

1:17 Wisdom and revelation are not to be interpreted as mystical. “Wisdom” concerns practical, workable principles; “revelation” refers to clear perception and applicable understanding. The Holy Spirit is the divine and supernatural source of both.

1:18 Eyes of your understanding being enlightened literally means that your heart may receive the brightness of hope resulting when the wealth of God’s investment in you is understood.

1:19 According to occurs repeatedly and means “in the same measure as” or “to the exact degree.”

1:20 Heavenly *places* does not refer to heaven in the sense of its being the destined home of the redeemed. Rather, the Greek word here refers to the invisible realm that surrounds our present daily situation, the arena or sphere of spiritual action and activity. Christ’s authority, which encompasses every age and exceeds every known power, is here and now (see also v. 3; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12).

1:21 Principality and power and might and dominion are terms consistently used for ruling authorities in both the visible and the invisible realms (see 3:10). The NT reveals an invisible hierarchy of evil powers who deceive and manipulate human behavior, thereby advancing satanic strategies. Christ Himself and all who are in Christ are shown to be placed in authority above these powers, an authority that only spiritual warfare can assert, demonstrate, and sustain (6:12).

1:22 His body: The primary thrust of this letter is to show the church as the present, physical presence of Christ. The church is to be filled with Him by the Holy Spirit, and assigned by the Lord Jesus to represent Him to society to minister His life, love, and power.

2:1 Were dead: Man does not merely need a guide or a teacher; he is dead and needs someone able to resurrect his spirit.

2:2 The mood and manner of society is shaped by **the prince of the power of the air**, a title for Satan as he exercises influence globally and within each culture.



2:3 Children of wrath: The inevitable end of “sons of disobedience” (v. 2) is to come under the condemnation of God’s righteous anger, a justifiable judgment for having violated known boundaries of spiritual and moral duty (see Rom. 1:18-21).

2:6 Sit together . . . in Christ Jesus: Three “togethers” in vv. 5 and 6 note our union with Christ 1) in His resurrection, 2) in His ascension, and 3) in His present rule at God’s right hand. From this place of partnership, He grants that we share in the present works of His kingdom’s power (Col. 1:13).

2:7 In the ages to come: Whatever glories of Christ’s kingdom dominion and authority may be experienced and enjoyed in the present era, it is clear that there is much that will be unrealized until the consummation of this age and the inauguration of the unimaginable future God reserves for His own.

2:8 Grace describes the undeserved kindness by which salvation is given, but it is also the power-word describing the Holy Spirit’s operational means. Grace is a *force* as well as a *favor*, a verb as well as a noun.

WORD WEALTH

2:10 **workmanship**, *poiema* (*poy-ay-mah*); Strong’s #4161: From the verb *poieo*, “to make.” (Compare “poem” and “poetry.”) The word signifies that which is manufactured, a product, a design produced by an artisan. *Poiema* emphasizes God as the Master Designer, the universe as His creation (Rom. 1:20), and the redeemed believer as His new creation (Eph. 2:10). Before conversion our lives had no rhyme or reason. Conversion brought us balance, symmetry, and order. We are God’s poem, His work of art.

2:10 Created . . . that we should walk: The genius of God’s new creation work in each believer is that He renovates the nature of His redeemed children to make **good works** a living possibility.

2:11 Uncircumcision is the most direct term to describe the fact that Gentiles were outside any covenant relationship with God.

2:12 Without Christ is the first of five phrases in this verse describing the estrangement of Gentiles before Christ came. Being “without a Messiah” is the fountainhead of futility and hopelessness.

KINGDOM DYNAMICS

2:13 **Gentiles Embraced by Christ’s Sacrifice**, THE BLOOD. Prior to the New Covenant, Gentiles were excluded from citizenship in the commonwealth of Israel and were foreigners to the covenant promises of God. There was no hope in this life and no ability to know God’s presence in the world. The covenant sacrifice of Christ’s blood



took Gentile believers who were far from God and joined them together with the Jews in the New Covenant. Gentiles were grafted in to enjoy the covenants of promise through the New Covenant and were included as heirs with the patriarchs of all of God's promises.

2:13 But now joins with “but God” (v. 4) as gloriously pivotal words upon which everything in life turns from death to life, sin to salvation, and hopelessness to eternal joy.

2:14 The essence of **peace** is dual, to cause a ceasing from separation as well as a ceasing from strife. Peace means “to be united with” as well as “to bring an end to hostility.”

WORD WEALTH

2:19 foreigners, *paroikos* (par-oy-koss); Strong's #3941: From *para*, “beside,” and *oikeo*, “to dwell”; hence, “dwelling near.” The word came to denote an alien who dwells as a sojourner in a land without the rights of citizenship. The word describes Abraham and Moses, sojourners in a land not their own (Acts 7:6, 29), and the Christian who is traveling through this world as an alien whose citizenship and ultimate residence are in heaven (1 Pet. 2:11).

2:19 Household literally means “members of the family.”

2:20 Apostles and prophets mentioned in this reference should be distinguished from the reference in 4:11. The founding apostles are meant here, as in Rev. 21:14, while the later reference (4:11) is to the ongoing mission of apostles, who serve the church of Christ in a more general way.

2:21 The metaphor of the body (1:22, 23) being filled by Christ is complemented by that of a **building . . . temple** being inhabited by God through the Holy Spirit.

3:1 Paul reflects on his mission to help believing Jews and Gentiles accept each other as partners in God's covenant of salvation. This mystery was especially foreign to the OT Jewish mindset, not being understood by either Jew or Gentile until Jesus came. See “revelation” (1:17) and “mystery” (1:9).

3:9 A textual variation suggests “dispensation” here for **fellowship** (see note on 1:10). Paul describes his driving desire to help every believer see the personal role each has in dispensing (spreading, distributing, administering) the grand truth of God's purpose in the church.

3:10 The eternal purpose is the same here as 1:9, 11. The text soars as Paul cites God's intent to display the church before all evil powers as His instrument to dispense throughout the earth what He has already **accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord** (that is, through Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension).



KINGDOM DYNAMICS

3:14 The Identity of Family Is in God, FAMILY ORDER. Humanly speaking, we link the identity of a husband, wife, and children to their particular family-name. This, however, is only a surface identification. Family identity has a deeper root.

“Family” is a word that is rooted in God: God is Father—the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. In Himself, God is a “divine family.” This also expresses itself in the way that God relates to people. The Bible reveals this aspect of God’s nature in rich and varied use of family imagery: God is our Father, God is Husband to His people, God is like a nurturing mother, Christ is the Bridegroom of the church.

When a man and a woman come together in marriage, God extends to them this name that in essence belongs to Him—the name of family. Husband, wife, and children live up to the true meaning of this name as they reflect the nature and life of the divine family in their human family.

KINGDOM DYNAMICS

3:14 Spiritual Leaders: Pray As Well As Teach, PRAYER. Spiritual leaders must pray for their people as well as teach them. Paul prayed that his fellow believers might know the strength of the Spirit’s reinforcement in the inner person, just as a storm-tossed ship on which he once sailed was strengthened inside by bracings and undergirded outside by cables (Acts 27:17). Knowing that the strength of Christianity is not outward laws but inward character, Paul prayed that Christ might enter through the open door of faith, dwell in their hearts, and imprint His nature upon their minds, wills, and emotions. When Christ enters a life, He brings His life—the very soil in which we take root and blossom, the ground in which our lives are founded. Prayer begets prayer, for the believer in whom Christ’s love is bringing the fullness of God will learn to ask and expect great things from Him!

WORD WEALTH

3:10 manifold, *polupoikilos* (pol-oo-poy-kil-oss); Strong’s #4182: From *polus*, “much,” and *poikilos*, “varied,” “many-colored.” The word pictures God’s wisdom as much varied, with many shades, tints, hues, and colorful expressions. As a God of variety, He is still entering the human arena displaying many-sided, multicolored, and much variegated wisdom to His people and through His people.



3:14 The second apostolic prayer is for the Holy Spirit's power to fill every believer, which is the logical need if the grand objective of vv. 9-12 is to be realized.

3:16 Strengthened with might is literally "become mighty by His power," which the Holy Spirit brings to work in the believer.

3:17 Rooted like a tree **and grounded** like a building on a strong foundation.

3:18 Comprehend means to receive experientially, not simply to understand intellectually.

WORD WEALTH

3:19 fullness, pleroma (*play-row-mah*); Strong's #4138: Full number, full complement, full measure, copiousness, plenitude, that which has been completed. The word describes a ship with a full cargo and crew, and a town with no empty houses. *Pleroma* strongly emphasizes fullness and completion.

3:19 To know the love of Christ is the essence of the greatest fullness. **All the fullness of God** speaks of more than one experience or one aspect of His truth or power. It points to a broad-based spirituality, balanced through participating in all of God's blessings, resources, and wisdom.

4:1 See section 1 of Truth-In-Action at the end of Eph.

4:1 Prisoner of the Lord: See also 3:1 and 6:20, which remind us that although the writer is in jail, he still maintains that his real captor is Christ. **Worthy** means "of sufficient weight," a quality issuing from acknowledging what Christ has poured into us, rather than whatever worth is felt or unfelt in oneself.

4:2 Unity is the responsibility of each believer and is to be pursued earnestly.

4:5 One baptism probably refers to water baptism, the common external point of publicly declaring faith in Jesus Christ. The issue is not the form of the ritual as much as the fact of one's obedience. The believer's baptism *by* the Holy Spirit *into* Christ's body (1 Cor. 12:13) and the baptism *in* or *with* the Holy Spirit *for* power-filled service (John 1:33; Acts 1:5, 8) are facts unchallenged by this observation. They clearly stand as spiritual realities linked in a tri-unity with the one baptism in water.

4:8 Gifts . . . gave some: The five ministry offices listed here are gifts that Christ gave for the nurture and equipping of His church, not for hierarchical control or ecclesiastical competition. Beyond the distinct role filled by the original founding apostles (see note on 2:20), the NT mentions enough additional apostles to indicate that this office, with that of prophets, is as continuing a ministry in the church as the more commonly acknowledged offices of evangelists, pastors, and teachers (some make pastor-teacher one office). There is no prescribed formula or "gift-mix" for any particular office, as God uses different people in different ways in each of these five ministries Christ has given. Uniqueness is manifested in individuals according to the



varied gifts God the Father has given them (Rom. 12:3-8) and joined with whatever gifts the Holy Spirit distributes to or through them (1 Cor. 12:4-11). The distinct gifts of the Father (Rom. 12), the Son (Eph. 4), and the Spirit (1 Cor. 12) ought not to be confused, nor should any of the five ministry offices in this text be limited to the operation of any particular gift.

4:9 Paul explains that the quote from Ps. 68:18 (v. 8) applies to the **ascended** Christ. An ascent implies a prior descent. Christ's descent **into the lower parts of the earth** has been variously interpreted as a descent into hell (associating it with 1 Pet. 3:19), a descent into Sheol/Hades (the realm of the dead (see Acts 2:25-35)), or as symbolically referring to His incarnation (whereby Christ descended to Earth from heaven), a descent carrying Him to the depths of humiliation (see Phil. 2:5-11). With reference to the view that He descended into hell, there is no biblical support for the notion that Jesus suffered in hell, only that He descended to Sheol to release the righteous dead into eternal glory, proclaiming the adequacy of the Atonement and validating the testimony of the prophets.

KINGDOM DYNAMICS

4:11 The Gifts Christ Gives, SPIRITUAL GIFTS. Distinguishing among the gifts of Rom. 12:6-8 (from the Father), the gifts of 1 Cor. 12:8-10 (from the Holy Spirit), and those here, which are explicitly given by Christ the Son (v. 8), is pivotal in comprehending the whole scope of spiritual gifts. An elaboration of this and related themes appears in the study article on page 2018, "Holy Spirit Gifts and Power."

WORD WEALTH

4:12 equipping, *katartismos* (kat-ar-tis-moss); Strong's #2677: A making fit, preparing, training, perfecting, making fully qualified for service. In classical language the word is used for setting a bone during surgery. The Great Physician is now making all the necessary adjustments so the church will not be "out of joint."

4:12 The Greek word for **equipping** implies: 1) a recovered wholeness as when a broken limb is set and mends; 2) a discovered function, as when a physical member is properly operating. The **work of ministry** is the enterprise of each member of the body of Christ and not the exclusive charge of select leaders. Taken together, vv. 11, 12 reveal that the task of the gifted leader is to cultivate the individual and corporate ministries of those he or she leads.

4:13 A progress in maturity (v. 13), stability (v. 14), and integrity (v. 15), taking place in every individual member's experience, results in the whole body's **growth** (numerical expansion) and **edifying** (internal strengthening).



4:17 Five traits of a worldly walk are summed up in the word **futility** (emptiness, purposelessness): darkened understanding, alienation from God, ignorance of God's way, hardened heart, and an unfeeling state. (The Greek word means "to have ceased to care.")

4:17 See section 2 of Truth-In-Action at the end of Eph.

4:20 This section asserts each believer's accountability to live in contrast with the surrounding culture, since the five traits of the worldling are no longer true of him.

4:22 The old man . . . the new man contrasts the old life-style dominated by the spirit of disobedience (2:1-3) with the believer's newly created capacity for a life-style of obedience by the Holy Spirit's power (2:10; 3:16).

4:25 See section 3 of Truth-In-Action at the end of Eph.

4:26 Being **angry** may win a moment, but it is not to be allowed to win a day.

4:27 The Greek word for **place** (*topos*) emphasizes that believers can actually give ground in their lives to satanic control. This is a warning against theologized suppositions that argue against the possibility that demonic vexing or oppression may succeed with Christians. But the surrounding commands balance the issue (v. 17-5:14), making clear that responsible believers cannot glibly blame the Devil for sin they yield to in carnal disobedience.

4:28 See section 7 of Truth-In-Action at the end of Eph.

4:28 Note that the first motive for a believer to earn money is **that he may have something to give**. The occupational enterprise of Christians is not simply to make a living, but to make possible their being instruments of God's service to mankind through their work and giving.

4:29 See section 4 of Truth-In-Action at the end of Eph.

4:29 Corrupt is literally "decayed, rotten," as used for spoiled meat, rotted fruit, or crumbled stones.

4:30 The Holy Spirit has **sealed** ("authorized as a representative," 1:13) and dwells in the inner man (3:16). If He is grieved, the believer will be the first to know. **Grieve** means to cause injury or distress, the precise feeling the believer senses when sin or disobedience finds its place.

4:32 Jesus taught the duty of **forgiving . . . even as God**, and showed it to be fundamental to having one's own prayers for forgiveness answered (see Matt. 6:14, 15; 18:21-35).

5:1 See section 1 of Truth-In-Action at the end of Eph.

5:2 Sweet-smelling aroma parallels the figure of the OT sacrifices offered in worship. See also 2 Cor. 2:15, 16, concerning one's witness, and Heb. 13:15, 16, concerning one's worship.

5:3 See section 4 of Truth-In-Action at the end of Eph.

5:3 Fornication encompasses all acts of sexual immorality; **covetousness** identifies the insatiability of human carnality—never able to "get enough."

5:11 Have no fellowship means to have no share in the darkened life-style. See 1 Cor. 5:9-13.



5:15 See section 6 of Truth-In-Action at the end of Eph.

5:15 Circumspectly means to walk cautiously, sensitively, as a person would walk through thorny terrain.

5:16 Redeeming the time is capitalizing on every appropriate opportunity.

KINGDOM DYNAMICS

5:18 Encouraging One Another in Praise, PRAISE PATHWAY. This text instructs interaction in our praise. Paul tells the Ephesians to “(speak) to one another,” using psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. Entering a gathering of believers, even with a small offering of praise, our worship begins to be magnified as we join with others. Their voices encourage us, and we inspire them. Separation from the local assembly deprives a person of this relationship and its strength. Let us assemble often and praise much—encouraging one another in praise.

5:18 See section 1 of Truth-In-Action at the end of Eph.

5:18 The tense of the Greek for **be filled** makes clear that such a Spirit-filled condition does not stop with a single experience, but is maintained by “continually being filled,” as commanded here.

5:19 Note the place of songful worship as a means to fulfilling the directive in v. 18—to be filled continually with the Spirit. **Psalms** are scriptural lyrics in song; **hymns** are humanly inspired lyrics in song; **spiritual songs** are impromptu rhythmic lyrics given by the Holy Spirit in one’s language or in “tongues” (see 1 Cor. 14:15).

5:21 See section 3 of Truth-In-Action at the end of Eph.

5:21 Submitting is taking the divinely ordered place in a relationship. Submission can never be required by one human being of another; it can only be given on the basis of trust, that is, to believe God’s Word and to be willing to learn to grow in relationships.

KINGDOM DYNAMICS

5:22 Christ and the Church Model Husband/Wife Relationships, FAMILY ORDER. The specific instructions that the apostle Paul gives to husbands and wives are a glimpse of the Bridegroom and bride—a heavenly model for every marriage on Earth.

As a husband, how should I behave toward my wife? Look to Christ, the divine Bridegroom, in His relationship with the church: love her, sacrifice for her, listen to her concerns, take care of her; be as sensitive to her needs and her hurts as you are to those of your own body.

As a wife, how should I behave toward my husband? Look to the chosen bride, the church, in its relationship with Christ: respect him, acknowledge his calling as “head” of



Ephesians

the family, respond to his leadership, listen to him, praise him, be unified in purpose and will with him; be a true helper (see Gen. 2:18).

No husband and wife can do this by mere willpower or resolve, but since you (including your marriage) are “His workmanship” (Eph. 2:8-10), God will help bring this about.

5:22 Women are never made second to men in general, but the wife is specifically called to accept her husband’s leadership.

5:23 The Bible does not put males over females, but it does call for husbands to accept responsible leadership in the same spirit of self-giving and devotion Christ has shown for His church.

5:24 These verses put such demands upon the Christian husband that it is impossible to see how a charge of male chauvinism could justly be made against the Bible, or how a license to exploit women or wives could ever be claimed from such texts.

KINGDOM DYNAMICS

6:1 14. Will I Have My Family in Heaven?, SPIRITUALANSWERS. For the answer to this and other probing questions about God and the power life in His kingdom, see the study article “Spiritual Answers to Hard Questions,” which begins on page 1996.

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6:1 The guidelines are for the family **in the Lord**, and are not necessarily expected to work outside the believing home.

KINGDOM DYNAMICS

6:4 Parents Responsible to Raise Children, FAMILY ORDER. God holds parents responsible for the upbringing of children—not grandparents, not schools, not the state, not youth groups, not peers and friends. Although each of these groups may influence children, the final duty rests with parents, and particularly with the father, whom God has appointed “head” to lead and serve the family. Two things are necessary for the proper teaching of children: a right attitude and a right foundation. An atmosphere reeking with destructive criticism, condemnation, unrealistic expectations, sarcasm, intimidation, and fear will “provoke a child to wrath.” In such an atmosphere, no sound teaching can take place.

The positive alternative would be an atmosphere rich in encouragement, tenderness, patience, listening, affection, and love. In such an atmosphere parents can build into the lives of their children the precious foundation of knowledge of God. (See also Deut. 6:6, 7; Prov. 22:6.)



6:5 In contrast to vv. 1-4, the believer's ethical duty and diligence in the marketplace is to perform as though serving Christ even when the worker's counterpart—employer or employee—is **according to the flesh**, that is, even when the other is not necessarily a Christian.

6:5 See section 3 of Truth-In-Action at the end of Eph.

KINGDOM DYNAMICS

6:10 Spiritual Warfare, FAITH'S WARFARE. Paul admonishes us to put on the whole armor of God in order to stand against the forces of hell. It is clear that our warfare is not against physical forces, but against invisible powers who have clearly defined levels of authority in a real, though invisible, sphere of activity. Paul, however, not only warns us of a clearly defined structure in the invisible realm, he instructs us to take up the whole armor of God in order to maintain a "battle-stance" against this unseen satanic structure. All of this armor is not just a passive protection in facing the enemy; it is to be used offensively against these satanic forces. Note Paul's final directive: we are to be "praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit" (v. 18). Thus, prayer is not so much a weapon, or even a part of the armor, as it is the means by which we engage in the battle itself and the purpose for which we are armed. To put on the armor of God is to prepare for battle. Prayer is the battle itself, with God's Word being our chief weapon employed against Satan during our struggle.

6:10 See section 5 of Truth-In-Action at the end of Eph.

6:10 Finally implies not "in conclusion," but rather "insofar as the rest of life and its challenges are concerned."

WORD WEALTH

6:11 stand against, *anthistemi* (anth-is-tay-mee); Strong's #436: Compare "antihistamine." From *anti*, "against," and *histemi*, "to cause to stand." The verb suggests vigorously opposing, bravely resisting, standing face-to-face against an adversary, standing your ground. Just as an antihistamine puts a block on histamine, *anthistemi* tells us that with the authority and spiritual weapons granted to us we can withstand evil forces.

6:11 The charge is to "brethren" (v. 10), not only each individual, but with corporate implications for the whole church.

6:12 Not . . . **against flesh and blood**: One of the church's greatest demands is to discern between the spiritual struggle and other social, personal, and political difficulties. Otherwise,



individual believers and groups become too easily detoured, “wrestling” with human adversaries instead of prayerfully warring against the invisible works of hell behind the scenes. **Heavenly places** recalls earlier references to: 1) spiritual resources available to the church (1:3); 2) Christ’s authority over evil (1:21); 3) the church’s being seated together with her ascended Lord (2:6); 4) the Father’s will to display His wisdom through the church to the confounding of evil powers (3:10). On these grounds this passage announces the church’s corporate assignment to prayer warfare, in order that evil will be driven back and the will of God advanced.

6:13 The metaphor here is based on the **armor** and battle dress of the first-century Roman soldier. Clearly the military metaphor is intended to show the reader that we are engaged in an active battle now. Though some suggest that the viewpoint of a continuous aggressive struggle minimizes the accomplished victory of the Cross, it in fact asserts that victory all the more. All spiritual warfare waged today is victorious only on the basis of appropriating the provision of the Cross and Christ’s blood (Col. 2:15). 1) Personal faith that positions itself against evil and 2) aggressive prayer warfare that assails demonic strongholds are two distinct and complementary facets of spiritual life.

This entire passage lends further support to this perspective: “To stand against” (v. 11) means to hold at bay aggressively or to stand in front of and oppose; “wrestle” (v. 12) means to engage actively in one-on-one combat; “to stand” (v. 13) means to be found standing after an active battle; and “stand” (v. 14) means take your stand for the next battle.

6:14 See section 5 of Truth-In-Action at the end of Eph.

6:15 Preparation refers to that which is already accomplished and ready.

6:16 The wicked one is a direct reference to the personal assault of Satan against believers.

6:18 See section 1 of Truth-In-Action at the end of Eph.

6:18 All prayer is literally “every order of praying,” the specific method by which spiritual warfare is carried on. Prayer is to include **supplication in the Spirit**, a phrase that elucidates Rom. 8:26, 27 and Jude 20, where Holy Spirit-assisted prayer is taught and directed. In 1 Cor. 14:14, 15 Paul clearly shows that such praying may include prayer “in a tongue” not known to the person praying.

6:19 The focus of all spiritual warfare is ultimately the opening of doors (Col. 4:3; 1 Cor. 16:9) so that the ministry of the gospel may be advanced.

TRUTH-IN-ACTION through EPHESIANS

Letting the LIFE of the Holy Spirit Bring Faith’s Works Alive in You!



Truth Ephesians Teaches

Guidelines for Growing in Godliness
Simply put, godliness is living the way God wants us to. Few books speak as clearly and succinctly to this subject as Eph. Here godliness is exhorted in terms of behavior, motivating dynamic, and example. Godly behavior is modeled after God Himself, especially as He has revealed Himself in His fullness in Jesus Christ.

Steps to Holiness

A major facet of holiness is living a life separated from the world. Jesus stressed this by saying that although we live in the world, we are not to be of the world.

Keys to Godly Relationships

Eph. has much to say about building godly relationships. This is one of the major themes of the NT. Our relationships are to be loving, truthful, selfless, and submissive. Simply put, Eph. exhorts that we relate to others as Jesus relates to the Father and to us.

Action Ephesians Invites

4:1 *Understand* that your conduct is the most effective sermon you will ever preach. *Live* a life that will give consistent, undeniable evidence of the truth of the gospel.

5:1, 2 *Model* your life after Jesus, imitating Him rather than others.

Understand that He is the perfect example of the love God requires.

5:18–20 *Be continually filled* with the Holy Spirit. *Overflow* with a continual song of praise and thanksgiving to maintain a Spirit-filled flow in your life.

6:18–20 *Give yourself* to constant, faithful prayer. *Let God change* your prayer life to a life of prayer.

4:17 *Be careful* to avoid and reject the world's way of thinking. *Realize* that thinking as the world does will unavoidably lead to sensuality and impurity.

4:25–27 *Diligently practice* honesty and truthfulness in all your relationships. *Deal with anger* quickly, not allowing it to influence your treatment of others.

5:21–6:4 *Maintain* a selflessly submissive attitude in all your family relationships. *Understand* that this will provide evidence that Christ rules your home.

6:5–8 *Do not be* merely a people-pleaser at work! *Serve the Lord* in all you do. *Recognize* that it is He who has assigned you to that post of responsibility.



How to Tame the Tongue

Proper speech is crucial to effective Christian living. Proverbs points out that life and death are in the power of the tongue. How important it is for us to realize that our speech can be spiritually motivated.

4:29 *Be careful* how you speak and what you say. *Reject* evil attitudes; and *develop* compassionate, forgiving attitudes toward others.

5:3–7 *Avoid* and *reject* any impure or immoral speech or behavior. *Be certain* that it contradicts your profession of faith in Christ.

Guidelines to Gaining Victory

Eph. gives us insight into the nature of the spiritual warfare we face daily. Our enemies are behind much of what combat is against spiritual forces, not men. Great is the protection and resources God has provided us to meet this enemy.

6:10–13 *Stand in readiness* for spiritual combat. *Recognize* that your demonic comes against you to harm you.

6:14–17 Each day, consciously *put on* the spiritual armor God supplies. *Learn* and *understand* the nature of this divine protection.

Keys to Wise Living

Perhaps wisdom is what is most necessary in governing our use of time.

5:15 *Use* time wisely, and *do not squander* it. *Be certain* that you will give an account of how you use God's gift of time.

Keys to Generous Living

Selflessness is most concretely expressed in generosity.

4:28 *Think* of how you can give rather than how you can get.

WORD WEALTH

6:20 *ambassador*, *presbeuo* (pres-byoo-oh); Strong's #4243: Literally "to be the elder," and later "to be an ambassador," a representative of a ruling authority. Ambassadors would be chosen from the ranks of mature, experienced men. To be an ambassador for Christ necessitates spiritual maturity.

² Hayford, J. W. (Ed.). (1997). *Spirit filled life study Bible* (electronic ed., Eph 1:1–6:19). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.

Keys to Ephesians

The Kingdom and the Heavenly Places

Kingdom Key: God's Purpose in View

No New Testament letter more clearly describes the church's mission and her privileged position "in Christ" than Ephesians. As noted elsewhere (see Colossians "Key"), the words "in Christ" and the believer's place "in the kingdom" are synonymous. The emphasis in Ephesians on the believer's position as "accepted in the Beloved" (1:6) establishes the believer's adequacy to function "in the heavenly places" (2:6; 6:12).

The term "heavenly places" translates the greek *epouranios*. This striking word describes the realm of the invisible—the real world of spiritual encounter and conflicts. The "heavenly places" are not some location in the distant heavens, such as John sees (Revelation 4–5). Rather, these are realms of invisible spiritual conflict on earth, where demon powers try to sustain control of humankind and world affairs (2:2–3).

"The heavenly places" introduces us to the church's place of intended dominion and dynamic operation. It focuses on Jesus' assertion, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36), and reminds us that our arena of action is spiritual, not political. Anytime in church history that God's people have forgotten this, the church has fallen into sore confusion.

Ephesians shows that the church is to *shape* the affairs of this world. It is to do so by its effectiveness "in heavenly places"—that is, by making the advance of God's kingdom known and felt through confrontation with and mastery over dark powers. This is achieved by a ministry of prayer warfare (6:10–20) and by the spread of the gospel (2 Cor. 4:1–6).

Ephesians refers to "the heavenly places" five times, shedding light on the church's qualifications for dynamic kingdom advance.

1. We are qualified for effective ministry through our being "blessed... in the heavenly places" (1:3). This blessing is decidedly spiritual (*pneumatika*, here, is also used for the gifts of the Holy Spirit in 1 Cor. 12:1). The place of Holy Spirit gifts in overthrowing the works of hell are hereby noted.

2. We are secured in Christ in a "seat" of triumph and dominion over all dark powers (1:19–23; 2:6). The combination of these two texts not only reveals the present place of our Lord's dominion over the devil; it also declares our present partnership with Him in exercising that dominion.

3. We are shown God's great delight in how His "wisdom" takes ordinary creatures, now redeemed and restored through His Son, and uses them—the church—to make His awesome power known (3:9–10). Here is a humbling truth: God's joy is to confound the Adversary by displaying His glorious power through those He has rescued from hopelessness (2:12) and restored to kingdom partnership in Christ (2:6).

4. In this light we are assigned to take action. The ministry of prayer, intercession, and spiritual warfare is the pathway to expanded conquest over hell's hold on the people and



affairs of this planet. Girded in God's armor, we are to engage the warfare with confidence (6:10–20).

Master Key: God's Son Revealed

Ephesians has been called “the Alps of the New Testament,” “the Grand Canyon of Scripture,” and “the Royal Capstone of the Epistles,” not only because of its grand theme, but because Christ's majesty is revealed here. In chapter 1, He is the Redeemer (1:7), the One in whom and by whom history will ultimately be consummated (1:10); and He is the resurrected Lord who not only has risen over death and hell but reigns as King. He pours out His life through His body, the church—the present expression of Himself on earth (1:15–23). In chapter 2, He is the Peacemaker who has reconciled humanity to God and who makes reconciliation among people possible as well (2:11–18); and He is the Chief Cornerstone of the new temple, His own people indwelt by God Himself (2:19–22). In chapter 3, He is the Treasure in whom life's unsearchable riches are found (3:8); and He is the Indweller of human hearts, securing us in God's love (3:17–19). In chapter 4, Jesus is the Giver of ministry gifts to His church (4:7–11); and He is the Victor who has broken hell's ability to keep humankind captive (4:8–10). In chapter 5, He is the Model Husband, unselfishly giving Himself to enhance His bride—His church (5:25–27, 32). In chapter 6, He is the Lord, mighty in battle, the resource of strength for His own as they arm themselves for spiritual warfare (6:10).

Key Word: *Building the Body of Christ*

Ephesians focuses on the believer's responsibility to walk in accordance with his heavenly calling in Christ Jesus and encouraging the body of Christ to maturity in Him.

Key Verses: Ephesians 2:8–10; 4:1–3

Key Chapter: Ephesians 6

Even though the Christian is blessed “with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ” (1:3), spiritual warfare is still the daily experience of the Christian while in the world.

Power Key: God's Spirit at Work

As with Christ, the Holy Spirit is revealed in widely varied ministry to and through the believer. In 1:13 the Holy Spirit is the Sealer, authorizing the believer to represent Christ; in 1:17



and 3:5 He is the Revealer, enlightening the heart to perceive God's purpose; in 3:16 He is the Empowerer whom Christ gives to strengthen believers within; in 4:3–4 He is the Spirit of Unity desiring to sustain the bond of peace in the body of Christ; in 4:30 He is the Spirit of Holiness who is grieved by insistence on carnal pursuits; in 5:18 He is the Fountain from which all believers are to be continuously filled; in 6:17, 18 He is the Giver of the Word as a sword for battle and the heavenly Assistant given to aid us in prayer and intercession until victory is won.

Introducing Ephesians

Background. Ephesus was a principal port on the west coast of Asia Minor, situated near present-day Izmir. It was one of the seven churches to whom Jesus addressed His letters in Revelation 2 and 3, a relevant fact for studying this epistle since it was originally circulated to approximately the same group of churches.

Although Paul had been to Ephesus earlier (Acts 18:21), he first came there to minister in the winter of A.D. 55. He ministered there for over two full years (Acts 19:8–10), developing so deep a relationship with the Ephesians that his farewell message to them is one of the Bible's most moving passages (Acts 20:17–38).

Occasion and Date. While imprisoned in Rome, Paul wrote Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon. Confined and awaiting trial (3:1; 4:1; 6:20), the apostle writes this encyclical letter—one to be read by several congregations. Ephesians is probably the same letter referred to in Colossians 4:16 as being circulated from Laodicea.

It appears that after writing Colossians, Paul was deeply stirred by an expanding revelation about the church. Now seeing the church as Christ's body and as God's instrument to confound and overthrow evil powers, he writes an elaboration of these themes.

Purpose. Ephesians unveils the "mystery" of the church as no other epistle. God's "secret" intention is revealed: (1) to form a body to express Christ's fullness on earth (1:15–23); (2) to do this by uniting one people—both Jew and Gentile, among whom God Himself dwells (2:11–3:7); and (3) to equip, empower, and mature this people to the end that they extend Christ's victory over evil (3:10–20; 6:12–20).

Content. The throbbing message of Ephesians is "to the praise of His [God's] glory" (1:6, 12, 14). The word "glory" occurs eight times and refers to the exceeding excellence of God's love, His wisdom, and His power. The magnificent goal is in Jesus' announced commitment to build a glorious, mature, and ministering church, "not having spot or wrinkle" (5:27).

Ephesians unfolds the process by which God is bringing the church to its destined purpose in Christ. Basic maturing steps are taken toward the church's battle with dark powers: (1) before the church is called to *war*, she is taught to *walk*; and (2) before being called to *walk*, the church is taught where she *stands*.

The epistle divides into two sections: (1) the believer's position, chapters 1–3, and (2) the believer's practice, chapters 4–6. In chapter 1, the recurrent term "in Christ" sums up the Christian's position, as having been given "every spiritual blessing." Several of these blessings



are enumerated: chosen, blameless (1:4), adopted, accepted (1:5–6), forgiven, predestined, and sealed (1:7, 11, 13).

With sweeping strokes, Paul moves to a bold, new assertion in the first of two prayers in this letter. He prays that each Christian may perceive God’s grand purpose in raising Christ to triumph—that now the church may know Christ’s victorious fullness as we resist evil and face life’s trials (1:15–2:10).

Chapter 2 describes how God’s grace has formed a united people among whom He can dwell in His fullness and glory. Through this people His high purpose is to be unveiled. Grasping the message of Ephesians requires understanding two words from chapter 3—“dispensation” and “mystery” (vv. 2–3). The apostle declared that God’s “secret” in planning the church is hidden no longer (3:3–4— *now* the “mystery” is *known*). He has designed the church to administer (“to dispense”) Christ’s fullness everywhere (3:2, 9), ministering as a living body, spreading over the earth and penetrating “the heavenuies.” God’s “manifold wisdom” now demonstrates His glory in the church (3:10–11), a manifestation that eventually will issue in the believer’s strengthening (3:14–20), maturing (4:15), confrontation, and victory (6:10–20). However, the church cannot approach this without a practical understanding of how this present glory of God’s grace and presence is to affect everyday living.

The great call to “walk worthy of the calling” introduces this letter’s second section (chs. 4–6). Systematically, Paul presents the ethical and moral implications of Spirit-filled living (4:1–6:9). The maturing process of the believer’s “equipping” (4:11–16) and the appeal to help each other forward (“speaking the truth in love”) will bring growth in the disciplines essential to the triumphant spiritual warrior’s life (6:10–20).

Personal Application. In short, Ephesians discloses awesome blessings of grace (“accepted in the Beloved,” 1:6) and awesome dimensions of spiritual authority over evil (“according to the power that works in us,” 3:20). But this awaits the believer’s first accepting the disciplines of unity (4:1–16), purity (4:17–31), forgiveness (4:32), and walking in the fullness of the Holy Spirit (5:1–21). With this, relationships at every point must be in order (5:22–6:9), the idea being firmly established that true spiritual power flows from true obedience to the divine order in relationships and personal conduct.

Surveying Ephesians

Opening greeting 1:1–2. Acts 19 describes Paul’s colorful and extremely fruitful ministry in Ephesus. In writing to the church, Paul offers no personal greetings, which are common in many of his letters, no doubt because this letter was to be circulated in a number of churches. Paul is in prison at this time and is concerned to see that the work in Asia continues as both Jews and Gentiles are forming the rapidly growing church.

I. THE BELIEVER’S POSITION IN CHRIST 1:3–14. Some of the most meaningful and reassuring truths in all the Bible are found here about God’s eternal interest in His people and His absolute commitment to bring His will to pass in their lives.



A. The blessings of full redemption (1:3–8). We have been chosen, predestined, adopted, redeemed, and forgiven! What more can be said about the unsearchable richness of God’s love for us in Jesus Christ?

“To the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved”

(1:3–6). This passage offers the most beautiful and complete statement of our acceptance in Christ and the lavish love of Father God for His children. “From before the foundation of the world” we were chosen in Christ as His children, and our predestination is found in the infinite knowledge of the Lord toward us. Our *praise is for the God who knew us before we knew Him, who loved us before we could love back, and who has accepted us in Christ even when our sin is so abhorrent that we cannot accept ourselves.

B. Partnership in God’s purpose (1:9–14). God’s purpose for His people will come to pass; the inheritance of the saints is assured. The salvation of the saints is certain, as they have been “sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise” (v. 14).

II. THE APOSTLE’S PRAYER FOR INSIGHT 1:15–23. Paul prays for wisdom and knowledge for the church so that they may know: (1) “the hope of his calling,” related to the eternal nature of their promise in Christ, and (2) the “greatness of His power,” which is available to the church as the body of Christ in the world.

A. For hearts that see with hope (1:15–18). The enlightenment of God’s people regarding their privilege in Christ can only come through a supernatural vision assisted by the Spirit of God (*see Prophecy*). The human heart and mind are incapable of grasping the dimension of Christ’s purpose for His people.

B. For experience that shares Christ’s victory (1:19–21). The complete vanquishing of the powers of darkness by Christ as described in Colossians 2:15 and 1 Corinthians 2:8 has established His preeminent place in heaven.

C. The church: Christ’s body (1:22–23). All things have been placed under Christ’s feet. Now, it remains for the church to walk in the same authority given to it as Christ’s body here on earth.

III. THE BELIEVER’S PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE 2:1–22. The work of grace is described as being personally significant and corporately significant in creating a completely new order of relationship in the church.



A. The past order of the living dead (2:1–3). Unbelievers are the “children of wrath” (v. 3), who are dominated by the spiritual powers of darkness. They are “dead” in sin, but by the power of Christ are made alive as they come to faith.

B. The new order of God’s loving life (2:4–10). Salvation is a matter of faith—which is a gift from God (2:8). In this new relationship we are seated together with Christ “in heavenly places” (1:20; 2:6).

“We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works”

(2:10). A believer’s good works have nothing to do with his or her salvation (Is.64:6). “Good works” result from the “*workmanship” of Christ in the life of the person by the Holy Spirit. Paul’s message is that faith saves the individual and good works flow from the life of a person growing in God’s grace.

C. The past separation and hopelessness (2:11–12). Paul is addressing Gentiles who were “strangers from the covenants of promise.” The cultural and religious separation between Jews and Gentiles was pronounced in the first century. The miracle of Christ’s new life in the believer is also moving toward a new community.

D. The new union and present peace (2:13–18). In Christ, Jews and Gentiles are “one new man from the two” (v. 15), both having “access by one Spirit to the Father” (v. 18; *see* Blood, The).

E. The church: Christ’s building (2:19–22). Paul continues with the imagery of a building that has a foundation of the apostles and prophets, but Jesus is the “chief cornerstone.” Jews and Gentiles (*see* Foreigner) *together* are being “built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit” (v. 22). This radical new concept is socially inconceivable, yet happening.

“Together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit”

(2:22). The transformation of Jesus Christ in the lives of individuals brings them from death to life, and the same is true within the culture of the church. Racial hatred, social separation, and cultural division in the body of Christ are completely unacceptable. Divisions among people are assailed throughout the New Testament. Jew and Gentile, male and female, master and slave are meaningless terms from God’s perspective



on the individual (Gal.3:28).“Together” the church is the dwelling place of God; separated the church ceases to be the instrument of redemption God intended it to be in the world.

IV. THE APOSTLE’S MINISTRY AND MESSAGE 3:1–13. Paul elaborates his mission as the apostle to the Gentiles and encourages them in the midst of his current personal struggle in prison.

A. The stewardship Paul has been given (3:1–7). The God-appointed mission of the apostle is to bring the Gentiles into the church as “fellow heirs” and “partakers of His promise” (v. 6).

B. The stewardship each believer is given (3:8–13). We are privileged to have instant access to the Father through faith. (see *Manifold*.)

V. THE APOSTLE’S PRAYER FOR POWER 3:14–21. Paul’s prayer is for the church to know the full measure of a personal relationship with Christ that reveals His love and power, bringing about the fullness of Christ in their lives.

A. For strength by the Holy Spirit (3:14–16). Paul prays that the inner man be changed and encouraged by grace. (see *Family Life; Prayer*.)

B. For faith and love by Christ’s indwelling (3:17–19). “Filled with all the *fullness of God” (v. 19) is the ultimate heart cry of the apostle for all those in his care.

“That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love”

(3:17).First John 3:8 categorically identifies the presence of love for other people as the sign of a life transformed by the Spirit of God.Our faith in Christ opens the way for the Spirit of God to make true agape (God’s love) a reality in our lives, making us candidates for “the fullness of God” (v. 19) to be at work within us.Only then can a person function in the selfless, servant-like spirit that the Bible commands.

C. The church and God’s glory (3:20–21). “The power that works in us” (v. 20) is God’s power by the Holy Spirit. All of the requests for knowledge, fullness, love, and faith come as



the result of our personal participation with God in allowing the Holy Spirit access to the hidden parts of our lives.

VI. THE BELIEVER'S CALL TO RESPONSIBILITY 4:1–16. Here is the turning point in the epistle. The doctrinal and theological treatment of our place in Christ now shifts to the character, lifestyle, and relationships of the people of God.

A. To pursue unity with diligence (4:1–6). Unity is not an option for the ecumenical-minded in the body of Christ—it is commanded: “Keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (v. 3).

B. To accept grace and gifts humbly (4:7–11). The Lord Jesus Himself gives gifts to His church for the purpose of furthering ministry (see Holy Spirit Gifts). These gifts are in the form of leaders who will lead, train, equip, and release the people of God in service to the world.

C. To grow in ministry as part of the body (4:12–16). Every part of the Lord's body must be edified and matured so that each can take his or her place in ministry to the world.

“*Equipping the saints for the work of ministry”

(4:12). Offices in the church have only one purpose in Scripture: preparing the people of God for their mission in the world. The tradition of trained clergy being the “ministers” of the congregation has bankrupted the church of its vitality and purpose. If the Great Commission in Matthew 28 were addressed merely to the disciples, the church would be a single-generation phenomenon. The responsibility for disciple-making belongs to the whole church. Each person has a unique sphere of influence, but it is the job of the church leadership to equip the people of God for this work.

VII. THE BELIEVER'S CALL TO PURITY 4:17–5:14. Believers must cooperate with the work of God's Spirit in the process of having personal transformation take place in attitude, action, and lifestyle.

A. To refuse worldly mindedness (4:17–19). The new convert needs “reprogramming” in terms of thinking and feelings. Life in Christ is a radical reorientation to a world of ignorance, blindness, and lewdness which can no longer be allowed to dominate the believer.

B. To put off the old and put on the new (4:20–32). Symbolically done at baptism, the Holy Spirit supplies both the power and the opportunity for the old man to be challenged and done away with by the believer. The consequence of such action allows the new man to be put on (see Manhood). The holiness and “true righteousness” of this new man are related to the work of God's grace referred to in 2:10.



C. To progress in untainted love (5:1–7). “Be imitators of God... walk in love.” Paul exhorts the church to act on its life in Christ. Describing the awful consequences of a worldly lifestyle—“the wrath of God”—Paul cautions, “do not be partakers with them [the world].”

D. To shine as undimmed light bearers (5:8–14). The people of the light live in the light, and they have no fellowship with the “unfruitful works of darkness” (v. 11). These believers carry the responsibility to beam the light of God’s love and righteousness in their own lives and in the culture around them. The church is not on a self-righteous mission but a redemptive one in the light of God’s love.

VIII. THE BELIEVER’S CALL TO SPIRIT-FILLED LIVING 5:15–6:9. The Christian’s personal walk with God and all relationships are affected by the commitment to be God’s person. Nothing is the same when Christ takes over a life.

A. To pursue God’s will and wisdom (5:15–17). Walking “circumspectly” means to be aware of what is happening around you and how you relate to it. The wise believer is not ignorant of the devil’s devices to deceive and destroy. Neither is the believer to be ignorant of the carnal nature of one’s own desire, which can become a snare. (see Stewardship.)

B. To maintain the fullness of the Holy Spirit through worship and humility (5:18–21). Spirit fullness is contrasted with the drunkenness that comes from too much wine. The world’s wine brings “dissipation”; the Spirit fullness that accompanies the worship life of the believer (see Praise) builds the person of God.

“Do not be drunk with wine in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit”

(5:18). The Holy Spirit outpouring in Acts 2:15 appeared to some to be drunkenness, but Holy Spirit power never diminishes a person’s capacity for reason, sound-minded action, or sensitivity to other people. Paul exhorts all believers to live consciously in the ever-flowing stream of the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

“Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord”



(5:19–20). This joyful song is to result in the giving of thanks to the Lord (v. 20). The people of God are to live with the melody of Christ in their hearts, with the overflow of song being one evidence. Songs focused on Jesus and God’s Word can lift the heart and strengthen the people of God in their daily walk with the Lord.

C. To conduct all relationships according to God’s order (5:22–6:9). All believers are to submit to each other “in the fear of God” (v. 21). Wives are to submit to their husbands; husbands submit to loving their wives as Jesus loved the church (*see* Manhood). Children are to obey; fathers are to nurture their children in a way that brings respect rather than provocation (*see* Family Life). Slaves are to be obedient; masters must rule with the understanding that they themselves have a master, God Himself. Paul offers a clear picture of the rights and the responsibilities each of us have in the various relationships of our life.

IX. THE BELIEVER’S CALL TO *SPIRITUAL WARFARE 6:10–20. The spiritual world is real, and it makes an impact on more than is obvious to most believers. Paul offers insight and direction for not being taken unaware in the midst of the invisible battle around us (*see* Withstand).

A. The reality of the invisible conflict (6:10–12). Our principal warfare is not against our circumstances or opposition from people who seem to stand in the way of progress. Our true enemies must be identified and then assaulted with the spiritual weapons at the disposal of the Christian.

B. Armor for the warrior (6:13–17). Believers must be protected from the spiritual conflict that surrounds them. The purpose of the armor of God is to “withstand in the evil day” (v. 13).

C. The action involved in warfare (6:18–20). Prayer and God’s Word are the two weapons of the people of God who are engaged in spiritual combat. The Word of God offers the terms of God’s purpose on the issues being “wrestled” over, and prayer is the spiritual exercise that ultimately brings the victory of God to our struggles. Jesus said, “Ask anything” in John 14:14; He also informs us that the agreement of the saints in prayer brings the action of God (Matt. 18:19).

“We do not wrestle against flesh and blood”

(6:10–18). The warfare of the believer is not against human resistance but against spiritual powers. Our demonic Adversary divides sincere brethren, causes stress in families, misdirects a believer’s attention, and tempts people to sin and eventual bondage. The Word of God (v. 17) and prayer (v. 18) are effective weapons for overcoming spiritual powers (v. 12) that



cause havoc in our world. However, in the midst of battle Paul instructs us on the “whole armor of God” to protect us in the battle.

“That I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an *ambassador in chains”
(6:19). Paul solicits prayer from the Ephesians so that he might be a bold witness. To us this seems ridiculous; Paul is the very definition of boldness. However, we learn elsewhere that Paul’s witness as a prisoner is shaking the emperor’s palace in Rome (Phil. 4:22). Pray for God to anoint you with boldness to share the testimony of Christ with the people who need it most.

CONCLUDING REMARKS 6:21–24. Paul is sending the letter with Tychicus, who will “make all things known to you” as he continues and elaborates the ministry intended by the letter. mark 41tna1

TRUTH-IN-ACTION through EPHESIANS

Truth Ephesians Teaches

Action Ephesians Invites

Guidelines for Growing in Godliness

Simply put, godliness is living the way God wants us to. Few books speak as clearly and succinctly to this subject as does Eph. Here godliness is exhorted in terms of behavior, motivating dynamic, and example. Godly behavior is modeled after God Himself, especially as He has

4:1 *Understand* that your conduct is the most effective sermon you will ever preach. *Live* a life that will give consistent, undeniable evidence of the truth of the gospel.

5:1, 2 *Model* your life after Jesus, imitating Him rather than others. *Understand* that He is the perfect example of the love God requires.



revealed Himself in His fullness in Jesus Christ.

5:18–20 *Be continually filled* with the Holy Spirit. *Overflow* with a continual song of praise and thanksgiving to maintain a Spirit-filled flow in your life.

6:18–20 *Give yourself* to constant, faithful prayer. *Let God change* your prayer life to a life of prayer.

Steps to Holiness

A major facet of holiness is living a life separated from the world. Jesus stressed this by saying that although we live in the world, we are not to be of the world.

4:17 *Be careful* to avoid and reject the world's way of thinking. *Realize* that thinking as the world does will unavoidably lead to sensuality and impurity.

Keys to Godly Relationships

Eph. has much to say about building godly relationships. This is one of the major themes of the NT. Our relationships are to be loving, truthful, selfless, and submissive. Simply put, Eph. exhorts that we relate to others as Jesus relates to the Father and to us.

4:25–27 *Diligently practice* honesty and truthfulness in all your relationships. *Deal with anger* quickly, not allowing it to influence your treatment of others.

5:21–6:4 *Maintain* a selflessly submissive attitude in all your family relationships. *Understand* that this will provide evidence that Christ rules your home.

6:5–8 *Do not be* merely a people-pleaser at work! *Serve the Lord* in all you do. *Recognize* that it is He who has assigned you to that post of responsibility.

How to Tame the Tongue

Proper speech is crucial to effective Christian living. Proverbs points out that life and death are in the power of the tongue. How important it is for us to realize that our speech can be spiritually motivated.

4:29 *Be careful* how you speak and what you say. *Reject* evil attitudes; and *develop* compassionate, forgiving attitudes toward others.

5:3–7 *Avoid* and *reject* any impure or immoral speech or behavior. *Be certain* that it contradicts your profession of faith in Christ.

Guidelines to Gaining Victory

6:10–13 *Stand in readiness* for spiritual combat. *Recognize* that your



Eph. gives us insight into the nature of the spiritual warfare we face daily. Our combat is against spiritual forces, not men. Great is the protection and resources God has provided us to meet this enemy.

demonic enemies are behind much of what comes against you to harm you. **6:14-17** Each day, consciously *put on* the spiritual armor God supplies. *Learn* and *understand* the nature of this divine protection.

Keys to Wise Living

Perhaps wisdom is what is most necessary in governing our use of time.

5:15 *Use* time wisely, and *do not squander* it. *Be certain* that you will give an account of how you use God's gift of time.

Keys to Generous Living

Selflessness is most concretely expressed in generosity.

4:28 *Think* of how you can give rather than how you can get.

3

THEMES:

**7030
unity**

The bringing together of separate or fragmented parts into a unified whole. It is God's ultimate goal to unite the whole of creation; his desire for unity is evident, too, in the life of his people. God himself acts as a unity in all his works.

**7031
unity, God's goal of**

God's purpose is to bring together and reconcile to himself the whole of creation. This desire for unity is a reflection of the unity within the Godhead; it is expressed in marriage, and demonstrated in the fellowship of the church.

Unity is a reflection of God's person

Dt 6:4; Jn 17:22 See also **Mk 12:29,32; Jn 1:1; 17:11; Gal 3:20; 1Jn 5:7**

Alienation is a result of sin

Alienation from God Ge 3:8,23-24; Isa 59:2; Eze 28:16; Jas 4:4

Alienation from one another Ge 4:7-9,23-24; 6:11; Jas 4:1-2; Jude 19

³ Hayford, J. W., Thomas Nelson Publishers. (1995). [Hayford's Bible handbook](#). Nashville, TN; Atlanta, GA; London; Vancouver: Thomas Nelson Publishers.



God's purpose in unity

To bring together all peoples Ps 133:1; Eph 1:9-10

To unite all peoples under his rule Zec 14:9 *See also* Ge 49:10; Ps 72:8-11; Isa 2:2-4 pp Mic 4:1-3; Jn 10:16; Php 2:9-11; Rev 11:15

To unite all peoples in worship Isa 19:23-25 *See also* Ps 86:9; Isa 56:6-8; Zec 8:20-23; 14:16; Mk 11:17; Rev 15:4

To bring reconciliation between Jew and Gentile Eph 2:11-19 *See also* Isa 14:1; Ro 10:12; Gal 3:28; Col 3:11

To bring reconciliation among his people Jer 50:4 *See also* Isa 11:10-13; Eze 37:21-24; Mic 2:12; Mt 5:24; Php 4:2

To reconcile humanity to himself Col 1:19-22 *See also* Ro 5:10-11; 2Co 5:18-19; Heb 10:19-20

Expressions of unity brought by God

Unity between husband and wife Ge 2:24 *See also* Mal 2:15; Mt 19:5-6 pp Mk 10:7-8; 1Co 6:16; 7:4,10-11

Marriage as an expression of unity between God and his people Jer 2:2; Eph 5:31-32 *See also* Isa 54:5; Jer 31:32; Hos 2:16; Jn 3:29; Rev 19:7; 21:2,9

Unity within the church Jn 17:21 *See also* Ac 2:1; 4:32; 1Co 1:10; 10:17; 12:12; Eph 4:13

See also

1170 God, unity of

1510 Trinity, the

2230 Messiah, coming of

5712 marriage, God & his people

5729 one flesh

6109 alienation

6716 reconciliation

9145 Messianic age

7032

unity, of God's people

A distinguishing characteristic of God's people, which derives from their common relationship with God, and is expressed in commitment to one another, mutual concern, concerted action and harmony within the believing community.

Unity in a common relationship with God

As children of God Mal 2:10 *See also* Ps 133:1; Mt 23:8-9; Ro 8:15-17; Col 1:2,12; 1Jn 5:1

As the people of God 1Pe 2:9-10 *See also* Ex 6:7; 19:5-6; Dt 7:6; 2Sa 7:24 pp 1Ch 17:22; Mal 3:17; Eph 1:14; Heb 11:25



Unity in a common union with Christ

1Co 10:16-17; 12:27 *See also* Jn 11:52; Ro 12:4-5; **1Co 12:12; Gal 3:26-28; Eph 2:17-19; 4:16; Col 3:11**

Unity through common receiving of the Holy Spirit

1Co 12:13 *See also* Isa 34:16; Ac 10:45-47; **1Co 12:4-11; 2Co 13:14; Eph 2:22; Heb 6:4**

Unity in a common faith

Eph 4:4-6 *See also* Eph 4:13; Tit 1:4; **1Jn 1:1-3; Jude 3**

Expressions of unity among God's people

Commitment to one another 1Sa 18:1-4; Ru 1:16-17; 1Th 2:8

Sharing possessions Ac 4:32 *See also* Lk 3:11; Ac 2:44-45; **Ro 12:13; 15:27; Gal 6:6; 2Ti 2:6**

Giving support Jos 22:3 *See also* Dt 3:18; **Heb 10:24-25**

Sharing troubles 2Co 1:7; Php 4:14

Unity expressed in agreement with one another

Living in harmony Ps 133:1; Eph 4:3; 1Pe 3:8 *See also* **Ro 12:16; 14:17; 1Co 10:24; Eph 4:25; Php 4:2; Col 1:12-14; 3:15**

United in purpose Php 1:27 *See also* **Jdg 20:11; 1Sa 14:7; Ezr 3:8-10; Ne 4:6; Mt 18:19-20**

Of one mind 1Co 1:10 *See also* **2Ch 30:12; Php 2:2**

Unity expressed in worshipping together

Ro 15:5-6 *See also* **Ps 22:22; 68:26; 122:1; 1Co 14:26; Heb 2:12**

Unity marks out God's people

Jn 17:21-23 *See also* **Jn 13:34-35**

See also

5783 agreement

6700 peace

7025 church, unity

7140 people of God

7921 fellowship

7933 Lord's Supper

8210 commitment to God's people

8292 love⁴

*****PO's notes:

What did Epaphras report?

⁴ Manser, M. H. (2009). [*Dictionary of Bible Themes: The Accessible and Comprehensive Tool for Topical Studies*](#). London: Martin Manser.



We can guess it included concerns from these themes contained in Ephesians:

UNITY:

Ephesians 2:12-14 One in Christ

¹¹ Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands—¹² ***remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.*** ¹³ ***But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.*** ¹⁴ ***For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility*** ¹⁵ by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, ¹⁶ and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. ¹⁷ And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. ¹⁸ For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens,^[d] but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, ²¹ in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. ²² In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by^[e] the Spirit.

LOVE:

This oneness was to be **demonstrated by their love one for another. Paul used the noun or verb form of love (agape) 19 times (about one-sixth of the total uses in all the Pauline letters).**

- Ephesians begins with love

Ephesians 1:4–6

⁴ *even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love* ⁵ *He predestined us for adoption to Himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His will,* ⁶ *to the praise of His glorious grace, with which He has blessed us in the Beloved.*

- Ends with love

Ephesians 6:23–24

²³ *Peace be to the brothers, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.* ²⁴ *Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love incorruptible.*

PAUL HAS A HABIT OF ADDRESSING THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM (Unity&Love) and he also includes:

REDEMPTION 1:7 (Salvation, Restoration)

DIVINE INTENTION for the human race 1:3-14 (God’s plan for us)

GRACE 1:2 (God’s favor that we never can earn)

PREDESTINATION 1:4-5

RECONCILIATION 2:1-21

UNION WITH CHRIST 2:1-21



If these are Paul's answers.....

WHAT PROBLEMS WOULD EXIST FOR THESE TO BE THE ANSWERS?

HOW can we accomplish this?

The new body, the church, has been endowed by the power of the Holy Spirit to enable them to live out their new lives (1:3–2:10) BY THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT:

Vs 1:13 **Sealed** with the promised Holy Spirit. WHO is our guarantee of our inheritance.

Ephesians 2:10b

*⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, **created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.***

2:18

¹⁸ For through him we both **have access in one Spirit to the Father.**

NIV Bible Speaks today: Notes on Ephesians

Outline

1:1–2	Greetings
1:3–14	What God has done for believers in Jesus Christ
1:15–23	Thanksgiving and prayer
2:1–10	Being made alive in Christ
2:11–22	Jews and Gentiles made one in Christ
3:1–13	The mystery made known
3:14–21	A prayer for the Ephesians
4:1–16	Unity in the body of Christ
4:17–5:20	Living as children of the light
5:21–6:9	Regulations for Christian households
6:10–20	The armour of God
6:21–24	Final greetings

Background and setting



Ephesians

The letter to the Ephesians is a marvellously concise, yet comprehensive, summary of the Christian good news and its implications. Nobody can read it without being moved to wonder and worship, and challenged to consistency of life. Many readers have been brought to faith and stirred to good works by its message. Ephesians is a vital book for today since it promises community in a world of disunity, reconciliation in place of alienation and peace instead of war.

In keeping with the convention of the day, the author begins by announcing himself—**Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus (1:1)**. Paul's authorship of Ephesians was universally accepted from the first century until the rise in the 1820s of critical scholarship. The evidence and arguments for the traditional view are strong and impressive. It reassures us to approach the text itself and read that Paul claims the same title that Jesus gave his closest followers (Lk 6:12–13), and that designated somebody specially chosen, called and sent to teach with authority. This is not a ministry Paul volunteered for, nor did the church appoint him. His apostleship derived from the will of God and from the choice and commission of Jesus Christ. Since this is so, we must listen to the message of Ephesians with attention and humility. Paul speaks with the authority of Jesus himself, in whose name and by whose inspiration he writes.

The letter is addressed to **God's holy people in Ephesus (1:1)**. Originally a Greek colony, Ephesus was now the capital of the Roman province of Asia Minor and a busy commercial port. It was also the headquarters of the cult of the goddess Diana (or Artemis), whose temple, after being destroyed in the middle of the fourth century BC, was gradually rebuilt to become one of the seven wonders of the world.

The words **in Ephesus (1:1)** are not found in several early manuscripts of this letter—and one mid-second-century writer says that the letter was addressed to the Christians in the nearby city of Laodicea. This has led some scholars to think that this was a circular letter intended for several churches in Asia Minor, but the mystery remains unsolved.

Themes and relevance

The letter to the Ephesians focuses on what God has done through Jesus Christ and is doing through the Holy Spirit to build a new society. It tells how Jesus shed his blood in a sacrificial death for sin, and was then raised from death by the power of God and exalted to the supreme place in the universe and in the church. More than that, we who are 'in Christ', united to him by faith, have shared in these great events. We have been raised from spiritual death, exalted to heaven and seated with him there. We have been reconciled to God and to each other. Through Christ and in Christ, we are nothing less than God's new society, the single new humanity he is creating. We are the family of God the Father, the body of Jesus Christ his Son and the temple or dwelling-place of the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, we are to demonstrate plainly and visibly by our new life the reality of the new work which God has done: first by the unity and diversity of our common life, secondly by the purity of love in our everyday behaviour, next by the mutual submissiveness and care of our relationships at home and lastly by our stability in the fight against the powers of evil.

The letter can be outlined like this:

- 1:3–2:10: the new life God has given us in Christ



- 2:11–3:21: the new society God has created through Christ
- 4:1–5:21: the new standards God expects in his new society
- 5:22–6:24: the new relationships into which God has brought us—harmony in the home and hostility to the devil.

The whole letter is thus a magnificent combination of Christian doctrine and Christian duty, Christian faith and Christian life, what God has done in Christ and what we must do in response.

Today more than ever Christians need to catch the biblical vision of the church, God's new society. In many places the church is in decline and urgently needs to be renewed. But what should that renewal look like? Ephesians will supply us with the answers. Here is Christ's own blueprint for his church, the church he **gave himself** up to redeem (5:25), the church **which is his body** and even his **fullness** (1:23).

Chapter 1

1:1–14 Spiritual blessings in Christ

In the original Greek text, vv. 3–14 are a single complex sentence. The words pour from Paul's pen as a continuous cascade of praise—a doxology, a blessing on God for blessing us with every conceivable blessing. The gifts God gives us are **spiritual** (3), in contrast with Old Testament days when God's blessings were largely material. The blessings from God relate to the past—**before the creation of the world** (4), the present—what **we have** in Christ (7) and the future—**when the times reach their fulfilment** (10).

The past blessing is election. In eternity past, before creation, God did something. **He chose us in him** (4). God put us and Christ together in his mind. He determined to make us his own children through the redeeming work of Christ. Everybody finds the doctrine of election difficult. 'Didn't I choose God?' someone will ask. To which we must answer, 'Yes, indeed you did, but only because in eternity past God had first chosen you.' Scripture nowhere dispels the mystery of election, but it is without question a biblical doctrine.

The present blessing we enjoy is **adoption to sonship** (5). God destined us in love to be his sons. We gain access to God as our Father and we lose our blemishes, beginning at once, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit.

The future blessing is that **he made known to us the mystery of his will** (9), **to bring unity to all things ... under Christ** (10). God's guarantee of our inheritance, the pledge and **seal** of all his promises, is the **Holy Spirit** (13). In giving him to us, God is not just promising our final inheritance, but actually giving us a foretaste of it.

How does the fact that God had a plan and purpose for you before the world was created affect you? Note the phrase 'to the praise of his glory' (1:5–6, 12, 14). Do you live for God's glory? In what ways? How can you widen the reflection of God's glory in your life? How do you incorporate praise for God's blessings into your life?

1:15–23 Open our eyes



Ephesians 1 is divided into two sections. First, Paul blesses God for having blessed us in Christ; then he prays that God will open our eyes to grasp the fullness of this blessing. Having heard of the Ephesians' faith and love, Paul says that he continuously thanks God for them, and then encompasses them with his prayers. His request is that they may appreciate to the fullest possible extent the implications of the blessings they have already received.

Paul prays that God **may give [them] the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that [they] may know [God] better** (17). He is not asking God to give the Holy Spirit to those who have already received him and been sealed by him (13), but rather that they should receive the Spirit's ministry of illumination. **I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened** (18). The apostle brings together three great truths that he wants his readers to grasp. First, Paul prays that our eyes would be opened to God's call (18). God called us to Christ and holiness, to freedom and peace, to suffering and glory. More simply, it was a call to a new life. Secondly, Paul wants us to grasp **the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people** (18). God's inheritance points to that final inheritance which Peter describes as one 'that can never perish, spoil or fade' and is 'kept in heaven for you' (1 Pe 1:4). Thirdly, Paul wants the Ephesians and us to grasp God's **incomparably great power** (19)—the power demonstrated in Christ's resurrection, exaltation and enthronement as **head over everything** (22).

In what ways do you want to know God better? How can you begin to fulfil that desire? Jesus' resurrection and ascension were visible demonstrations of God's power. What would it be like to see that power at work in your life today? What would change? For whom would you pray this prayer? What specific requests would you make?

Chapter 2

2:1–10 Resurrection life

In this brief passage Paul first plumbs the depths of pessimism about humanity and then rises to the heights of optimism about God. He paints a vivid contrast between what a person is by nature and what we can become by grace. Paul's devastating description of the human condition apart from God is universal: we **were dead** (1), we were enslaved to **the ways of this world** (2) and we were condemned, **deserving of wrath. All of us ... lived** (3) this way.

In contrast to the desperate condition of fallen humanity, we have the gracious initiative and sovereign action of God. We once were the objects of his wrath, **but because of his great love for us** (4), God had mercy on us. We were dead, but God **made us alive with Christ** (5). We were slaves, but God has **raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms** (6). God has taken action to reverse our condition. Salvation is certainly deliverance from our fallen condition, but it also includes the totality of our new life in Christ—and it is all of grace from first to last. **Grace** is God's free and undeserved mercy towards us, and **faith** (8) is the humble trust with which we receive it for ourselves. **Good works** (10) are indispensable to salvation too—not as the means of salvation, but as its evidence. We are **not saved by works** (9), but **we are ... created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do** (10).



In contrast to the desperate condition you were once in, what has God done for you in salvation according to this passage? How can you respond to God's marvellous grace as Paul describes it in this passage and as you have experienced it personally?

2:11–22 He is our peace

For Jewish people, the New Testament world was sharply divided between God's covenant people of Israel and the rest—the nations, the Gentiles. Circumcision was a sign given to Abraham as the mark of inclusion in the blessings of his covenant. Gentiles were **called 'uncircumcised' by those who call themselves 'the circumcision'** (11). Gentile alienation is described in stark terms: they were **separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world** (12). Then follows the great change: **But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ** (13).

Jesus **himself is our peace** (14). What did he do when he died on the cross to get rid of the enmity between Jew and Gentile, between lost humanity and God? First, Christ's death set aside **the law with its commands and regulations** (15). Jesus did not abolish the moral law (Mt 5:17), but he set the whole ceremonial law aside. Secondly, Jesus created a single **new humanity** (15), a new human community that spans racial, gender and social distinctions (Gal 3:28; Col 3:11). Then Jesus reconciled both Jews and Gentiles **to God through the cross** (16). **We are no longer foreigners and strangers, but citizens of a new kingdom, members of a new family** (19) and participants in **a holy temple in the Lord** (21), **a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit** (22). God is not tied to holy buildings any longer, but to holy people, to his own new humanity.

How are churches divided from each other today? What binds churches together in unity? As you think about the spiritual building that is being constructed, how are the apostles and prophets the foundation? Why is it important that Jesus is the chief cornerstone?

Chapter 3

3:1–13 A servant of the gospel

Paul introduces himself as **the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles** (1). What led to opposition to Paul from the Jewish leaders was his uncompromising defence of the Gentile cause. Four times Paul uses the word **mystery** (3–4, 6, 9). In English a 'mystery' is something secret and puzzling, but in Paul's Greek a 'mystery' is something once hidden but now openly revealed by God. What is this truth **which was not made known to people in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets** (5)? He spells it out in the next verse: **This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus** (6).

This privileged ministry of spreading the good news to Gentiles has three stages in Paul's mind. He was commissioned first **to preach to the Gentiles the boundless riches of Christ** (8). Secondly, Paul was called **to make plain to everyone** (9) what God had purposed to do. The third



phase of Paul's ministry broadens to include **the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms** (10). These are spiritual beings, spectators of the drama of salvation. The good news of God's salvation offered to all humanity through the cross was passed from God to Paul, from Paul and others to all humanity, and from the church on earth back to heaven again, to the cosmic powers. This was God's **eternal purpose**—to create the church out of a new and reconciled humanity in union with **Christ Jesus our Lord** (11).

Among your Christian friends, who is different from you (age, ethnicity, gender, social and economic status, political views)? What have you learned from them? Why would God want heavenly rulers and authorities (angels) to understand his wisdom and purpose in offering salvation to all human beings?

3:14–21 Confidence in God's power

Prayer expresses our anxieties and ambitions. We pray about what concerns us. This is certainly true of Paul's second prayer in Ephesians. He prays that God's wonderful plan which he has been explaining might be even more completely fulfilled in the experience of his readers.

The prayer itself is a staircase by which Paul climbs higher and higher in his desire for the Ephesian Christians. The prayer-staircase has four steps. He prays first that God **may strengthen [them] with power through his Spirit in [their] inner being** (16). He asks the Father to allow Christ by the Spirit to settle in their hearts and empower them. Secondly, he prays that they may be **rooted and established in love** (17). They need the Spirit's power and Christ's indwelling to enable them to love one another. Thirdly, Paul asks that they may **grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ** (18), even though that **love ... surpasses knowledge** (19). The love of Christ is wide enough to encompass all humanity, long enough to last for eternity, high enough to exalt him to heaven and deep enough to reach the most desperate sinner. Finally he prays that they **may be filled with all the fullness of God** (19). God expects believers to grow daily as they are being transformed by the Holy Spirit into Christ's image.

Paul concludes his prayer with a declaration that our God is at work powerfully within us. Such a God can answer any prayer. He **is able to do what we ask or imagine** (20); he **is able to do ... all we ask or imagine**; he **is able to do ... more than all we ask or imagine**; he **is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine according to his power that is at work within us** (20). **To him be glory** (21), Paul exclaims, to this God of resurrection power who alone can make the impossible happen. The power comes from him; the glory must go to him **for ever and ever!** (21).

Can you think of another Christian for whom you would want to pray this prayer? What specific requests would you ask God for and why? How do you usually give praise to God—in song, in words, in service? How can you expand the practice of giving God praise in your life?

Chapters 4–5

4:1–16 Unity and maturity



For three chapters Paul has been unfolding God's eternal purpose. Through Jesus Christ, God is creating a new society, a new humanity. Now Paul turns from what God has done to what we must be and do, from doctrine to duty. He begs those reading his words **to live a life worthy of the calling you have received** (1). Paul's emphasis here is on the unity of God's people, the singleness of God's family. This is a oneness that the Spirit produces, but at the same time we are to be eager to **keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace** (3).

The apostle then elaborates four truths about the oneness which God intends his new society to enjoy. First, unity rests on love: **Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love** (2)—five foundation stones of Christian unity. The second truth Paul emphasises is that unity in the body of Christ arises from the unity of our God (3–6). The word **one** occurs seven times in these verses, sometimes alluding to the persons of the Trinity and sometimes to the unity of the church. Is there only **one God** (6)? Then he has only one church—not a visible institution, but a spiritual entity united in faith in Jesus. Paul's third point is that Christian unity is enriched by the diversity of our spiritual gifts (7–12). Unity does not mean uniformity. Diversity in the church does not come only from our different cultures and temperaments, but also from the different gifts Christ bestows on **each one of us** (7). Paul's final truth about unity is that unity depends on our growth into spiritual maturity (13–16). Our goal is that **we will no longer be infants** (14). Unstable children and immature Christians are like little boats in a stormy sea, entirely at the mercy of wind and waves. Instead of being **tossed back and forth** (14), we are to strive to attain **to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ** (13). This is Paul's vision for the church.

Which of the qualities that contribute to unity mentioned in this passage do you struggle with most? What can you do to strengthen that quality in your life? In what areas of your understanding or behaviour do you see immaturity? Who can you ask to help you grow in these areas?

4:17–24 The new you

The apostle continues to describe the new standards which are expected of God's new society. Called to be one people, we must cultivate unity; called to be holy people, we must also cultivate purity. The heart of his message is plain: **you must no longer live as the Gentiles do** (17). He is generalising, of course. Not all unbelieving Gentiles were (or are) as dissolute as those he is about to portray. Just as there is a typical Christian life, so there is a typical non-believer's life. His readers had lived as unbelievers themselves, but they must no longer live that way (17). Their identity had changed in Christ and so they must behave differently.

While describing those outside Christ, Paul draws attention to **the futility of their thinking** (17). He adds that **they are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God** and attributes this alienation to **ignorance** and **the hardening of their hearts** (18). As a result, they **indulge in every kind of impurity** (19). In contrast, Christians have **learned** (20) about Christ, have **heard about him** and **were taught in him** according to **the truth that is in Jesus** (21). These are remarkable expressions. The substance of Christian teaching is Jesus. Christians are taught to grasp their new creation in Christ and the entirely new way of life that results from it (2 Co 5:17). It is nothing less than putting off our old humanity like dirty clothing and putting on the new humanity like clean clothing, recreated in God's image. Becoming a Christian involves a radical



change. God is the one who makes us new in Christ, and then we entirely concur with what he has done.

How would you rate the purity of the behaviour of most Christians? How would you rate the purity of your own behaviour? What remnants of the old self do you still need to put off? What aspects of the new self is God calling you to put on?

4:25–5:4 Six examples of godly living

It is amazing how easily Paul descends from lofty theological talk about our two humanities to the nitty-gritty of Christian behaviour. He gives six practical examples of godly living that all concern our relationships. Holiness is not a mystical condition experienced only in relationship to God: holiness is to be a distinctive quality of life displayed in the real world of people.

Don't tell lies, but rather tell the truth (4:25). The followers of Jesus should be known in their community as honest, reliable people whose word can be trusted.

Don't lose your temper, but rather be sure your anger is righteous (4:26–27). There is such a thing as Christian anger and too few Christians either feel or express it. God's anger is righteous, as was Jesus' anger (Mk 3:5). There must be therefore a good and true anger.

Don't steal, but rather work and give (4:28). It is not enough that the thief stops stealing. Let him start working, **doing something useful with [his] own hands** (28).

Don't use your mouth for evil, but rather for good (4:29–30). The apostle turns from the use of our hands to the use of our mouths. Speech is a wonderful gift from God when used **for building others up** (4:29). It is not immediately clear why Paul adds **do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God** (4:30); but as the Spirit of truth, he is upset and stressed by any misuse of speech.

Don't be unkind or bitter, but rather **kind and compassionate** (4:32). In 4:31–5:2 are six unpleasant attitudes and actions which we are to **get rid of**. In their place we should welcome the qualities which characterise Christ.

Don't joke about sex, but rather give thanks for it (5:3–4). All God's gifts, including sex, are subjects for thanksgiving, rather than for joking and vulgarity.

Which of these six examples do you struggle with most? How do Paul's instructions help you? How can you respond if you 'grieve the Holy Spirit' (4:30)? What steps can you take to restore that relationship?

5:5–20 Children of light

Paul has been arguing that, because we are God's new society, we must adopt new standards. Now he adds more arguments for holy living. The first is the solemn certainty of judgment (5–7). Paul warns that **no immoral, impure or greedy person** (5) will have a part in the kingdom of God. His words should not be understood as teaching that even a single immoral thought or deed is enough to disqualify us from heaven. The person envisaged here is one who has given himself or herself without shame to this way of life. **Because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient** (6). The second motive for holy living is drawn not from future judgment, but from the past and present change in our lives (8–14). We **were once darkness**, but now we **are light in the Lord** (8). Therefore, we are called to **live as children of light** (8), with conduct marked by **goodness, righteousness and truth** (9).



Paul's third argument for holy living is based on the assumption that Christians are filled with wisdom, practical wisdom that teaches us how to behave (15–17). He challenges his readers to **be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise** (15). Wise people make the most of their time and discern the will of God. The apostle's final motivation for holiness is the infilling of him whose very nature and name is holy (18–20). A person who is drunk with alcohol is 'under the influence' of the alcohol. That condition, Paul says, is to be avoided. The Christian is to be controlled by another source of power, by one no less than the indwelling member of the Trinity—**filled with the Holy Spirit** (18). Under the influence of the Spirit we do not lose control; we gain it. Being filled with the Spirit results in worship and praise and thanksgiving to God.

How might you respond, based on 5:5–6, to someone who claims that everyone will inherit God's kingdom? What differences has the Holy Spirit made in your life? How can we follow the command to 'be filled with the Spirit' (5:18)?

5:21–33 The mystery of marriage

The final evidence of being 'filled with the Spirit' (18) is that we **submit to one another out of reverence for Christ** (21). Almost nothing in contemporary culture arouses more angry protest than talk of submission or surrender. Ours is an age of liberation, especially for the groups Paul addresses in Ephesians 5 and 6—women, children and workers. But it is Jesus who treated women with respect and honour, Jesus who welcomed children into his arms and Jesus who taught the dignity of labour by working as a carpenter. So nothing that Paul writes can be applied in a way that contradicts these attitudes of Jesus.

Paul's first example of mutual submission is the relationship of husbands and wives. The essence of his teaching is clear. Wives are to **submit** (22) and husbands are to **love** (25). The wife's submission is not coerced but free—and she submits to a lover, not an abuser. Three times the apostle repeats his fundamental charge: **Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her** (25); **husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies** (28); **each one of you also must love his wife** (33). Does the requirement of submission sound difficult to a wife? What is required of her husband is even more difficult. This is not that he loves her with romantic, sentimental love. Instead, he is to love her with the self-sacrificing love of Christ. The husband's headship is never used to suppress his wife. The biblical teaching is that God has given to the husband in the marriage relationship a certain headship, and that his wife will find herself and her true God-given role not in rebellion against him or his leadership, but in a voluntary and joyful submission.

Why is the notion of submitting to someone else so difficult for us? If you are a husband or a wife, how can you live out the teaching of this passage more fully in your marriage?

Chapter 6

6:1–4 Parents and children



Here is another example of submission to one another which according to 5:21 is expected of all members of God's new society. **Children** are to **obey** their **parents** (1). Paul gives three grounds for the obedience of children in a Christian home: nature, the law and the gospel. The obedience of a child to his or her parent rests on natural law first which God has written on all human hearts. Children are to obey because **this is right** (1). It was also revealed in the law which God wrote on stone tablets—**Honour your father and mother** (2; Ex 20:12). As children, we are to honour our parents and give them, not only our obedience, but our love and respect as well. Even in adulthood when we are no longer obligated to 'obey' our parents, we are still to 'honour' them—**so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth** (3; Dt 5:16). Paul connects a child's obedience with the gospel by saying they should **obey ... in the Lord** (1), namely in the Lord Jesus. Christian children learn to obey with gladness in God's new society.

When Paul outlines how parents, specifically **fathers** (4), should behave towards their children, it is not the exercise, but the restraint, of their authority which he urges upon them. A Roman father had absolute power over his wife and children. The picture Paul paints of a Christian father is one of a self-controlled, gentle, patient educator who helps his children develop their full, God-given potential.

How would you describe your relationship with your parents? How about with your children? How do these verses apply to adult children and their parents?

6:5–9 Respect in the workplace

Slavery seems to have been universal in the ancient world. A high percentage of the population of the Roman Empire was slaves. They constituted the work force, both as servants and manual labourers as well as educated teachers and doctors. These verses can be applied by Christians today to their relationships in the workplace. Our need is to see Jesus as Lord over all our lives, including our work. In each of the four verses addressed to those who work (5–8), Jesus Christ is mentioned. Christian workers are to serve Christ by respectfully doing what their **earthly masters** (5) require them to do. They are to work honestly, **with sincerity of heart** (5) and with integrity, **not only ... when the boss's eye is on [them], but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from [their] heart** (6).

Slave owners, which we would equate with Christian employers, are given only three principles to guide their relationship with their employees. First, they are to give their employees the same respect they desire from them. If their hope is to receive service from their employees, they must first give it. Secondly, they are **not to threaten them** (9). A relationship based on threats is not a human relationship at all. Thirdly, masters are to realise that they also have a **Master ... in heaven** (9), to whom they will one day give an account. Slave and master, worker and employer, will face the same impartial judge.

What should be the motivation behind our work? What seeds are planted in this passage that would lead to the eventual abolition of slavery?

6:10–17 The armour of God

As Paul brings his letter to a close, he also brings us down to earth and to the realities of the opposition against us. Beneath surface appearances an unseen spiritual battle is raging. He talks



again about the devil (11; 2:2; 4:27) and certain **rulers, authorities** and **spiritual forces** (12) under the devil's command. Paul does this to warn us of their hostility and teach us how to overcome them. Is God's plan to create a new society? Then they will do their utmost to destroy it. The forces arrayed against us have three main characteristics: they are powerful (12), they are wicked and they are cunning (11). How can we expect to stand against such enemies? The truth is we cannot. Only the power of God can defend us and deliver us from the power of the devil.

Two challenges stand side by side: **Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power** (10) and **put on the full armour of God** (11). Paul details the six main pieces of a fully armed soldier—the **belt**, the **breastplate** (14), the boots (15), the **shield** (16), the **helmet** and the **sword** (17)—and he uses them as pictures of **truth, righteousness** (14), **the gospel of peace** (15), **faith** (16), **salvation** and **the word of God** (17). The equipment is forged and provided by God, a warrior himself, the Lord of hosts (Isa 59:17). Yet it is our responsibility to take it up, then put it on and use it confidently against the powers of evil. Moreover, we must be sure to avail ourselves of every item of equipment provided and not omit any. Equipping ourselves with God's armour is an expression of our total dependence on God.

Based on what you read in this passage, how would you describe our spiritual enemy to another Christian? Which of the six pieces of armour do you find most helpful and why? Which piece are you prone to neglect?

6:18–24 Pray in the Spirit

The letter to the Ephesians concludes with a declaration about prayer, not because Paul thinks of prayer as one more weapon, but because prayer is to pervade all our spiritual warfare. Prevailing prayer has four universals. We are to **pray ... on all occasions, with all kinds of prayers and requests**, we are to **be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people** (18). Most Christians pray sometimes, with some kinds of prayer and some degree of perseverance for some of God's people. But to replace 'some' by 'all' in each expression would be to introduce us to a new dimension and depth of prayer. **Pray also for me** (19), Paul begged. He was wise enough to know his own need of strength for his own ministry as **an ambassador in chains** (20) for the gospel.

Tychicus, the dear brother and faithful servant in the Lord (21) was perhaps the secretary who wrote Paul's words down, and was likely the bearer of this letter from Paul in Rome to the Christians in Ephesus. Paul's prayer wishes for the Ephesians are for **peace, love with faith** (23) and **grace** (24).

Why is it difficult to pray the way Paul instructs us to pray in 6:18? What prayer wishes do you have for members of your family or your church family after reading Ephesians? Be specific.⁵

NOTES:

Outline of Ephesians:

I. New life

⁵ [NIV Bible Speaks Today: Notes](#). (2020). (Eph). London: IVP.



1. Every spiritual blessing (1:3–14)
2. A prayer for knowledge (1:15–23)
3. Resurrected with Christ (2:1–10)

II. New society

4. A single new humanity (2:11–22)
5. Paul's unique privilege (3:1–13)
6. Confidence in God's power (3:14–21)

III. New standards

7. Unity and diversity in the church (4:1–16)
8. A new set of clothes (4:17–5:4)
9. More incentives to righteousness (5:5–21)

IV. New relationships

10. Husbands and wives (5:21–33)
11. Parents, children, masters and servants (6:1–9)
12. Principalities and powers (6:10–20)
13. Conclusion (6:21–24)⁶

Acts 20: 26 Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. 27 For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God. 28 Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. 29 For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. 30 Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. 31 Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.

The New King James Version (Ac 20:26–21:2). (1982). Thomas Nelson.

20:26–28 Paul states that he has completed his responsibilities to the Ephesian believers. Paul can make this statement because he has shared the complete message of the gospel to those in Ephesus and because he now will pass his responsibilities to the elders (or overseers) of Ephesus. The language borrows from 1 Sam 12:2–5, where Samuel declares his innocence and holds the audience accountable.

Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., Whitehead, M. M., Grigoni, M. R., & Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). Faithlife Study Bible (Ac 20:26–28). Lexham Press.

⁶ Stott, J. R. W. (1979). [*God's new society: the message of Ephesians*](#) (p. 7). InterVarsity Press.



Ephesians

Sparking Gems from the Greek

January 4: How Often Should We Pray? (Ephesians 6:18) January 4
Ephesians 6:18

January 4: How Often Should We Pray? (Ephesians 6:18) January 4
Ephesians 6:18 gives us the answer!

January 4: How Often Should We Pray? (Ephesians 6:18) January 4
When all three of these words are used together in one phrase (*en panti kairo*) as in Ephesians 6:18, they could be more accurately translated *at each and every occasion*.

January 4: How Often Should We Pray? (Ephesians 6:18) January 4
Ephesians 6:18 conveys this idea:

January 4: How Often Should We Pray? (Ephesians 6:18) January 4
And if your schedule is as busy as you think it is, take Ephesians 6:18 to heart.

January 5: Do Not Grieve the Holy Spirit! (Ephesians 4:30) January 5
Ephesians 4:30

January 5: Do Not Grieve the Holy Spirit! (Ephesians 4:30) January 5
Many years ago, when I first studied the word “grieve” in Ephesians 4:30, I ran to my bookshelf and pulled out my Greek New Testament to discover exactly what the word “grieve” meant.

January 5: Do Not Grieve the Holy Spirit! (Ephesians 4:30) January 5
One scholar has translated Ephesians 4:30 in the following way:

January 9: Have You Said ‘Thank You’ Today? (Ephesians 1:16) January 9
Ephesians 1:16

January 9: Have You Said ‘Thank You’ Today? (Ephesians 1:16) January 9
The phrase “give thanks” in Ephesians 1:16 comes from the Greek word *eucharisteo*, a compound of the words *eu* and *charis*.

January 9: Have You Said ‘Thank You’ Today? (Ephesians 1:16) January 9
This is the word Paul used when he “gave thanks” for the Ephesian church.

January 9: Have You Said ‘Thank You’ Today? (Ephesians 1:16) January 9
For instance, Paul used this word in Ephesians 1:16 when he said, “[I] cease not to give thanks for you....”

January 9: Have You Said ‘Thank You’ Today? (Ephesians 1:16) January 9
This means that when Paul thought of the Ephesian church, wonderful feelings of thankfulness would well up in his heart for them.



Ephesians

January 9: Have You Said ‘Thank You’ Today? (Ephesians 1:16) January 9

The Greek carries this idea in Ephesians 1:16:

January 12: A Unique Receptacle Specially Made for the Power of God! (Ephesians 6:10) January 12

Ephesians 6:10

January 12: A Unique Receptacle Specially Made for the Power of God! (Ephesians 6:10) January 12

I want to draw your attention to the word “strong” in Ephesians 6:10.

January 12: A Unique Receptacle Specially Made for the Power of God! (Ephesians 6:10) January 12

Ephesians 6:10 could be translated to mean:

January 15: It’s Time to Get Creative in ‘Doing the Word’ (James 1:22) January 15

Ephesians 2:10 is another place where a form of this word *poietes* is used.

January 15: It’s Time to Get Creative in ‘Doing the Word’ (James 1:22) January 15

Because the word *poiema* is used in Ephesians 2:10, it unmistakably means that God wielded His fullest, greatest, and most creative powers when we were born again.

January 15: It’s Time to Get Creative in ‘Doing the Word’ (James 1:22) January 15

Whether the word *poietes* is used to depict a poet, as mentioned above, or (in another form) to describe God’s creative power, as in Ephesians 2:10, it always depicts someone *putting forth his fullest creative abilities to achieve something*.

January 21: A Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation for You (Ephesians 1:17) January 21

Ephesians 1:17

January 21: A Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation for You (Ephesians 1:17) January 21

If so, Paul’s prayer to the Ephesian church in Ephesians 1:17 is an important scripture for you to apply to your own life.

January 21: A Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation for You (Ephesians 1:17) January 21

This is why Paul prayed for God “to give” the Ephesian church a spirit of wisdom and revelation.

January 21: A Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation for You (Ephesians 1:17) January 21

Because the Ephesian church needed wisdom beyond their own human understanding, Paul asked God to give them what they needed: *special insight that is not naturally attained*.

January 21: A Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation for You (Ephesians 1:17) January 21

Taking all this into consideration, Ephesians 1:17 could be translated:

January 21: A Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation for You (Ephesians 1:17) January 21

God had all the answers the Ephesian believers needed.

January 21: A Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation for You (Ephesians 1:17) January 21

If you need direction and guidance today, stop right now and pray Paul’s prayer in Ephesians 1:17 for your own life.



Ephesians

January 31: Unshackled from the Tyranny and Cruelty of Sin! (Romans 6:17) January 31

Indeed, this pervading demonic presence in our lives was so absolute and supreme that Paul described it this way in Ephesians 2:2: “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.”

February 4: Don't Ignore the Last Words! (Ephesians 6:10) February 4

Ephesians 6:10

February 4: Don't Ignore the Last Words! (Ephesians 6:10) February 4

In the sixth chapter of Ephesians, the apostle Paul writes his great text about spiritual warfare and spiritual weapons.

February 4: Don't Ignore the Last Words! (Ephesians 6:10) February 4

With this in mind, the word “finally” in Ephesians 6:10 carries this idea:

February 4: Don't Ignore the Last Words! (Ephesians 6:10) February 4

The book of Ephesians contains some of the deepest theological teaching in the New Testament.

February 4: Don't Ignore the Last Words! (Ephesians 6:10) February 4

- The election of the saints (Ephesians 1:4)

February 4: Don't Ignore the Last Words! (Ephesians 6:10) February 4

- The predestination work of God (Ephesians 1:5)

February 4: Don't Ignore the Last Words! (Ephesians 6:10) February 4

- The adoption of the sons of God (Ephesians 1:5)

February 4: Don't Ignore the Last Words! (Ephesians 6:10) February 4

- The dispensation of the fullness of times (Ephesians 1:10)

February 4: Don't Ignore the Last Words! (Ephesians 6:10) February 4

- The sealing of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13)

February 4: Don't Ignore the Last Words! (Ephesians 6:10) February 4

- The earnest of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:14)

February 4: Don't Ignore the Last Words! (Ephesians 6:10) February 4

- The power of God that is available to every believer (Ephesians 1:19)

February 4: Don't Ignore the Last Words! (Ephesians 6:10) February 4

- The grace of God (Ephesians 2:1–10)

February 4: Don't Ignore the Last Words! (Ephesians 6:10) February 4

- The eternal plan of God (Ephesians 3:10–11)

February 4: Don't Ignore the Last Words! (Ephesians 6:10) February 4



Ephesians

- The fivefold ministry gifts (Ephesians 4:11–13)

February 4: Don't Ignore the Last Words! (Ephesians 6:10) February 4

- The infilling with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18–19)

February 4: Don't Ignore the Last Words! (Ephesians 6:10) February 4

But in addition to these important theological points, the book of Ephesians also includes some of the most practical instructions in the New Testament regarding such issues as:

February 4: Don't Ignore the Last Words! (Ephesians 6:10) February 4

- The relationship between believers (Ephesians 4:25–5:2)

February 4: Don't Ignore the Last Words! (Ephesians 6:10) February 4

- The relationship between believers and the world (Ephesians 5:3–16)

February 4: Don't Ignore the Last Words! (Ephesians 6:10) February 4

- The relationship between husbands and wives (Ephesians 5:22–33)

February 4: Don't Ignore the Last Words! (Ephesians 6:10) February 4

- The relationship between parents and children (Ephesians 6:1–4)

February 4: Don't Ignore the Last Words! (Ephesians 6:10) February 4

- The relationship between employers and employees (Ephesians 6:5–9)

February 4: Don't Ignore the Last Words! (Ephesians 6:10) February 4

Because like so many in the Church world today, the Ephesian believers had gathered together a vast accumulation of spiritual knowledge, information, and facts; nevertheless, this alone was not enough to keep the devil under their feet where he belonged!

February 4: Don't Ignore the Last Words! (Ephesians 6:10) February 4

As we read through chapter 4, we can see that the devil was apparently attacking the Ephesian church and was having some success!

February 4: Don't Ignore the Last Words! (Ephesians 6:10) February 4

That's why Paul had to instruct these believers to put away lying, steal no more, let no corrupt communication out of their mouths, grieve not the Holy Spirit, and put aside all anger and malice (Ephesians 4:25–31).

February 4: Don't Ignore the Last Words! (Ephesians 6:10) February 4

The Ephesian believers were members of the largest church of that day, yet they were not fully experiencing the overcoming, abundant life that Jesus Christ had come to offer them.

February 4: Don't Ignore the Last Words! (Ephesians 6:10) February 4

That's why Paul said, "Finally ..." In case the Ephesian believers didn't remember anything else, he wanted them to remember that they *had* to have spiritual weapons to keep the devil under their feet.

February 4: Don't Ignore the Last Words! (Ephesians 6:10) February 4



Ephesians

3. How long has it been since you read Ephesians 6:10–18 and really meditated on those verses about spiritual weapons?

February 8: The Holy Spirit Wants to Place a Razor-Sharp Sword in Your Hands (Ephesians 6:17) February 8
Ephesians 6:17

February 8: The Holy Spirit Wants to Place a Razor-Sharp Sword in Your Hands (Ephesians 6:17) February 8
Ephesians 6:17 declares that God has given you “... the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God”!

February 8: The Holy Spirit Wants to Place a Razor-Sharp Sword in Your Hands (Ephesians 6:17) February 8
But the weapon referred to in Ephesians 6:17, coming from the Greek word *machaira*, was neither of these swords.

February 8: The Holy Spirit Wants to Place a Razor-Sharp Sword in Your Hands (Ephesians 6:17) February 8
By using the word *machaira* in Ephesians 6:17, the apostle Paul is saying that God has given the Church of Jesus Christ a weapon that is frightful to the devil and his forces.

February 8: The Holy Spirit Wants to Place a Razor-Sharp Sword in Your Hands (Ephesians 6:17) February 8
Because of the words *machaira* and *rhema*, Ephesians 6:17 conveys this impression:

February 20: How Do You Make a Dead Man See? (John 16:8) February 20
The Bible says that sin makes people hardhearted, spiritually blind, and past feeling (Ephesians 4:18, 19).

February 20: How Do You Make a Dead Man See? (John 16:8) February 20
The Bible says that the lost person is “dead in trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 2:1).

February 20: How Do You Make a Dead Man See? (John 16:8) February 20
At that divine moment, our souls heard Him say, “... Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light” (Ephesians 5:14).

February 21: Effective Spiritual Weapons Require Effective Spiritual Strategies (2 Corinthians 10:4)
February 21
They are both offensive and defensive weapons and can be found in Ephesians 6:13–18, where Paul lists them one by one and explains what each piece represents.

February 22: You Have a Two-Edged Sword! (Hebrews 4:12) February 22
Ephesians 6:17 calls it “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (see February 8).

February 23: The Holy Spirit—A Partner Who Wants to Take Responsibility for You in This Life! (2 Corinthians 13:14) February 23
Jesus also healed people by the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:38); cast out demons by the power of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 12:28); was *resurrected* from the dead by the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:11); and was seated at God’s right hand in the heavenly places through the power of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:19, 20).

February 25: You Are a Shrine for the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19, 20) February 25



Ephesians

His work inside you was so glorious that when it was all finished, He declared you to be His own workmanship (Ephesians 2:10).

February 26: Take Advantage of All Kinds of Prayer (Ephesians 6:18) February 26
Ephesians 6:18

February 26: Take Advantage of All Kinds of Prayer (Ephesians 6:18) February 26
Ephesians 6:18 says, "Praying always with all prayer...."

February 26: Take Advantage of All Kinds of Prayer (Ephesians 6:18) February 26
When all three of these words are used together in one phrase (*en panti kairo*) as in Ephesians 6:18, they could be more accurately translated *at each and every occasion*.

February 26: Take Advantage of All Kinds of Prayer (Ephesians 6:18) February 26
Other translations of Ephesians 6:18 include:

February 27: A Picture of Who You Used to Be! (Ephesians 2:2) February 27
Ephesians 2:2

February 27: A Picture of Who You Used to Be! (Ephesians 2:2) February 27
Ephesians 2:2 is like looking at a photograph of what you were like before Jesus Christ came into your life.

February 27: A Picture of Who You Used to Be! (Ephesians 2:2) February 27
When Paul wrote Ephesians 2:2, it was like he held that old photo up in the air and said, "Hey, look at this! Do you remember what you looked like back then?"

February 27: A Picture of Who You Used to Be! (Ephesians 2:2) February 27
You could rephrase Ephesians 2:2 this way:

March 1: God's Power Is Yours for the Taking! (Ephesians 6:10) March 1
Ephesians 6:10

March 1: God's Power Is Yours for the Taking! (Ephesians 6:10) March 1
Paul answers this question in Ephesians 6:10, where he says, "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might."

March 1: God's Power Is Yours for the Taking! (Ephesians 6:10) March 1
This same *locative case* that describes the power of God being *locked up* inside Jesus Christ is used *nine times* in Ephesians 1, where Paul uses it to declare that we are perpetually and infinitely *locked up* inside the Person of Jesus Christ.

March 6: It's Time for You to Start Acting like God! (Ephesians 5:1) March 6
Ephesians 5:1

March 6: It's Time for You to Start Acting like God! (Ephesians 5:1) March 6
In Ephesians 5:1, the apostle Paul wrote these words: "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children."



Ephesians

March 6: It's Time for You to Start Acting like God! (Ephesians 5:1) March 6

Because Paul uses this word in Ephesians 5:1, he is telling us to model our lives after God.

March 6: It's Time for You to Start Acting like God! (Ephesians 5:1) March 6

When all of this is put together in Ephesians 5:1, it could be interpreted:

March 13: Who Said You Had to Deserve What God Gives You? (2 Timothy 2:1) March 13

It was a huge assignment for a young man, but after working with Paul all those years, Timothy was ready to step into his own pulpit as the senior pastor of the cherished Ephesian church.

March 15: Are You Wearing Your Killer Shoes? (Ephesians 6:14, 15) March 15

Ephesians 6:14, 15

March 15: Are You Wearing Your Killer Shoes? (Ephesians 6:14, 15) March 15

Paul refers to these killer shoes in Ephesians 6:15 as he talks about the spiritual weapons God has given to the Church.

March 15: Are You Wearing Your Killer Shoes? (Ephesians 6:14, 15) March 15

When Paul writes about these shoes in Ephesians 6:15, he says, "... And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace."

March 17: Stick Your Neck out—Commit Yourself to Someone! (2 Timothy 2:2) March 17

It is a historical fact that because of Nero's persecutions against the Church, masses of believers left the Ephesian church and returned to their old pagan temples.

March 18: Don't Be a 'Bone out of Joint'! (1 Timothy 1:6) March 18

All these problems resulted from the rebellious attitudes of a few people who didn't want to follow the senior leadership of the Ephesian church.

March 24: The Most Essential Weapon in Your Spiritual Arsenal (Ephesians 6:14) March 24

Ephesians 6:14

March 24: The Most Essential Weapon in Your Spiritual Arsenal (Ephesians 6:14) March 24

Now consider all this in light of Ephesians 6:14, where Paul says, "Stand therefore, *having your loins girt about with truth....*"

April 5: A Full Moon, Lanterns, Torches, and Weapons! (John 18:3) April 5

The Greek word for "weapons" is *hoplos*, the very word that depicts *the full weaponry of a Roman soldier* referred to in Ephesians 6:13–18.

April 19: Herod Antipas Mocks the King of Glory! (Luke 23:11) April 19

This is why Paul wrote, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace" (Ephesians 1:7).

April 25: The Day the Veil Was Rent and the Earth Shook (Matthew 27:50, 51) April 25

This is why the apostle Paul wrote that Jesus "... hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us" (Ephesians 2:14).



Ephesians

May 8: Don't Do What You're Tempted to Do When Someone Gets Ugly with You! (2 Timothy 2:24) May 8

When Timothy was serving as pastor of the Ephesian church, he had some insubordinate people in church leadership positions.

May 9: Are You Dressed in the Whole Armor of God? (Ephesians 6:11) May 9

Ephesians 6:11

May 9: Are You Dressed in the Whole Armor of God? (Ephesians 6:11) May 9

Every time I see this armor section of the museum, I think of Paul's words in Ephesians 6:11: "Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."

May 9: Are You Dressed in the Whole Armor of God? (Ephesians 6:11) May 9

In Ephesians 6:14, Paul tells us that the believer is equipped with a loincloth of truth, referring to the written Word of God.

May 9: Are You Dressed in the Whole Armor of God? (Ephesians 6:11) May 9

In Ephesians 6:14, Paul informs us that in our spiritual arsenal, we have at our disposal the "breastplate of righteousness."

May 9: Are You Dressed in the Whole Armor of God? (Ephesians 6:11) May 9

In Ephesians 6:15, Paul refers to this vital piece of weaponry when he tells us that our feet are "... shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace."

May 9: Are You Dressed in the Whole Armor of God? (Ephesians 6:11) May 9

Paul makes reference to these shoes in Ephesians 6:15 when he talks about our feet being "... shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace."

May 9: Are You Dressed in the Whole Armor of God? (Ephesians 6:11) May 9

In Ephesians 6:16, Paul declares that as a believer, you are specially outfitted with a "... shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked."

May 9: Are You Dressed in the Whole Armor of God? (Ephesians 6:11) May 9

In Ephesians 6:17, Paul proclaims the good news that God has provided every believer with "the helmet of salvation" to protect him against the mental assaults of the enemy.

May 9: Are You Dressed in the Whole Armor of God? (Ephesians 6:11) May 9

In Ephesians 6:17, we are taught by Paul that every believer has "... the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

May 9: Are You Dressed in the Whole Armor of God? (Ephesians 6:11) May 9

Although Paul does not specifically mention the lance in his list of weaponry in Ephesians 6, it is suggested in verse 18 when Paul writes, "Praying always...."

May 15: The Most Common Word for Prayer in the New Testament (Ephesians 6:18) May 15

Ephesians 6:18



Ephesians

May 15: The Most Common Word for Prayer in the New Testament (Ephesians 6:18) May 15

It is the word that Paul uses in Ephesians 6:18, when he says, “Praying always with all prayer....”

May 15: The Most Common Word for Prayer in the New Testament (Ephesians 6:18) May 15

The word *pros* is used in Ephesians 6:12 to picture our *close contact* with unseen, demonic spirits that have been marshaled against us.

May 20: The ‘Kratos’ Power of God! (Ephesians 6:10) May 20

Ephesians 6:10

May 20: The ‘Kratos’ Power of God! (Ephesians 6:10) May 20

In Ephesians 6:10, the apostle Paul gives us some very important insight into the kind of power God has made available to every believer—including you!

May 20: The ‘Kratos’ Power of God! (Ephesians 6:10) May 20

First, let me remind you that Ephesians 6:10 is a verse about the supernatural power God has made available for our fight with unseen, demonic powers that come to war against the soul.

May 20: The ‘Kratos’ Power of God! (Ephesians 6:10) May 20

In Ephesians 6:10, he says, “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.”

May 20: The ‘Kratos’ Power of God! (Ephesians 6:10) May 20

Ephesians 1:19, 20 declares that when God raised Jesus from the dead, He used this very same *kratos* power to do the job!

May 20: The ‘Kratos’ Power of God! (Ephesians 6:10) May 20

Because the phrase “the power of his might” is the same identical phrase used in Ephesians 6:10 to denote the power that is working behind the scenes to energize us!

May 21: The ‘Ischuos’ Power of God! (Ephesians 6:10) May 21

Ephesians 6:10

May 21: The ‘Ischuos’ Power of God! (Ephesians 6:10) May 21

But today we will look at a second word in Ephesians 6:10 that describes a second kind of power made available to the believer.

May 21: The ‘Ischuos’ Power of God! (Ephesians 6:10) May 21

In Ephesians 6:10, Paul says, “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.”

May 21: The ‘Ischuos’ Power of God! (Ephesians 6:10) May 21

These words in Ephesians 6:10 are so powerful that they convey this idea:

May 28: The Shield of Faith! (Ephesians 6:16) May 28

Ephesians 6:16



Ephesians

May 28: The Shield of Faith! (Ephesians 6:16) May 28

In Ephesians 6:16, he referred to the shield of faith.

May 31: Darkness Cannot Overcome the Light! (John 1:5) May 31

Since you are a child of the light (Ephesians 5:8), this means darkness doesn't have the ability to put out *your* light either!

June 2: Are You Tired of Waiting for Your Fruit-Producing Season? (Colossians 2:7) June 2

Spend this phase of your life wisely by renewing your mind to the Word of God (Ephesians 4:23) and being certain your affections are set on things above, not on things of this earth (Colossians 3:2).

June 3: You Are Sealed and Guaranteed by God's Spirit! (Ephesians 1:13) June 3

Ephesians 1:13

June 3: You Are Sealed and Guaranteed by God's Spirit! (Ephesians 1:13) June 3

Well, in the first chapter of Ephesians, Paul lets us know that God Himself is waiting for a special delivery package!

June 3: You Are Sealed and Guaranteed by God's Spirit! (Ephesians 1:13) June 3

Notice that Ephesians 1:13 says, "... In whom also after that ye believed, ye were *sealed* with that holy Spirit of promise."

June 3: You Are Sealed and Guaranteed by God's Spirit! (Ephesians 1:13) June 3

In Ephesians 1:13, Paul says that if you belong to the Lord, you have been "sealed" with the Holy Spirit.

June 3: You Are Sealed and Guaranteed by God's Spirit! (Ephesians 1:13) June 3

An interpretive translation of Ephesians 1:13 could be the following:

June 5: You Are No Accident, Because God Chose You! (Ephesians 1:4) June 5

Ephesians 1:4

June 5: You Are No Accident, Because God Chose You! (Ephesians 1:4) June 5

In light of these Greek meanings, Ephesians 1:4 could be phrased to read:

June 9: Spiritual Warfare Is Real! (Ephesians 6:12) June 9

Ephesians 6:12

June 9: Spiritual Warfare Is Real! (Ephesians 6:12) June 9

In Ephesians 6:12, Paul told us, "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 in high places."

June 9: Spiritual Warfare Is Real! (Ephesians 6:12) June 9

Let me tell you a little about how these sports functioned in the first century when Paul wrote this verse, because it forms the backdrop to the word "wrestle" in Ephesians 6:12.



Ephesians

June 9: Spiritual Warfare Is Real! (Ephesians 6:12) June 9

I realize that these are very graphic images, but they are also very important images, for they are all contained in the word “wrestle” that Paul uses in Ephesians 6:12.

June 9: Spiritual Warfare Is Real! (Ephesians 6:12) June 9

This first phrase in Ephesians 6:12 really carries this idea:

June 10: The Rank and File of Satan’s Kingdom (Ephesians 6:12) June 10

Ephesians 6:12

June 10: The Rank and File of Satan’s Kingdom (Ephesians 6:12) June 10

In Ephesians 6:12, the apostle Paul presents a divine revelation he received that describes how Satan’s kingdom has been militarily aligned.

June 10: The Rank and File of Satan’s Kingdom (Ephesians 6:12) June 10

Take advantage of all the weapons described in Ephesians 6:13–18.

June 28: Mark 11:23 Works for the Devil Too! (Mark 11:23) June 28

As you spend time meditating in the Word, your mind becomes renewed to God’s way of thinking (see Ephesians 4:23 and Colossians 3:10).

June 30: What God Thinks about People Who Gossip! (Ephesians 4:29) June 30

Ephesians 4:29

June 30: What God Thinks about People Who Gossip! (Ephesians 4:29) June 30

Ephesians 4:29 says, “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.”

July 8: They Shall Cast out Devils! (Mark 16:17) July 8

This agrees completely with the picture that Paul gives us in Ephesians 6:12, where he describes the rank and file of the devil’s kingdom (see June 10).

July 13: How Would You like to ‘Take a Stroll’ in the Spirit Today? (Galatians 5:16) July 13

In Ephesians 2:3, Paul states that before we came to Jesus Christ, we walked “... in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh....”

Drunkenness July 19

This is precisely why he told the Ephesian believers, “And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess ...” (Ephesians 5:18).

Drunkenness July 19

Under that influence, they would be so changed that they would start speaking to themselves in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in their hearts to the Lord (Ephesians 5:19).

Gentleness July 25

The apostle Paul uses this word to depict God’s *incomprehensible kindness* for people who are unsaved (see Romans 11:22; Ephesians 2:7; Titus 3:4).



Ephesians

August 4: The Helmet of Salvation (Ephesians 6:17) August 4

Ephesians 6:17

August 4: The Helmet of Salvation (Ephesians 6:17) August 4

In Ephesians 6:17, Paul writes, “And take the helmet of salvation....”

August 4: The Helmet of Salvation (Ephesians 6:17) August 4

In this final chapter of Ephesians, Paul deals extensively with the subject of spiritual armor.

August 11: Be Sure to Go to Sword Practice! (Ephesians 6:17) August 11

Ephesians 6:17

August 11: Be Sure to Go to Sword Practice! (Ephesians 6:17) August 11

It was from this background that Paul said, “And take ... the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Ephesians 6:17).

August 16: Look at What You’ve Been Given in Jesus Christ! (John 1:12) August 16

For instance, Ephesians 2:10 says, “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”

August 18: Don’t Give Place to the Devil! (Ephesians 4:27) August 18

Ephesians 4:27

August 18: Don’t Give Place to the Devil! (Ephesians 4:27) August 18

In Ephesians 4:27, the apostle Paul writes, “Neither give place to the devil.”

August 26: The Devil’s Destination (Ephesians 6:11) August 26

Ephesians 6:11

August 26: The Devil’s Destination (Ephesians 6:11) August 26

In Ephesians 6:11, Paul explicitly tells us how the devil operates.

August 26: The Devil’s Destination (Ephesians 6:11) August 26

When the words *meta* and *odos* are compounded into one word, as in Ephesians 6:11, it literally means *with a road*.

August 26: The Devil’s Destination (Ephesians 6:11) August 26

I realize this seems strange, but when you connect this to the devil as Paul does in Ephesians 6:11, it means that the devil is like *a traveler who travels on a road*.

September 6: Here’s How to Extinguish the Fiery Darts of the Wicked! (Ephesians 6:16) September 6

Ephesians 6:16

September 6: Here’s How to Extinguish the Fiery Darts of the Wicked! (Ephesians 6:16) September 6

Well, Ephesians 6:16 assures you that if you have your shield of faith lifted high in front of you, you will be supernaturally empowered to defend yourself against the fiery darts of the enemy.



Ephesians

September 6: Here's How to Extinguish the Fiery Darts of the Wicked! (Ephesians 6:16) September 6

Therefore, let's look at Ephesians 6:16 to see exactly what it says about us being able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the enemy.

September 6: Here's How to Extinguish the Fiery Darts of the Wicked! (Ephesians 6:16) September 6

When these Greek words and phrases are used together as they are in Ephesians 6:16, it could actually be translated, *"Above all, taking the shield of faith, by which you will be dynamically empowered...."*

September 6: Here's How to Extinguish the Fiery Darts of the Wicked! (Ephesians 6:16) September 6

In Ephesians 5:26, the Word of God is likened to water.

September 17: Do You Know People Who Talk out of Both Sides of Their Mouths? (1 Timothy 3:8)

September 17

The challenge we face is learning how to "speak the truth in love" as Ephesians 4:15 commands us.

September 17: Do You Know People Who Talk out of Both Sides of Their Mouths? (1 Timothy 3:8)

September 17

In Ephesians 4:25, the apostle Paul commanded us, "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour...."

October 3: Wives, Be Supportive of Your Husbands (1 Peter 3:1) October 3

This is also the reason God commands men to love their wives (see Ephesians 5:25).

October 17: Why Should We Stop Just Because the Devil Gets in the Way? (1 Thessalonians 2:18) October 17

He knows how much I love the leadership of Ephesus!" Paul could have bemoaned, "Now I'll never see the Ephesian believers again.

In Weariness October 28

This is why Paul referred to it as "the work of the ministry" (Ephesians 4:12).

November 5: Never Go to Bed Angry! (Ephesians 4:26, 27) November 5

Ephesians 4:26, 27

November 5: Never Go to Bed Angry! (Ephesians 4:26, 27) November 5

Ephesians 4:26, 27 warns us, "... Let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil."

November 8: Grace, Mercy, and Peace (1 Timothy 1:2) November 8

(See Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:3; 2 Corinthians 1:2; Galatians 1:3; Ephesians 1:2; Philippians 1:2; Colossians 1:2; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:2; and Philemon 1:3).

November 14: Nothing Shall Separate You from the Love of God (Romans 8:38, 39) November 14

This is the same word that Paul uses in Ephesians 6:12, where he describes the rank and file of the devil's kingdom.

November 19: Fight like a Soldier! (2 Timothy 2:3) November 19



Ephesians

Hence, this was a very, very tough time for the Ephesian believers and their pastor.

December 2: The Lance of Prayer and Supplication (Ephesians 6:18) December 2

Ephesians 6:18

December 2: The Lance of Prayer and Supplication (Ephesians 6:18) December 2

When Paul wrote his epistle to the Ephesians, he spoke extensively about the armor of God, urging believers to use their spiritual weaponry.

December 2: The Lance of Prayer and Supplication (Ephesians 6:18) December 2

But although Paul didn't explicitly mention the lance, he did tell believers to take up the *whole* armor of God (Ephesians 6:11), implying a complete set of weaponry.

December 2: The Lance of Prayer and Supplication (Ephesians 6:18) December 2

The lance of our spiritual armor is found in Ephesians 6:18, where Paul says, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit...."

December 6: Take up Your Shield of Faith! (Ephesians 6:16) December 6

Ephesians 6:16

December 6: Take up Your Shield of Faith! (Ephesians 6:16) December 6

Many people wrongly assume that the shield of faith is the most important part of their spiritual weaponry because Paul said, "Above all, taking the shield of faith ..." (Ephesians 6:16).

December 13: Abhor that Which Is Evil (Romans 12:9) December 13

A form of this word is used in Ephesians 5:31, where Paul teaches that a man should leave his father and mother and "be joined" unto his wife.

December 25: Every Knee Will Bow to the Name of Jesus Christ! (Philippians 2:9–11) December 25

The same word is found in Romans 11:4; Romans 14:11, and Ephesians 3:14, where the apostle Paul uses it to picture *a person who bends his knee in acknowledgement of God's authority*.

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Paul uses the phrase "for this reason" repeatedly —needs the verses that precede to understand.

⁷ Renner, R. (2008). [*Sparkling Gems from the Greek: 365 Greek Word Studies for Every Day of the Year to Sharpen Your Understanding of God's Word*](#) (pp. 8–1037). Wordsearch.



[Rom 1:26 NKJV] 26 For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature.

[Rom 15:9, 22 NKJV] 9 and that the Gentiles might glorify God for [His] mercy, as it is written: "For this reason I will confess to You among the Gentiles, And sing to Your name." ... 22 For this reason I also have been much hindered from coming to you.

[1Co 4:17 NKJV] 17 For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.

[1Co 11:10, 30 NKJV] 10 For this reason the woman ought to have [a symbol of] authority on [her] head, because of the angels. ... 30 For this reason many [are] weak and sick among you, and many sleep.

[Eph 3:1, 14 NKJV] 1 For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles-- ... 14 For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

[Eph 5:31 NKJV] 31 "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh."

[Col 1:9 NKJV] 9 For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;

[1Th 2:13 NKJV] 13 For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed [it] not [as] the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.

[1Th 3:5 NKJV] 5 For this reason, when I could no longer endure it, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter had tempted you, and our labor might be in vain.

[2Th 2:11 NKJV] 11 And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie,

[1Ti 1:16 NKJV] 16 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.

[2Ti 1:12 NKJV] 12 For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.

[Tit 1:5 NKJV] 5 For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you--

[Heb 9:15 NKJV] 15 And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

PAUL AND HIS JOURNEYS

"He was a man little of stature," claims an account in the apocryphal second-century Acts of Paul, "partly bald, with crooked legs, of vigorous physique, with eyes set close together and nose



somewhat hooked.” If this statement is trustworthy, it tells a little more about this man from Tarsus who lived through nearly seven eventful decades after the birth of Jesus. It would fit Paul’s own record of a taunt whispered against him in Corinth, “For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible” (2 Cor. 10:10).

What he actually looked like will have to be left to the imagination of the artists—we cannot be sure. But more important matters press for attention—what he felt, what he thought, what he did.

We know what this man from Tarsus came to believe about the person and work of Christ, and other subjects crucial to Christian faith. Letters from his pen, preserved in the New Testament, bear eloquent testimony to the passion of his convictions and the power of his logic.

Here and there in these letters are bits of autobiography. Also, we find a broad outline of Paul’s activities in the Acts of the Apostles, recorded by Luke, first-century gentile physician and historian.

So while the theologian has enough material to create endless debate about what Paul believed, the records for the historian are skimpy. A biographer of Paul soon discovers gaps in the apostle’s life that cannot be spanned with anything more than a learned guess.

Like a flaming meteor, Paul flashes suddenly into view as an adult in a religious crisis, resolved by conversion. He disappears for many years—years of preparation. He reappears in the role of missionary statesman, and for a time we can trace his movements across the first-century horizon. Before his death, he flames on into the shadows beyond the limits of our straining eyes.

I. YOUNG SAUL

- A. From the City of Tarsus**
- B. A Roman Citizen**
- C. Of Jewish Ancestry**
- D. The Death of Stephen**
- E. A Career of Persecution**

II. CONVERSION ON THE DAMASCUS ROAD

III. EARLY MINISTRY

IV. MISSIONARY JOURNEYS

V. IMPRISONMENT AND TRIAL

VI. PAUL’S PERSONALITY IN HIS LETTERS

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND INSIGHTS

Paul’s Method of Preaching

Gamaliel

I. Young Saul. But before we can understand Paul, the Christian missionary to the Gentiles, it is necessary to spend some time with Saul of Tarsus, the young Pharisee. We find in Acts Paul’s explanation of his identity: “I am a man which am a Jew of Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city” (Acts 21:39). This gives us our first thread for weaving the background of Paul’s life.



ANCIENT WALL, TARSUS. *The capital city of Cilicia in the eastern part of Asia Minor, Tarsus was the birthplace of the apostle Paul (Acts 21:39), who visited it at least once after his conversion (Acts 11:25). The city was mentioned in historical records as early as the ninth century B.C. and was noted for its schools.*

A. From the City of Tarsus. In the first century, Tarsus was the chief city of the province of Cilicia in the eastern part of Asia Minor. Although about 16 km. (10 mi.) inland, the city was a major port having access to the sea by way of the Cydnus River, which flowed through it.

Just to the north of Tarsus towered the lofty, snow-covered Taurus Mountains, which provided the timber that formed one of the principal objects of trade for Tarsian merchants. An important Roman road ran north out of the city and through a narrow passage in the mountains known as the “Cilician Gates.” Many an ancient military struggle was fought at this mountain pass.

Tarsus was a frontier city, a meeting place for East and West, a crossroad for commerce that flowed in both directions by land and sea. Tarsus had a prized heritage. Fact and legend intermingled to make its citizens fiercely proud of its past.

The Roman general Mark Antony granted it the status of *libera civitas* (“free city”) in 42 B.C. Thus, though part of a Roman province, it was self-governing, and not required to pay tribute to Rome. The democratic traditions of the Greek city-state had long been established in Paul’s day.

MILETUS. *The southernmost of the great Greek cities on the west coast of Asia Minor, Miletus flourished as a commercial center before it was destroyed by the Persians in 494 B.C. When Paul arrived here (Acts 20:15; 2 Tim. 4:20), it was part of the Roman province of Asia and declining commercially because its harbor was filling up with silt. Beyond the theater is the former harbor, now a marsh.*

In this city, young Saul grew up. In his writings, we find reflections of sights and scenes in Tarsus when he was a lad. In sharp contrast with the rural illustrations of Jesus, the metaphors of Paul spring from city life.

The glint of the Mediterranean sun on Roman helmets and spears would have been a common sight in Tarsus when Paul was a boy. Perhaps this was the background for his illustration concerning Christian warfare, when he insisted that “the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds” (2 Cor. 10:4).

Paul writes of “shipwreck” (1 Tim. 1:19), of the “potter” (Rom. 9:21), of being led in “triumph” by Christ (2 Cor. 2:14). He compares the “earthly tent” of this life with “a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (2 Cor. 5:1). He takes the Greek word that became *theater* in English and daringly applies it to the apostles, who “are made a spectacle (*theatro*) unto the world” (1 Cor. 4:9).

Such statements reflect the typical life of the city in which Paul spent the formative years of his boyhood. So the sights and sounds of this bustling seaport form a backdrop against which



Paul's life and thought become more understandable. Small wonder that he should refer to Tarsus as "no mean city."

The philosophers of Tarsus were mostly Stoics. Stoic ideas, though essentially pagan, produced some of the noblest thinkers of the ancient world. The Tarsian Athenodorus is a splendid example.

When Athenodorus was retiring from public life in Rome to return to his native city, he gave this parting counsel to Augustus Caesar: "When you are angry, Caesar, say nothing and do nothing until you have repeated the letters of the alphabet." He is also credited with saying, "So live with men as if God saw you; so speak with God as if men were listening."

Though Athenodorus died in A.D. 7, when Paul was but a small boy, he long remained a hero in Tarsus. Young Saul could scarcely have escaped hearing something about him.

Just how much contact did young Saul have with this world of philosophy in Tarsus? We do not know; he has not told us. But the marks of wide education and contact with Greek learning are upon him as a grown man. He knew enough about such matters to plead the cause he represented before all sorts of men. He was also aware of the subtle dangers present in the speculative religious philosophies of the Greeks. "See to it that no one makes a prey of you by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition ... and not according to Christ," he warned the church at Colosse (Col. 2:8, RSV).

WALL OF DAMASCUS. *Saul of Tarsus, on his way to persecute the Christians of Damascus, was struck to earth and heard the heavenly voice as he neared this city (Acts 9:1–9). This is the traditional site along the wall of Damascus where Paul was lowered in a basket to escape persecution after preaching in the city's synagogues (Acts 9:23–25). Paul had returned to Damascus after a period of solitude in Arabia (Gal. 1:17).*

B. A Roman Citizen. Paul was not only "a citizen of no mean city," but a Roman citizen as well. This furnishes still another clue to his boyhood background.

Acts 22:24–29 shows Paul carrying on conversations with a Roman centurion and a Roman tribune. (The *centurion* was a captain over 100 men in the Roman army; the *tribune* in this case would be a military commander.) On orders from the tribune, the centurion was about to have Paul scourged. But the Apostle protested, "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman [citizen], and uncondemned?" (Acts 22:25). The centurion carried the news to the tribune, who queried further. To him Paul not only affirmed his Roman citizenship but explained how he became one: "I was free born" (Acts 22:28). This implies that his father had been a Roman citizen.

Roman citizenship could be obtained in various ways. The tribune in the narrative states that he "bought" his citizenship "for a large sum" (Acts 22:28, RSV). More often, however, citizenship was a reward for some service of unusual distinction to the Roman Empire, or was granted when an individual was freed from slavery.

Roman citizenship was precious, for it carried special rights and privileges, such as exemption from certain forms of punishment. A Roman citizen could not be scourged or crucified.

However, the relationship of the Jews to Rome was not entirely a happy one. Jews rarely became Roman citizens. Most Jews who attained citizenship lived outside of Palestine.



C. Of Jewish Ancestry. We should also consider Paul's Jewish ancestry and the impact of his family's religious faith. He describes himself to the Christians at Philippi as "of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee" (Phil. 3:5). On another occasion, he called himself "an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin" (Rom. 11:1).

Thus Paul stood in a proud lineage reaching back to the father of his people, Abraham. From the tribe of Benjamin had come Israel's first king, Saul, after whom the boy of Tarsus was named.

The synagogue school helped Jewish parents pass on the religious heritage of Israel to their children. A boy began reading the Scriptures when he was but five years old. By the time he was ten, he would be studying the Mishna with its involved interpretations of the Law. Thus, he became steeped in the history, customs, Scriptures, and language of his people. Paul's later vocabulary was strongly colored by the language of the Greek Septuagint, which was the Bible of Hellenistic Jews.

Of the major "parties" of the Jews, the Pharisees were the most strict. (See "Jews in New Testament Times.") They were determined to resist the efforts of their Roman conquerors to impose new beliefs and ways of life upon them. By the first century, they had become the "spiritual aristocracy" of their people. Paul was a Pharisee, the "son of Pharisees" (Acts 23:6). Thus we can be certain that his religious training found its roots in loyalty to the regulations of the Law, as interpreted by the Jewish rabbis. At 13, he was expected to assume personal responsibility for obedience to that Law.

Saul of Tarsus spent his young manhood in Jerusalem "at the feet of Gamaliel," where he was "taught according to the perfect manner of the law ..." (Acts 22:3). Gamaliel was the grandson of Hillel, one of the greatest of the Jewish rabbis. The school of Hillel was the more liberal of the two major schools of thought among the Pharisees. Acts 5:33-39, RSV, gives a glimpse of Gamaliel, who is described as "held in honor by all the people."

Rabbinic students were required to learn a trade so that they could eventually teach without becoming a burden to the people. Paul selected a typical Tarsian industry, making tents from goats-hair cloth (Acts 18:3). His skill in this trade later proved a great boon to him in his missionary work.

Upon completion of his studies with Gamaliel, this young Pharisee probably returned to his home in Tarsus for a few years. We have no clear evidence that he met or knew Jesus during the Master's ministry in the flesh.

From Paul's own pen as well as from the book of Acts, we learn that he then returned to Jerusalem and dedicated his energies to the persecution of Jews who accepted the teachings of Jesus the Nazarene. Paul could never quite forgive himself for the hate and violence that characterized his life during these years. "For I am the least of the apostles," he later wrote, "... because I persecuted the church of God" (1 Cor. 15:9). In other references, he brands himself as "a persecutor of the church" (Phil. 3:6), one who "persecuted the church of God, and wasted it" (Gal. 1:13).

An autobiographical reference in Paul's first letter to Timothy sheds some light on the question of how a man of such sensitive conscience could become involved in this violence against his own people. "I formerly blasphemed and persecuted and insulted him [Christ, represented by His people]; but I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief" (1 Tim. 1:13, RSV). The history of religion is replete with examples of others who made the same



mistake. In the same passage, Paul refers to himself as “the foremost of sinners” (1 Tim. 1:15, RSV), undoubtedly because he persecuted Christ Jesus and His followers.

D. The Death of Stephen. Had it not been for the way Stephen died (Acts 7:54–60), young Saul might have turned away unmoved from the stoning, at which he held the executioners’ clothing. It would have seemed just another legal execution.

But as Stephen knelt and the martyring stones rained upon his defenseless head, he testified to his vision of Christ in glory, and prayed, “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge” (Acts 7:60). Though this crisis launched Paul on his career as a hunter of heretics, it is natural to suppose that Stephen’s words stayed with him so that he became “hunted” as well—hunted by conscience.

E. A Career of Persecution. The events that followed the martyrdom of Stephen do not make pleasant reading. The story is told in a breath: “Saul laid waste the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison” (Acts 8:3).

II. Conversion on the Damascus Road. The persecution in Jerusalem actually scattered the seed of faith. Believers dispersed, and soon the new faith was being preached far and wide (cf. Acts 8:4). “Yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord” (Acts 9:1), Saul decided it was time to carry the campaign to some of the “foreign cities” in which the scattered disciples had lodged. The long arm of the Sanhedrin could reach to the farthest synagogue in the empire in matters of Jewish religion. At this time, the followers of Christ were still regarded as a heretical Jewish sect.

So Saul set out for Damascus, about 240 km. (150 mi.) away, armed with credentials that would empower him to bring “any of this way, whether they were men or women ... bound to Jerusalem” (Acts 9:2).

What was in his mind as he tramped on, day after day, in the dust of the road and the burning heat of the sun? The intensely personal self-revelation of Romans 7:7–13 may give us a clue. Here we see a conscientious man’s struggle to find peace through observing all the minute ramifications of the Law.

Did it free him? Paul’s answer from experience was no. Instead it became an intolerable burden and strain. The influence of Saul’s Hellenistic environment in Tarsus must not be overlooked as we try to find the reason for his inner frustration. After his return to Jerusalem, he must have found rigid Pharisaism galling, even though he professed to accept it wholeheartedly. He had breathed freer air most of his life, and he could not renounce the freedom to which he had become accustomed.

However, the deeper reason for his distress was spiritual. He had tried to keep the Law, but learned that he could not do so, by reason of his sinful fallen nature. How then could he ever be right with God?

With Damascus in sight, a momentous thing happened. In one blinding flash, Saul saw himself stripped of all pride and pretension, as the persecutor of God’s Messiah and His people. Stephen had been right, and he was wrong. In the face of the living Christ, Saul capitulated. He heard a voice that said, “I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest.... Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do” (Acts 9:5–6). And Saul obeyed.

During his stay in the city, “He was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink” (Acts 9:9). A disciple at Damascus by the name of Ananias became a friend and counselor, a man not afraid to believe that Paul’s conversion had been genuine. Through his prayers, God restored Paul’s sight.



III. Early Ministry. Paul began witnessing to his newfound faith in the synagogue at Damascus. The burden of his message concerning Jesus was, “He is the Son of God” (Acts 9:20). But Paul had bitter lessons to learn before he could emerge as a trusted and effective Christian leader. He discovered that people do not forget easily; a man’s mistakes can haunt him for a long time, even after he has forsaken them. Paul was suspected by many of the disciples and hated by his former companions in persecution. He preached briefly in Damascus, went away to Arabia, and then returned to Damascus.

Paul’s second attempt to preach in Damascus did not work out well, either. A year or two had elapsed since his conversion, but the Jews remembered how he had deserted his original mission to Damascus. Hatred against him flamed anew, and “the Jews took counsel to kill him” (Acts 9:23). The story of Paul’s dramatic escape over the wall in a basket has captured the imagination of many readers.

Paul’s days of preparation were not over. The Galatian account continues by saying, “After three years I went up to Jerusalem ...” (Gal. 1:18). There he met the same hostile reception as at Damascus. Once more he had to flee.

Paul dropped from view for several years. These hidden years brought the ripened convictions and spiritual stature he would need for his ministry.

In Antioch, Gentiles were being converted to Christ. The church in Jerusalem had to decide how to care for these new converts. It was then that Barnabas remembered Paul and went to Tarsus to look for him (Acts 11:25). Barnabas had already been instrumental in introducing Paul in Jerusalem, in an effort to allay suspicions against him.

These two men were entrusted with the task of carrying relief funds back to Judea, where the followers of Jesus were suffering from a famine. When Barnabas and Paul returned to Antioch, mission accomplished, they brought young John Mark, Barnabas’ nephew, with them (Acts 12:25).

IV. Missionary Journeys. The thriving young church at Antioch now sent out Barnabas and Paul as missionaries. The first port of call on the first missionary journey was Salamis on the island of Cyprus, the home country of Barnabas. This fact, together with the Bible’s frequent listing of these missionaries as “Barnabas and Saul,” indicates that Paul was playing the lesser role. This was Barnabas’ journey, Paul was second in command, and the two of them “had John [Mark] to assist them” (Acts 13:5, RSV).

The success of their missionary endeavors on that island fired Paul and his partners to press on into more difficult territory. They made a longer sea voyage, this time across to Perga on the mainland of Asia Minor. From there Paul meant to travel inland on a dangerous mission to Antioch in Pisidia.

But just at this point, something happened that was to cause much heartache for all three. The helper, John Mark, “departing from them returned to Jerusalem” (Acts 13:13), his home. We are not told why, though it is natural to guess that his courage and confidence had failed. Mark’s sudden change of plans would later cause friction between Paul and Barnabas.

In Antioch, Paul became the spokesman and a familiar pattern developed. Some believed his message and rejoiced; others rejected his message and stirred up opposition. It happened first



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at Antioch, then at Iconium. At Lystra he was stoned and left for dead (Acts 14:19), but he survived to press on to one more city, Derbe.

The visit of Paul and Barnabas to Derbe completed their first journey. Soon Paul decided to retrace the difficult route over which he had come, in order to strengthen, encourage, and organize the Christian groups he and Barnabas had established.

In this we discern Paul's plan of planting congregations in the principal cities of the Roman Empire. He did not leave his converts unorganized and without suitable leadership; but by the same token, he did not remain long in one place.

The Jews often made converts among the Gentiles, but these gentile converts were kept in a "second-class" position. Unless they were ready to undergo circumcision and accept the Pharisaic interpretation of the Law, they remained on the fringes of the Jewish congregation. Even if they went that far, the fact that they were not born Jewish still barred them from complete fellowship.

So what would be the relationship of gentile converts to the Christian community? Paul and Barnabas journeyed to Jerusalem to confer with the leaders there regarding this fundamental issue.

At Jerusalem, Paul set forth his convictions and won the day. Paul's own description of the controversy in Galatians states that he was given "the right hands of fellowship," along with Barnabas. The elders at Jerusalem agreed that these men "should go unto the heathen" (Gal. 2:9).

Following the conference in Jerusalem, Paul and Barnabas "continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord" (Acts 15:35). Here, two incidents put severe strains upon Paul's working relationships with Peter and Barnabas.

The first of these incidents arose out of the same problems that brought on the Jerusalem conference. The conference had freed Gentiles from the Jewish regulation of circumcision. However, it had not decided whether Christians of Jewish background could eat with gentile converts. Peter took his stand with Paul in favor of this practice, which involved relaxing the Jewish food regulations. In fact, Peter set the example by eating with the Gentiles. But later he "withdrew and separated himself" (Gal. 2:12), and "Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation" (v. 13).

Paul, regarding these acts as a new threat to his mission to the Gentiles, resorted to drastic action. "I opposed [Peter] to his face, because he stood condemned" (Gal. 2:11, RSV). He did this "before them all" (v. 14). In other words, he resorted to public rebuke.

This incident helps us to understand the second one, which Luke records in Acts 15:36–40. Barnabas wanted young Mark to accompany them on a second missionary journey; Paul opposed the idea. And the narrative says "there arose a sharp contention" (v. 39, RSV).

We do not know whether Paul and Barnabas ever met again. They "agreed to disagree" and embarked on separate journeys. No doubt the gospel was thereby furthered more than it would have been had they stayed together.

Then "Paul chose Silas, and departed, ... and he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches" (Acts 15:40–41). After revisiting Derbe, which had been the last point visited on the first journey, Paul and his company pressed on to Lystra to see their converts in that place. Here



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Paul found a young Christian named Timothy (Acts 16:1), and perhaps saw in him a potential replacement for Mark.

What happened here redeemed Paul from any charge of not being willing to place confidence in men younger than himself. In 1 Timothy 1:2, Paul addressed Timothy as “my own son,” and in the second epistle he speaks of him as “my dearly beloved son” (2 Tim. 1:2). In the second epistle we also read, “I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you” (1:15, RSV). This may imply that Timothy’s family had been won by Paul and Barnabas on their first journey. Certainly, when Paul came again, he “wanted Timothy to accompany him” (Acts 16:3, RSV). This same verse adds that Paul “took and circumcised him because of the Jews.” Was this inconsistent with Paul’s earlier judgment upon Peter? Or was it that he had learned the wisdom of not forcing unnecessary issues? At any rate, since Timothy was half-Jewish, this decision would avoid trouble many times. Paul knew how to fight for a principle and how to yield for expediency when no principle was at stake. Paul maintained that circumcision was not necessary to salvation (cf. Galatians), yet he was ready to circumcise a Christian Jew as a matter of expediency.

When the evangelistic party (directed in some unspecified way by the Holy Spirit—Acts 16:6–8) reached Troas and stood gazing across the narrow strait, they must have pondered the prospect of advancing their campaign to what is now the European mainland. The decision came when “a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia ... saying, Come over into Macedonia and help us” (Acts 16:9). Paul’s response was immediate. The party set sail for Europe. Many writers have suggested that this “man of Macedonia” may have been Luke the physician. At any rate, he seems to enter the travel drama at this point, for now he begins referring to the missionaries as “we.”

The journey continued along the great Roman road running westward through the principal cities of Macedonia—from Philippi to Thessalonica, and from Thessalonica to Berea. For three weeks, Paul spoke in the synagogue at Thessalonica; then he moved on to Athens, center of Greek learning and a “city wholly given to idolatry” (Acts 17:16). Restlessly, he journeyed on to Corinth.

His first major mission to the gentile world extended to almost three years. Then he turned back to Antioch.

After a short stay in Antioch, Paul set out on his third missionary journey in A.D. 52. This time his first stops were in Galatia and Phrygia. After visiting the churches in Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, he decided to do some intensive missionary work in Ephesus. Ephesus was the capital of the Roman province of Asia. Strategically located for commerce, it was surpassed in size and importance only by Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch. As the outcome of Paul’s labors there, it became the third most important city in the history of early Christianity—Jerusalem, Antioch, then Ephesus.

Paul came to Ephesus to undertake what proved to be the most extended and successful of his missionary efforts in any one locality. But these were strenuous years for him. Since he supported himself by working at his trade, his days were long. Following the custom of laborers in such a hot climate, he would be up and working at his trade before dawn. His afternoon hours were given to teaching and preaching, and likely his evening hours as well. He did this “daily” for “two years.” In his own description of these labors, Paul adds that he not only taught in public,



but “from house to house” (Acts 20:20). He succeeded—too well. We are told of “special miracles” (Acts 19:11) that took place during these stirring days in Ephesus. The new faith made such an impact on the city that “a number of those who practiced magic arts brought their books together and burned them” (Acts 19:19, RSV). This aroused the hatred of pagan worshipers, who feared that the Christians would undermine the influence of their religion.

After three winters in Ephesus, Paul spent the next one in Corinth, in line with the promise and hope expressed in 1 Corinthians 16:5–7. There Paul made further preparation for a visit to Rome. He penned a letter, telling the Christians in Rome, “I long to see you, ... Oftentimes I purposed to come unto you” (Rom. 1:11, 13), and “I hope to see you in passing as I go to Spain” (Rom. 15:24, RSV).

STREET IN EPHESUS. *Paul’s words incited a mob of angry Ephesians to riot in the theater at the end of this marble street (Acts 19:21–41). Demetrius, who made small silver models of the great temple of Diana, stirred up the trouble when he found that Paul’s preaching endangered his craft. Paul left the city, choosing Timothy to remain behind and prevent the church from being corrupted by false doctrine (1 Tim. 1:3).*

Paul ignored warnings of the dangers that threatened him if he should appear in Jerusalem again. He felt that it was crucial that he return in person, bearing the gift of the gentile congregations. He was “ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 21:13). So Paul came again to Jerusalem, and Luke writes that “the brethren received us gladly” (21:17). But lurking in the shadows was a reception committee with different intentions.

V. Imprisonment and Trial. The Christians in Jerusalem were happy to hear Paul’s report of the spread of the Christian faith. However, some of the Jewish Christians doubted Paul’s sincerity. To show his respect for the Jewish Christians, Paul helped four men who were keeping a Nazarite vow at the temple. Some Jews from Asia seized Paul and falsely accused him of bringing Gentiles into the temple (Acts 21:27–29). The tribune of the Roman garrison took Paul into custody to prevent a riot. Upon learning that Paul was a Roman citizen, the tribune removed his chains and asked the Jews to convene the Sanhedrin to interrogate him.

Paul realized that the heated mob might send him to death. So he told the Sanhedrin that he had been arrested because he was a Pharisee and believed in the resurrection of the dead. This divided the Sanhedrin into its Pharisaic and Sadducean factions, and the Roman tribune had to rescue Paul again.

Hearing that the Jews were plotting an ambush for Paul, the tribune sent him by night to Caesarea, where he was guarded in Herod’s palace. Paul spent two years under arrest there.

When Paul’s Jewish accusers arrived, they charged that the apostle had tried to profane the temple and had created a civil riot in Jerusalem (Acts 24:1–9). The Roman procurator Felix demanded more evidence from the tribune in Jerusalem. But before new evidence could arrive, Felix was replaced by a new procurator, Porcius Festus. This new official asked for Paul’s accusers to come to Caesarea again. When they arrived, Paul exercised his right as a Roman citizen to present his case to Caesar.



While waiting for the ship to Rome, Paul had an opportunity to plead his cause before King Agrippa II, who visited Festus. Acts 26 records Paul's speech, in which he recounted the events of his life up to that point.

Festus committed Paul to the charge of a centurion named Julius, who was taking a shipload of prisoners to the imperial city. After a very rough voyage, the ship was wrecked on the island of Melita (Malta). Three months later, Paul and the other prisoners boarded another ship for Rome.

The Christians of Rome traveled about thirty miles from the city to welcome Paul (Acts 28:15). Julius delivered Paul to "the captain of the guard" (Acts 28:16), who placed the apostle under house arrest. Acts 28:30 tells us that Paul rented a house for two years while waiting for Caesar to hear his case.

The New Testament gives us no account of Paul's death. Many modern scholars believe that Caesar freed Paul, and that the apostle engaged in more missionary work before being arrested a second time and executed.

Two books written before A.D. 200—the First Epistle of Clement and the Acts of Paul—assert that this happened. They indicate that Paul was beheaded in Rome near the end of the reign of Emperor Nero (*ca.* A.D. 67).

OLD APPIAN WAY. *Paul traveled to Rome on this, the oldest and most famous highway in Italy (Acts 28:14–16). Appius Claudius began its construction in 312 B.C. Roman tombs, catacombs, and towering cypress trees line the way for many kilometers.*

VI. Paul's Personality in His Letters. Paul's epistles are the mirror of his soul. They reveal his inner motives, his deepest passions, his basic convictions. Without the surviving letters of Paul, he would be only a dim figure for us.

Paul was more interested in persons and what was happening to them than in literary formalities. As we read Paul's writings we note that his words may come tumbling out in hot haste, as in the first chapter of Galatians. Sometimes he breaks off abruptly to plunge into a new line of thought. At points he draws a long breath and dictates a sentence almost without end.

Second Corinthians 10:10 gives a clue as to how Paul's letters were received and regarded. Even his enemies and critics acknowledged the impact of what he had to say, for they were known to comment, "His letters are weighty and powerful ..." (2 Cor. 10:10).

Strong leaders, such as Paul, tend to attract or repel those they seek to influence. Paul had both devoted followers and bitter enemies. Consequently, his contemporaries held widely differing opinions about him.

Paul's earliest writings antedate most of the four Gospels. They mirror him as a man of courage (2 Cor. 2:3), of integrity and high motive (vv. 4–5), of humility (v. 6), and of gentleness (v. 7).

Paul knew how to differentiate between his own opinion and a "commandment of the Lord" (1 Cor. 7:25). He was humble enough to say "I think" on some matters (v. 40). He was very aware of the urgency of his commission (9:16–17), and of the fact that he was not beyond the danger



of being “disqualified” through succumbing to temptation (1 Cor. 9:27, RSV). He recalls with sorrow that once he “persecuted the church of God” (15:9).

Read Romans 16 with special attention to Paul’s generous attitude toward his co-laborers. He was a man who loved and appreciated people and prized the fellowship of the believers. In the letter to the Colossians, we see how warm and friendly Paul could be, even with Christians whom he had not met. “I want you to know how greatly I strive for you ... and for all who have not seen my face,” he writes (Col. 2:1, RSV).

In the Colossian letter, we also read about a man named Onesimus, a runaway slave (Col. 4:9) who had evidently added theft to the crime of forsaking his owner, Philemon. Now Paul had won him to the Christian faith and had persuaded him that he should return to his master. But knowing the severity of punishment meted out to runaway slaves, the apostle wanted to persuade Philemon to treat Onesimus as a brother. Here we see Paul the reconciler. He maneuvered to ensure a Christian welcome for Onesimus as he returned to Philemon. As we would say it today, he put Philemon “on the spot” in the eyes of the church and in terms of his personal relationship to Paul. And he did all this in behalf of a man on the bottom rung of the ladder in Roman society. Contrast this with the behavior of young Saul, guarding the garments of those who stoned Stephen. Observe how profoundly Paul had changed in his attitude toward persons.

In these writings we see Paul as a generous, warmhearted friend, a man of great faith and courage—even in the face of extreme circumstances. He was utterly committed to Christ, whether in life or death. His testimony is one deep anchorage in spiritual realities: “I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Phil. 4:12–13).

Misreading Scripture with Individualist Eyes: E. Randolph Richard (search for Paul)

Preface Page x

Jesus spoke with a Galilean accent (Mt 26:73); Paul got angry, and God used his anger to fuel a letter such as Galatians.

Preface Page x

In Paul’s world, there were also things that went without being said.

Preface Page x

Caesar promised peace and security.

Introduction Page 1

At least twice, Paul shames the Corinthians to urge them toward proper actions.

Why Learn about These Foundational Social Structures of the Biblical World? Page 9

We are wary of people simply reading modern Middle Eastern cultural values into the biblical text and saying, “That’s what Paul meant.”

Why Does This Matter? Page 19

Thus, we assume Paul as an individual wrote his letters.



Why Does This Matter? Page 19

In fact, I grew up calling them “Paul’s letters.”

Why Does This Matter? Pages 19–20

The opening of the letter to the Thessalonians tells us: “Paul, Silas and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace and peace to you” (1 Thess 1:1).

Why Does This Matter? Page 20

Paul couldn’t really mean that they worked together to write the letter.

Why Does This Matter? Page 20

Other scholars suggest Paul is just being humble.

Why Does This Matter? Page 20

Yet, why wasn’t he humble to the Romans, Galatians, or Ephesians?

Why Does This Matter? Page 20

We read “Paul, Silas and Timothy,” but we never really see it.

Why Does This Matter? Page 20

I “forget” that the opening of the letter tells us it was written to a group of people: “Paul, Silas and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace and Peace to *you* [plural]” (1 Thess 1:1).

Why Does This Matter? Page 20

I grew up reading the letter as if Paul (an individual) were speaking to me (an individual).

Why Does This Matter? Page 20

Thus, at the end of the letter, when Paul writes, “Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus” (1 Thess 5:16–18), I imagine Paul telling me to do those things.

Why Does This Matter? Page 20

Since the church would have been assembled and listening as a group to Paul’s letter as it was read aloud to them, they most likely discussed together how Paul’s command for them (as a group) to rejoice, pray, and give thanks should shape their community life.

Adoption Page 39

In the New Testament, we read an interesting exchange between Paul and the Roman commander who had arrested him:

Adoption Page 39

The commander went to Paul and asked, “Tell me, are you a Roman citizen?”

Adoption Page 39

“But I was born a citizen,” Paul replied.



Ephesians

Adoption Page 39

Paul notes that he was *born* a citizen, indicating his entire family was citizens.

Adoption Page 39

Hearing Paul was a Roman citizen causes the commander to pause: *Hmmm, a Roman citizen, and even more so, he was born a Roman.*

Adoption Page 40

He was so determined to act with all possible haste that he straightaway took me to his own house and entrusted me with the direction of all his affairs.

Adoption Page 40

This is why they adopted an adult, not a child.

Adoption Page 41

When Paul wrote to the Ephesians that God “predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will,” (Eph 1:5), there would have been a gasp from those who heard the letter read.

Adoption Page 42

Somehow Onesimus and Paul meet in Rome, and during this time Onesimus comes to faith in Christ.

Adoption Page 42

Paul wants to reconcile Onesimus with Philemon his owner.

Adoption Page 42

Paul writes:

Marriage Page 43

(Christians believe Jesus is that promised Son of David.)

Conclusion > Chapter 1: Kinship: Being in a Family Page 47

From their perspective, our collective stories create powerful expectations among our kin about how we are to behave toward other peoples.

Conclusion > Chapter 1: Kinship: Being in a Family Page 47

Paul writes to the divided and disunited church in Corinth to call them into unity.

Conclusion > Chapter 1: Kinship: Being in a Family Page 47

In a carefully composed passage in 1 Corinthians 10, Paul reminds them of the exodus story.

Conclusion > Chapter 1: Kinship: Being in a Family Page 47

Paul reminds them of their ancestors going through the desert.

Conclusion > Chapter 1: Kinship: Being in a Family Page 47

The rock that accompanied them and sustained them, Paul says, was Christ.



Ephesians

Conclusion > Chapter 1: Kinship: Being in a Family Page 47

But, like in the exodus story, Paul reminds them, “God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear” (1 Cor 10:13).

Conclusion > Chapter 1: Kinship: Being in a Family Page 47

Paul uses this story as a metaphor, but he is doing so because he was speaking in a collective world.

Conclusion > Chapter 1: Kinship: Being in a Family Page 47

Paul argues that the exodus story is now the story of the Corinthians’ spiritual ancestors.

Conclusion > Chapter 1: Kinship: Being in a Family Page 47

What goes without being said is why Paul is troubling to make this point.

Conclusion > Chapter 1: Kinship: Being in a Family Page 47

By making the exodus story the story of their ancestors, Paul is using collective pressure on them.

Conclusion > Chapter 1: Kinship: Being in a Family Page 48

When Paul writes his first letter to the Thessalonian church, he uses all kinds of family language that would have made sense to both Jewish and Gentile family settings.

Conclusion > Chapter 1: Kinship: Being in a Family Page 48

Paul speaks of them as brothers and sisters many times in the letter.

Conclusion > Chapter 1: Kinship: Being in a Family Page 48

Paul says he feels like any father would “being separated from you for a short time (in person, not in thought)” and that he feels “intense longing” to see them (1 Thess 2:17).

Conclusion > Chapter 1: Kinship: Being in a Family Page 48

Paul mentions how the Thessalonians “love all of God’s family throughout Macedonia.

Conclusion > Chapter 1: Kinship: Being in a Family Page 48

Elsewhere Paul talks about the way we are to treat older men as fathers, older women as mothers, and younger believers as sisters and brothers (1 Tim 5:1–2).

Conclusion > Chapter 1: Kinship: Being in a Family Page 49

Paul reminds us the church is not a cultural group, not a subculture, not an organization, not an event, but a family of brothers and sisters joined by adoption by one father.

Chapter 3: Patronage: Gifts Had Strings Attached Page 67

These examples from people at different times and in different places show that these attitudes toward mutual dependency were pervasive in the Mediterranean world.

Chapter 3: Patronage: Gifts Had Strings Attached Page 67

Some of these people lived just around the minimum subsistence level and perhaps 10 to 20 percent of people lived desperately below the minimum subsistence level.



Patrons and Clients Page 72

Oftentimes they simply did not need to point out the relational expectations at all; ancients understood what went without being said.

Gifts Have Strings Attached (and that's Good) Page 73

Ancient Roman philosopher Seneca discusses benefaction in one of the great writings of antiquity, which one modern scholar describes as “a brilliant example of a philosopher at work on the actual mechanisms of society.”

Patrons Give Various Kinds of Gifts Page 75

Paul says, “Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die” (Rom 5:7).

Patrons Give Various Kinds of Gifts Page 75

By “good person” Paul probably has a sort of wealthy patron in mind.

Clients Give Gratitude Page 77

For the ungrateful ... forget noble men ... and in addition ill-treat their [patrons] ... as though they were enemies.”

Clients Give Gratitude Page 77

There is evidence that some patrons threatened to withdraw their patronage if they considered their clients to be ungrateful.

Western Ideas about Gift Giving Can Lead Us off Course Page 80

Among collectives, gifts are given to create a bond between people (Seneca, *On Benefits* 6.41.2).

Phoebe Page 91

An inscription in Corinth from about the time Paul was in the city praises a patroness called Junia Theadora who migrated to Corinth.

Phoebe Page 91

The inscription calls her a benefactress and praises her for the way she gave patronage (*prostasian*) to Lycian travelers.

Phoebe Page 92

Her clients express their gratitude by praising her character “so that Junia herself, and the city of Corinth at the same time, may be aware of the loyalty of our city to her.”

Phoebe Page 92

Paul mentions another worthy patroness from the region of Corinth.

Phoebe Page 92

In his letter to the Romans (written from Corinth) around the same time as the Junia inscription, Paul writes: “I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon of the church in Cenchreae.



Ephesians

Phoebe Page 92

Paul's commendation of Phoebe as a "deacon" sparks a lot of debate in some circles, but we shouldn't overlook that Paul also commends her for being the benefactor of many.

Phoebe Page 92

Paul calls her a *prostatis* (benefactor), a cognate of the term *prostasian* (patronage) used in the inscription about Junia.

Phoebe Page 92

She opened her home to host gatherings of believers in the port of Cenchreae and probably also received and helped take care of the needs of traveling Christians (likely including Paul) as they arrived at the port.

Felix Page 92

Felix. Patronage dynamics are at work in Paul's interaction with Felix the Roman governor.

Felix Page 92

When the Jewish leadership brings their charges against Paul before Felix, they use a lawyer named Tertullus, probably because the trial was in Latin.

Felix Pages 92–93

This litany culminated in the client expressing their profound gratitude to the patron.

Felix Page 93

They are asking for Paul to be released for a Jewish trial (which should only have flogging as a punishment).

Felix Page 93

But Luke helps us understand that the leaders had no intention of giving Paul a fair trial.

Felix Page 93

Possibly, Paul was going to "have an accident" along the way.

Felix Page 93

The Jewish leaders were right to expect Felix to reciprocate, like a good patron, by handing over Paul.

Felix Page 93

A bit of background may help understand why Felix doesn't turn Paul over.

Felix Page 93

Nonetheless, Felix should have reciprocated by granting their request against Paul.

Felix Page 93

Paul mentioned he was in Jerusalem to deliver an offering (Acts 24:17).

Felix Pages 93–94



Ephesians

Luke tells us Felix holds Paul because “he was hoping that Paul would offer him a bribe” (Acts 24:26).

Felix Page 94

Paul doesn't.

Felix Page 94

He should have cleared out his court backlog, including a ruling on (i.e., released) Paul.

Felix Page 94

Instead, he purposefully left Paul locked up in prison.

Patrons as Protectors Page 94

We see the dynamics of patronage used (and abused) throughout the story of Felix and Paul.

Patrons as Protectors Page 94

They appeal to this patronage when making a request for him to act in their interests against Paul.

Patrons as Protectors Page 94

Felix does not act in the interests of Paul.

Patrons as Protectors Page 94

He does not use his imbalanced power to serve the communities who were dependent on him, neither Paul nor the Jewish delegation.

Conclusion: Becoming Attached to the Right People Page 95

Paul had patrons.

Conclusion: Becoming Attached to the Right People Page 95

In Paul's world, staying in the home of an influential person often meant receiving their patronage.

Conclusion: Becoming Attached to the Right People Page 95

In Philippi, Paul and his companions go to a place of prayer.

Conclusion: Becoming Attached to the Right People Page 95

A woman there named Lydia is a dealer in purple cloth and likely wealthy.

Conclusion: Becoming Attached to the Right People Page 95

She invites Paul and his companions to stay in her home: “ ‘If you consider me a believer in the Lord,’ she said, ‘come and stay at my house.’”

Conclusion: Becoming Attached to the Right People Page 95

Likely Lydia acted as a patron for Paul.

Conclusion: Becoming Attached to the Right People Page 95



Ephesians

Paul later mentions that he was financially supported by the Philippian church at times, probably meaning Lydia and/or the jailer (2 Cor 11:8; Phil 4:18–19).

Conclusion: Becoming Attached to the Right People Page 95

This makes it more striking that Paul refuses to accept gifts from members of the Corinthian church.

Conclusion: Becoming Attached to the Right People Page 95

Paul's refusal seems to have angered some members (1 Cor 9).

Conclusion: Becoming Attached to the Right People Page 95

Some slander Paul by suggesting his refusal to accept their support indicates he isn't an actual apostle.

Conclusion: Becoming Attached to the Right People Page 95

Paul has to defend his apostleship as a result.

Conclusion: Becoming Attached to the Right People Page 95

The reason Paul refused to accept their financial support is that gifts have strings attached.

Conclusion: Becoming Attached to the Right People Page 96

Some factions are claiming their own apostle: Cephas, Paul, or Apollos (1 Cor 1:12).

Conclusion: Becoming Attached to the Right People Page 96

If Paul accepted financial support from any of the patrons in these factions, he would become indebted—tied—to that faction of the church; he would become we.

Conclusion: Becoming Attached to the Right People Page 96

It seems some of the patrons in these factions were angered that Paul would not accept their patronage.

Conclusion: Becoming Attached to the Right People Page 96

Paul wisely doesn't allow them to gain control of him through their patronage.

Conclusion: Becoming Attached to the Right People Page 96

Paul adds, "I robbed other churches by receiving support from them so as to serve you [plural]" (2 Cor 11:8).

Conclusion: Becoming Attached to the Right People Page 96

So is it hypocrisy for Paul to accept the patronage of Lydia in Philippi and of other churches and not of someone in Corinth?

Conclusion: Becoming Attached to the Right People Page 96

No. Paul understood that the value of a gift depended on the motives of the patron.

Conclusion: Becoming Attached to the Right People Page 96

Tentmaking was not Paul's universal missionary strategy.



Conclusion: Becoming Attached to the Right People Page 96

Paul's universal missionary strategy was to make sure that nothing interfered with following Jesus.

Conclusion: Becoming Attached to the Right People Page 97

When the patron's gift had strings that would hinder, Paul chose to refuse the gift and to work with his hands.

Conclusion: Becoming Attached to the Right People Page 97

Paul understood the patronage system very well.

The Language of Patronage in the Bible Page 101

In other words, like Felix, who detained Paul in hopes of a bribe, Jude's false leaders use their status and resources only for themselves.

Fathers, Shepherds, Kings, and Other Common Patronage Terms Page 103

For example, when Paul writes to the Corinthian church, he calls himself their "father" (1 Cor 4:15).

Fathers, Shepherds, Kings, and Other Common Patronage Terms Page 103

When he speaks about Timothy, Paul says, "But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel" (Phil 2:22).

Fathers, Shepherds, Kings, and Other Common Patronage Terms Page 103

Paul sees the relationship as being the same as a kinship relationship.

Grace, Faith, and Patronage Page 104

When an ancient Greek person heard the word *charis*, they would naturally think of the flow of patronage all around them. *Charis* was what was constantly being passed between the three graces as they danced.

Grace, Faith, and Patronage Page 104

Pistis described the way a patron was faithful or loyal in acting to benefit their clients.

Grace, Faith, and Patronage Page 104

Charis and *pistis* frequently occur in Paul's writings, where they are translated "grace" (*charis*) and "faith" (*pistis*).

Grace, Faith, and Patronage Page 104

Paul commandeers the everyday terms Mediterranean people used to talk about patronage to help explain the new relationship believers have with God, through Jesus Christ.

Grace, Faith, and Patronage Page 104

To explain the mysterious salvation of God, Paul portrays it as a relationship they understood.

Grace, Faith, and Patronage Page 104



When Paul wants to describe the way God showed kindness and faithfulness to us by giving us his Son, he used *charis*, the way a patron generously chose to have favor on clients and bestow gifts on them.

Grace, Faith, and Patronage Pages 104–105

For example, Paul writes, “For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God’s grace [*charis*] and the gift that came by the grace [*chariti*] of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many!” (Rom 5:15).

Grace, Faith, and Patronage Page 105

When Paul thinks about the way God is faithful to his people and continues to care for and protect them, he picks up the word *pistis* to speak about “God’s faithfulness” (Rom 3:3; 1 Cor 1:9; 10:13).

Grace, Faith, and Patronage Page 105

When Paul wants to describe the way Christians trust in God alone, in the light of having received his favor and gifts, he speaks of their *pistis*.

Grace, Faith, and Patronage Page 105

For example, Paul writes, “to the one who does not work but trusts [*pisteuonti*] God who justifies the ungodly, their faith [*pistis*] is credited as righteousness” (Rom 4:5).

Grace, Faith, and Patronage Page 105

Yet, when we strip these words from their original patronage context, we can lose some of Paul’s meaning.

Grace, Faith, and Patronage Page 105

Paul expects us to “trust” or “have faith” in what God has indeed done.

We Need to Read Paul in His First-Century Context Page 106

WE NEED TO READ PAUL IN HIS FIRST-CENTURY CONTEXT

We Need to Read Paul in His First-Century Context Page 106

Paul uses patronage to explain salvation.

We Need to Read Paul in His First-Century Context Page 106

Paul says we are to respond with *pistis*, which we translate “faith.”

We Need to Read Paul in His First-Century Context Pages 106–107

These are great translations, but to understand better what Paul meant, we need to remember the context: patronage.

We Need to Read Paul in His First-Century Context Page 107



Ephesians

God provides us the gift of salvation, and we respond by trusting in it: “For it is by grace [*charis*] you have been saved, through faith [*pistis*],” Paul writes, “and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God” (Eph 2:8–9).

We Need to Read Paul in His First-Century Context Page 107

Yet, Paul’s patronage language can cause a problem for us individualists in the West.

We Need to Read Paul in His First-Century Context Page 107

Understandings of patronage in Paul’s world are slowly catching on in the West (this book is one example).

We Need to Read Paul in His First-Century Context Page 107

Yet, while we need to be aware of the context in which Paul wrote, we still need to be careful to read what Paul himself said, in that context.

We Need to Read Paul in His First-Century Context Page 107

When people learn that Paul used the language of patronage to talk about grace and faith, they can then simply take the way patronage worked among people in the first century and read it into what Paul is saying about God.

We Need to Read Paul in His First-Century Context Page 107

This can lead to a significant misreading of Paul.

We Need to Read Paul in His First-Century Context Page 107

In order to understand Paul in his context, it is important for us to recognize two things.

We Need to Read Paul in His First-Century Context Page 107

First, that Paul drew on the context of patronage as one metaphor to explain the gospel.

We Need to Read Paul in His First-Century Context Page 107

Second, Paul had something very different to say about the way God acted as a patron.

We Need to Read Paul in His First-Century Context Page 107

Paul would have agreed.

We Need to Read Paul in His First-Century Context Page 107

When Paul talks about grace and faith, he does not mean God acts like a fallen first-century patron who only gives grace to those he feels deserve it because they are loyal to him.

We Need to Read Paul in His First-Century Context Pages 107–108

The better we understand first-century patronage, the better we can see where what Paul says about God also breaks with the patronage mold around him in his world.

We Need to Read Paul in His First-Century Context Page 108

First, Paul says we have all *already* fallen short of being deserving clients.

We Need to Read Paul in His First-Century Context Page 108



Ephesians

So Paul has shown that Abraham was credited righteousness, not because he was perfectly loyal in the ensuing relationship, but because he trusted in God's promise (Rom 4:18–22).

We Need to Read Paul in His First-Century Context Page 108

The key to understanding Paul is not to focus on the characteristics of the clients but the patron.

We Need to Read Paul in His First-Century Context Page 108

Paul has explained, "But God *demonstrates his own love for us* in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom 5:8).

We Need to Read Paul in His First-Century Context Page 109

Paul envisions—and established—communities of people who trust in God's ongoing patronage to them.

We Need to Read Paul in His First-Century Context Page 109

Paul expects this new network to grow in strength and transform all other alliances.

We Need to Read Paul in His First-Century Context Page 109

Paul insists on this as well.

We Need to Read Paul in His First-Century Context Page 109

For Paul, conversion didn't require an existential crisis.

Mediation/Brokerage in the New Testament Page 120

Paul writes, "For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim 2:5).

Conclusion: Kinsmen, Patrons, and Brokers Page 124

Thus, Paul is able to work as a tentmaker only where he is able to get access to the local guild, mediating a connection.

Conclusion: Kinsmen, Patrons, and Brokers Page 124

The only thing he *can* do is seek the help of his patron.

Tools, Buckets, Lenses, and Other Inadequate Metaphors Page 130

Individualist cultures have their own tools, such as guilt (and innocence) and an introspective conscience.

Same Honor, Different Values Page 135

(Whose list looks more like Paul's qualifications for an elder in Titus 1:6–8?)

The Most Important Things Are Hard to Define Page 136

Despite the best efforts of scholars, honor can't be distilled into a neat philosophical statement.

The Most Important Things Are Hard to Define Page 136

Paul, in trying to describe the effects of the Spirit on the life of a believer, calls them the fruit (singular) of the Spirit.



Ephesians

The Most Important Things Are Hard to Define Pages 137–138

Paul praises Timothy for serving him like a child serves a father (Phil 2:22).

The Most Important Things Are Hard to Define Page 138

Paul doesn't mean serving with simple faith (or serving poorly, as children sometimes do) but serving without thought of one's own status.

The Honor of the Firstborn Page 141

When Paul defends his honor in front of the Sanhedrin, he lists his ascribed honor (Acts 23:1–10).

The Honor of the Firstborn Page 141

Paul's ascribed honor, however, cannot be questioned.

The Honor of the Firstborn Page 141

"Brothers, I am a Pharisee," Paul notes, "a son of Pharisees" (Acts 23:6 NASB).

The Ascribed Honor of Anointing Page 142

But just as Paul didn't lose his ascribed honor in the eyes of the other Pharisees, so King Saul doesn't lose the honor *ascribed* to him by the prophet Samuel.

David (and Goliath) Page 150

Paul writes, "I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers" (Gal 1:14).

David (and Goliath) Page 150

Paul is indicating his achieved honor.

David (and Goliath) Page 150

So we quote Paul when he says love does not boast (1 Cor 13:4).

David (and Goliath) Page 150

We might even cite verses where Paul is condemning someone for boasting (Rom 1:30; 2:23; 4:2; 1 Cor 1:29; 5:6; 9:16; Eph 2:9).

David (and Goliath) Page 150

Yet, if we look closely at these verses, Paul is not actually condemning boasting but boasting for the wrong reasons.

David (and Goliath) Page 150

Paul actually commends or engages in his own boasting (Rom 2:17; 3:27; 1 Cor 3:21; 2 Cor 1:12, 14; 5:12; 7:14; 8:24; 9:2, 3; 10:13, 15, 16, 17; 11:12, 17, 18, 21; 12:1, 5, 6; Gal 6:4, 14; 1 Thess 2:19; 2 Thess 1:4).

David (and Goliath) Page 150

Boasting in Paul's culture (and in many collective cultures) was to indicate achieved honor.

David (and Goliath) Page 150



Ephesians

Furthermore, since honor is collective, everyone else in Paul's group also benefited from his boasting.

David (and Goliath) Page 151

Now, we will look at Paul.

The Honor of Paul Page 151

The honor of Paul.

The Honor of Paul Page 151

Near the end of Acts, when Paul comes to Jerusalem, certain Jews from Asia see him in the temple and begin to stir up a crowd.

The Honor of Paul Page 151

They accuse Paul of preaching against the Jewish people and the law and of bringing a Gentile into the temple (Acts 21:27–30).

The Honor of Paul Page 151

Paul wants to defend himself before the crowd.

The Honor of Paul Page 151

In his speech, Paul lists both ascribed and achieved honors.

The Honor of Paul Page 151

Then Paul notes he excelled in his education, becoming a student of the leading teacher in Jerusalem, Gamaliel, an achieved honor they would esteem.

The Honor of Paul Page 151

Paul is successful.

The Honor of Paul Page 151

As in the examples of David and Paul, honor is more like a portfolio than a single source.

Honor between Groups Page 152

They wrote it off as Jews being "a peculiar people."

Honor between Groups Page 152

"While Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews of Corinth made a united attack on Paul and brought him to the place of judgment" (Acts 18:12).

Honor between Groups Page 152

Paul's accusers strike to the heart of the matter.

Honor between Groups Page 152

The charge they bring against Paul is a serious issue of honor to Jews.

Honor between Groups Page 152

They accuse Paul of crossing a boundary.



Ephesians

Honor between Groups Pages 152–153

Before Paul can defend his honor, Gallio rules that Gentiles have no interest: “Just as Paul was about to speak, Gallio said to them, ‘If you Jews were making a complaint about some misdemeanor or serious crime, it would be reasonable for me to listen to you.

Honor between Groups Page 153

The Jews bring the wrong kind of charge against Paul—a point Gallio makes.

Honor between Groups Page 153

Paul and Roman aristocrat Seneca had different values.

Honor between Groups Page 153

Paul writes, “In your anger do not sin” (Eph 4:26).

Honor between Groups Page 153

Likewise, Seneca would likely have disagreed in several ways with Paul’s command, “Rather, in humility value others above yourselves” (Phil 2:3).

Honor between Groups Page 153

When Paul is in Thessalonica, Jews and Gentiles both feel Paul threatens the honor of their city.

Honor between Groups Page 153

The authorities take action against Paul:

Honor between Groups Page 153

When Paul and his companions had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue.

Honor between Groups Page 153

As was his custom, Paul went into the synagogue....

Honor between Groups Pages 153–154

Some of the Jews were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a large number of God-fearing Greeks and quite a few prominent women.

Honor between Groups Page 154

Some patronesses have given Paul their support: “quite a few prominent women,” Luke subtly notes.

Honor between Groups Page 154

If the Jews want to incite the Gentiles against Paul, they will need to find another reason, a threat against a shared value.

Honor between Groups Page 154

They rushed to Jason’s house in search of Paul and Silas in order to bring them out to the crowd.



Ephesians

Honor between Groups Page 154

The Thessalonian Jews are smart enough to know they cannot charge Paul with gaining patronage from patronesses, however disruptive it could prove to be to them personally.

Honor between Groups Page 154

Apparently, the Jews knew something of Paul's activities.

Honor between Groups Pages 154–155

They knew Paul was holding meetings in Jason's home and that Christians considered Jesus to be king.

Honor between Groups Page 155

The Jews knew such charges would resonate with city leaders: these troublemakers (Paul and his friends) should be arrested or at least banished.

Honor between Groups Page 155

Paul's opponents in Thessalonica knew to present a value that mattered to both Jews and Gentiles there.

Changing Group Allegiance Page 155

Paul reinforces that value by honoring them in a letter, noting how other churches honor them for doing so: "You became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia...."

Changing Group Allegiance Page 155

Paul is using honor to reinforce the value.

Changing Group Allegiance Page 156

Paul changed what he honored, too, when he changed communities.

Changing Group Allegiance Page 156

After he encountered Jesus and came to belong to the followers of Jesus, Paul valued this new community's *ascribed* honors: being a slave of Christ (Rom 1:1), of humility and weakness and of his reliance on Christ (1 Cor 12:9), and being called an apostle to the Gentiles (Rom 11:13).

Changing Group Allegiance Page 156

Paul's values had changed.

At Jesus' Trial Page 171

Paul writes to the newly founded church in Philippi, "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit.

At Jesus' Trial Page 171

Paul tells them not to live on this basis.

At Jesus' Trial Page 171

The Philippians might well ask, "Why would I want to do that, Paul?" Paul goes on to outline the values behind this action, the values God honors.



At Jesus' Trial Page 172

He gave up his status to serve others, as Paul is asking those with status to do in Philippi.

At Jesus' Trial Page 173

Paul says we are to let *these* values underlie our relations with others in our community.

Why We Get Shame Wrong as Individualists Page 176

The problem is Paul does it: "I say this to shame you" (1 Cor 6:5).

Why We Get Shame Wrong as Individualists Page 176

One scholar writes that Paul "makes very little use of the 'guilt' terminology in the psychological sense, but it may be fairly said that many of the things he says about sin include the thought that sinners are guilty people."

Why We Get Shame Wrong as Individualists Page 176

To this theologian, it seems obvious that Paul is thinking about guilt, even though Paul rarely writes it.

Why We Get Shame Wrong as Individualists Page 177

It's important to note that while Bible dictionaries published in the West have extensive articles on guilt, they have very little on shame, even though Daniel, David, and Paul use shame language.

Honor versus Shame? Page 181

Paul is appalled at the behavior of a particular churchman.

Honor versus Shame? Page 181

Paul's solution is to shame the man.

Honor versus Shame? Page 181

Paul does not do this to condemn his brother but that he might be restored (1 Cor 5:1–5).

Honor versus Shame? Pages 181–182

Whether it was this same man or another Christian brother who sinned and was excluded, Paul later writes to the Corinthians that when such a one repents, the church should not only forgive but comfort and restore him.

Honor versus Shame? Page 182

Paul does not endorse any use of shame that causes someone or some people to be devalued, disgraced, or unwanted.

Shame in the Bible Page 187

We saw above that Paul uses shame.

Shame in the Bible Page 187

Paul is not using shame here to condemn the believers.

Shame in the Bible Page 187



A survey of English commentaries shows modern writers struggle with how to translate Paul here.

Shame in the Bible Page 187

One commentator says, “Paul eschews shaming other Christians.”

Shame in the Bible Page 187

Since *eschew* means “to avoid using,” we wonder how the commentator can say Paul avoids shaming other Christians in a verse where he is explicitly doing it.

Shame in the Bible Page 187

We agree that Paul would abstain from using shame in the negative way we have come to use it today.

Shame in the Bible Page 187

We are certain Paul would not condemn the Corinthians.

Shame in the Bible Page 187

Paul himself argues there is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus (Rom 8:1).

Shame in the Bible Page 187

Nevertheless, Paul is clearly participating in the Mediterranean system of shaming in positive ways, pulling people back to their values.

Shame in the Bible Page 187

In 1 Timothy 2:9, Paul encourages women to dress “with shame” (*aidōs*).

Shame in the Bible Page 187

Here Paul is using a positive term for shame.

Shame in the Bible Pages 187–188

Paul is saying that women should dress in a way that wouldn’t cause the voice in their head to say “shame” or for the community to think “shame.”

Shame in the Bible Page 188

In America, we assume Paul is talking about dressing in sexually modest ways.

Shame in the Bible Page 188

Paul is actually talking about economics, being economically modest.

Shame in the Bible Page 188

Paul says the women’s sense of shame, or knowing what was right, should discourage dressing lavishly.

Shame in the Bible Page 188

If Christian women today were tempted to dress in ways that flaunted their wealth in the faces of poorer church members, Paul would say *aidōs*.

Shame in the Bible Page 188



Paul isn't targeting women or clothing.

Shame in the Bible Page 188

Paul is using shame to reinforce a value: everyone has an equal seat at the Lord's Table.

Shame in the Bible Page 188

In 1 Timothy 2:9 Paul is describing one way shame works.

Shame in the Bible Page 189

Last, we should see the compliment in what Paul says.

Chapter 11: Shaming: Done Right (and Wrong) Page 191

Paul heard that some members of the Corinthian church were taking other members to court.

Chapter 11: Shaming: Done Right (and Wrong) Page 191

Paul writes, "If you have disputes about such matters, do you ask for a ruling from those whose way of life is scorned in the church?"

Chapter 11: Shaming: Done Right (and Wrong) Page 192

Paul is trying to use shame to call the entire congregation back to one another and to embody the values of God.

Jesus Shames a Pharisee Page 195

Five hundred denarii would be nearly three years of pay for a working man.

Paul Shames Lots of People Page 197

Paul shames lots of people.

Paul Shames Lots of People Page 197

Yet Paul is more than willing to insult them by bringing up gullibility (Gal 1).

Paul Shames Lots of People Page 197

Is Paul just being racially insensitive?

Paul Shames Lots of People Page 197

No. What we are supposed to remember is that Paul is one of them.

Paul Shames Lots of People Page 197

Similarly, what would be a racial insult on the lips of an outsider is not for Paul.

Paul Shames Lots of People Page 197

As an insider, Paul is reminding them that they are being religiously gullible.

Paul Shames Lots of People Page 197

Paul is speaking as we to his fellow Galatians.

Paul Shames Lots of People Page 197

As an insider, Paul is referring to this slur (which he shares in common with them) to shame them, to pull them back by reminding them to think again.



Paul Shames Lots of People Page 197

In another instance, Paul shames Peter.

Paul Shames Lots of People Page 198

We get a hint of their attitude by a comment James and the other elders of the Jerusalem church later make to Paul, “You see, brother, how many thousands of Jews have believed, and all of them are zealous for the law” (Acts 21:20).

Paul Shames Lots of People Page 198

Paul is alarmed.

Paul Shames Lots of People Page 198

Paul confronts Peter.

Paul Shames Lots of People Page 198

Because Peter’s actions have already moved the congregation away from the central values of the gospel message, Paul shames him back toward the center: “When Cephas (Peter) came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned....

Paul Shames Lots of People Page 199

Paul doesn’t take an ad out in the local paper, gossiping about it around town.

Paul Shames Lots of People Page 199

We read later that the church in Antioch continued to strongly endorse Paul’s mission to the Gentiles, so we may assume that Paul restored the community back to the heart of the gospel, believing that the cross is sufficient.

Biblical Examples of Shaming Done Wrong Page 202

When Paul was in the city of Corinth, “the Jews of Corinth made a united attack on Paul and brought him to the place of judgment.

Biblical Examples of Shaming Done Wrong Page 202

Apparently, he is considered responsible for the way the case against Paul was presented to the Roman authorities.

Biblical Examples of Shaming Done Wrong Page 203

Paul later writes to the church in Corinth, and his cosender is a man named Sosthenes.

We and These and They and Those Page 207

Paul says to Peter, “We ... are Jews by birth and not sinful Gentiles” (Gal 2:15).

We and These and They and Those Page 207

The Samaritan woman, John’s disciples, Peter, and Paul think of people as members of collective groups, not as individuals.

Maintaining Values through Boundaries Page 215

We have already noted that Paul was raised in a Gentile city.



Ephesians

Maintaining Values through Boundaries Page 215

The reason Paul grew up a Pharisee instead of a Gentile was that he was the son of a Pharisee (Acts 23:6).

Maintaining Values through Boundaries Page 215

His family maintained its identity, which helped Paul maintain his values and gave him clear boundaries.

Maintaining Values through Boundaries Page 215

As Paul maintained his boundaries, his values were reinforced.

Chapter 13: Guarding Boundaries: Keeping Us Us Page 219

Now imagine Judah later hears the preaching of Paul and believes Jesus is the promised Messiah.

Chapter 13: Guarding Boundaries: Keeping Us Us Page 219

Sometime after Paul leaves, the city officials force the Jewish market to close.

Chapter 13: Guarding Boundaries: Keeping Us Us Page 219

Historians suggest this occurred.)

Chapter 13: Guarding Boundaries: Keeping Us Us Page 220

This question reaches Paul, and he responds with a letter, which we call 1 Corinthians.

Chapter 13: Guarding Boundaries: Keeping Us Us Page 220

Paul answers that question in 1 Corinthians 8–10.

Chapter 13: Guarding Boundaries: Keeping Us Us Page 220

Saying “I follow Paul” or “I follow Apollos” (1 Cor 1:12) is also a boundary marker.

Phinehas Enforces the Boundaries Page 222

Paul describes his actions in violently persecuting the early church as zeal (Phil 3:6).

Synagogues Enforce Boundaries on Paul Page 222

Synagogues enforce boundaries on Paul.

Synagogues Enforce Boundaries on Paul Page 223

In 2 Corinthians, among the things Paul suffered for the sake of the gospel, he includes: “Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one” (2 Cor 11:24).

Synagogues Enforce Boundaries on Paul Pages 223–224

It seems that Paul received this severe punishment because he was challenging the boundaries of the synagogue in ways they thought were very serious.

Synagogues Enforce Boundaries on Paul Page 224

Paul accepted the synagogue discipline, as painful as it was.

Synagogues Enforce Boundaries on Paul Page 224



Ephesians

Paul accepted the beatings because he wanted to maintain his identity as part of the group.

Synagogues Enforce Boundaries on Paul Page 224

Paul was willing to pay a very heavy price to retain the right to be part of *us*, members of the synagogue.

The Risk of Lost Values Page 225

In the early years of the church, Paul completed a missionary journey planting churches in South Galatia.

The Risk of Lost Values Page 225

Paul wasn't the only Jewish Christian traveling around.

The Risk of Lost Values Page 225

The churches Paul started were on the major road, so we should not be surprised to learn that other Jewish Christians passed through the same towns.

The Risk of Lost Values Page 226

When Paul hears, he becomes angry about this development, because boundaries define values.

The Risk of Lost Values Page 226

In Paul's view, these Jewish Christians were reinforcing the wrong boundary—a boundary that wrongly excluded Gentiles from Christian fellowship.

The Risk of Lost Values Page 226

Paul cleverly argues, "Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by believing what you heard?" (Gal 3:2).

The Risk of Lost Values Page 226

Paul argues that having God's Spirit, not circumcision, shows you are within the boundaries.

The Risk of Lost Values Page 226

The presence of the Spirit, seen in the Spirit's work in the believers' lives, showed who was us. Gentile Christians could have a law-free (Torah-free) Christianity, because the Spirit would produce godliness in them and thus they would arrive at the desired values, a boundary marking us from them.

The Risk of Altered Values Page 227

In Acts 21, Paul has returned to Jerusalem.

The Risk of Altered Values Page 227

James and other Jerusalem Jews have heard distressing rumors that Paul has forsaken his Jewish identity, that he has cast off the yoke.

The Risk of Altered Values Page 227

Not only that, but Paul has been teaching other Jews to cast off the yoke—to forsake the laws of Moses (Acts 21:20–21).



Ephesians

The Risk of Altered Values Page 227

Paul is putting *everyone* at risk, they would have reasoned.

The Risk of Altered Values Page 227

James wants to assure those in Jerusalem that Paul still maintains his group (Jewish) identity.

The Risk of Altered Values Page 227

James needed a way for Paul to do something that can easily be seen in public.

The Risk of Altered Values Page 227

In this case, James asks Paul to take a purity vow, which likely meant shaving his head and publicly recording the vow at the temple.

The Risk of Altered Values Page 227

The reason this will work is that people will see Paul walking around town with a shaved head.

The Risk of Altered Values Page 227

People will say, "Oh, Paul is taking a purity vow."

The Risk of Altered Values Page 227

It indicates that Paul is keeping the boundaries, which means he is keeping the values, thus keeping the identity, and keeping us *us*.

The Risk of Altered Values Page 227

James and the Jerusalem church need to show that Paul also is still within the boundaries.

The Risk of Altered Values Page 227

This vow means Paul will abstain from unclean things.

The Risk of Altered Values Page 227

It goes without being said to all readers of Acts that Paul takes the vow seriously.

The Risk of Altered Values Page 228

Precisely because Paul's vow is quite visible, a problem arises.

The Risk of Altered Values Page 228

Paul is seen walking around town with Trophimus the Ephesian, a Gentile (Acts 21:29).

The Risk of Altered Values Page 228

This could only mean (to them) that this Jew (Paul) is flouting, mocking, his purity vow.

The Risk of Altered Values Page 228

In their minds, this is not just Paul breaking his purity vow, but rather Paul is publicly mocking the vow.

The Risk of Altered Values Page 228

In Acts, it goes without being said Paul would never mock a vow he had taken before God.

The Risk of Altered Values Page 228



Ephesians

Instead, Paul is trying to make a theological statement, that Trophimus is *not* unclean.

The Risk of Altered Values Page 228

Thus, Paul is arguing by symbolic action that he can *both* maintain his purity vow *and* walk with Trophimus at the same time.

The Risk of Altered Values Page 228

Paul's message collapses, though, because Paul assumed it would go without being said that he would *never* break a vow before the Lord.

The Risk of Altered Values Page 228

Since, in Paul's mind, that is obvious, Paul expects every Jew who sees him to conclude there must be some way in which the purity boundary is still being maintained.

The Risk of Altered Values Page 228

The crowds, however, merely assume Paul is ridiculing the vow, thus ridiculing the boundary and ultimately ridiculing them as a people.

The Risk of Altered Values Page 228

This makes it easy for them to believe that Paul would also break the boundaries of the temple by taking a Gentile inside.

The Risk of Altered Values Page 228

Paul's actions were not some individual act.

The Risk of Altered Values Page 228

Paul was putting the boundary at risk.

Conclusion: Getting the Boundaries Right Page 229

Soon after Jesus' resurrection, Paul was zealously persecuting Christians.

Conclusion: Getting the Boundaries Right Page 229

Thus they often ask about Paul here, Why didn't Paul just let them get on with it?

Conclusion: Getting the Boundaries Right Page 229

Why were the actions of these new Jewish followers of Jesus any of Paul's business?

Conclusion: Getting the Boundaries Right Page 229

These new followers of Jesus were Jews; they belonged to Paul's group, and they were proclaiming that "the crucified imposter Jesus" was the Messiah.

Conclusion: Getting the Boundaries Right Page 229

Paul understood that their change in values would change the boundaries of what it meant to follow God as his people.

Conclusion: Getting the Boundaries Right Page 229

The Pharisee Paul saw this contagion was spreading.



Ephesians

Conclusion: Getting the Boundaries Right Page 229

Paul was zealous for God, and so, like Phinehas, he began to use violence to enforce the boundaries.

Conclusion: Getting the Boundaries Right Page 230

In his zeal for the Lord, Paul was not content to settle for protecting the boundaries only in Jerusalem but even set out for Damascus, “so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem” (Acts 9:2).

Conclusion: Getting the Boundaries Right Page 230

Understanding the importance of boundaries helps us understand Paul’s actions.

Conclusion: Getting the Boundaries Right Page 230

While traveling to Damascus, something happens to Paul.

Conclusion: Getting the Boundaries Right Page 230

Understanding that event helps us to better understand Paul and his writings.

Conclusion: Getting the Boundaries Right Page 230

Paul later tells King Agrippa the story and adds this interpretive element:

Conclusion: Getting the Boundaries Right Page 230

This appearance of Christ changes Paul.

Conclusion: Getting the Boundaries Right Page 230

To fully understand Paul’s change, we need to understand what Jesus said to Paul.

Conclusion: Getting the Boundaries Right Page 230

Here, on the road to Damascus, Jesus commissions Paul to play a role within the fulfillment of these things.

Conclusion: Getting the Boundaries Right Pages 230–231

Paul comes to see that Jesus is the Christ, the Servant of the Lord, and that the time has come for salvation to include Gentiles as well as Jews.

Conclusion: Getting the Boundaries Right Page 231

This is good news, a gospel, and Paul is now to be a messenger of this good news (Acts 13:46–47).

Conclusion: Getting the Boundaries Right Page 231

Did Paul lose his zeal?

Conclusion: Getting the Boundaries Right Page 231

While most Jews saw Gentiles as outside the boundary, Paul saw, in the words of Isaiah, God’s plan to extend his offer of salvation to Gentiles as well.

Conclusion: Getting the Boundaries Right Page 231



Rather than kinship, though, Paul uses an agricultural metaphor: Gentiles can be grafted into Israel's tree (Rom 11:13–24).

Conclusion: Getting the Boundaries Right Page 231

Nevertheless, Paul, like the Baptist before him, is redefining the boundary of God's people.

Conclusion: Getting the Boundaries Right Page 231

Paul did not set aside Judaism and start a new religion.

Conclusion: Getting the Boundaries Right Page 231

During this first missionary trip to be a light to the Gentiles, Paul saw some pagan Celts come to faith in Jesus.

Conclusion: Getting the Boundaries Right Page 231

Paul's anger wasn't over circumcision—he was circumcised—but over the definition of *we*.

Conclusion: Getting the Boundaries Right Page 231

If Jesus was the Servant of the Lord (and if Paul was his emissary), then circumcising Gentiles meant going back to the old boundaries, and therefore the old values.

Conclusion: Getting the Boundaries Right Page 232

Paul fought all his life both in person and in his letters to ensure that the Gentiles and Jews would be together one in Christ; both were inside the same boundary and thus were *we*.

Conclusion: Getting the Boundaries Right Page 232

Paul has neither lost his zeal nor relaxed God's boundaries.

Conclusion: Getting the Boundaries Right Page 232

I can end up describing Paul as crossing boundaries or even breaking boundaries, when in reality, he was their fiercest guardian—at least of the right boundaries.

I'm Saved into We Pages 237–238

Paul writes to the Corinthians, "Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your [plural] midst?"

God as Father Page 241

This understanding of God being our father was very important to the early church, so much so that Paul writes to the church in Rome and says, "The Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship.

God as Father Page 241

Teaching God as Father was such a foundational aspect of the early church that Paul doesn't need to introduce it.

God as Father Page 241

When I read about Paul telling the church in Rome that through the Spirit we cry out *abba*, I need to avoid my individualist signpost that leads me to think only about "me and my Dad."



God as Father Page 241

This is Paul's point.

God as Father Page 242

Paul is teaching God as father (and patron) will care for us.

New Family Boundaries Page 244

It was such a strange concept that Paul needed to use a metaphor they would understand: adoption.

New Family Boundaries Page 245

When Paul writes to the newly established church in Thessalonica, he emphasizes kinship: Paul calls these new believers his "brothers and sisters" (1 Thess 1:4).

New Family Boundaries Page 245

We can miss some of the weight of Paul's pastoral strategy.

New Family Boundaries Page 245

In fact, Paul impresses on them that they are brothers and sisters seventeen times, even in this short letter.

New Family Boundaries Page 245

Paul speaks about a father instructing his children, children obeying their fathers, a nursing mother caring for babes, brothers living in harmony, and, of course, family loving one another.

New Family Boundaries Page 245

Even when Paul shames a church member who is unruly, in order to draw him back within the boundaries Paul describes the person as a brother (2 Thess 3:6).

New Family Boundaries Page 245

In 1 Corinthians, writing to a church divided in a number of ways, Paul's strategy remains the same: reminding them they are kin.

New Family Boundaries Page 245

Paul shames them for taking *we* to them instead of to *us*.

New Family Boundaries Page 245

Paul uses the language and metaphor of kinship over and over to shape the way his audience thinks about one another.

New Family Boundaries Page 246

He intends the kinship language to transform the way they behave toward one another.

New Family Boundaries Page 246

Paul sees this as the outworking of the gospel: in Christ they all call God *abba*, so they are family.

New Family Boundaries Page 246



Paul wants them to understand this.

New Family Boundaries Page 246

Paul practices what he preaches.

New Family Boundaries Page 246

Paul explains that he urged Apollos to come to them, but Apollos refused.

New Family Boundaries Page 246

Nonetheless, Paul emphasizes “our brother Apollos” (1 Cor 16:12).

New Family Boundaries Page 246

Paul is reminding the Corinthians they are family and that they are to understand Paul’s and Apollo’s relationship in the context of family.

We Share a Table Page 246

Let’s explore households by envisioning what happened when Paul visited Lydia of Philippi in Acts 16.

We Share a Table Page 246

When Paul and his team entered the city of Philippi, they found no synagogue.

We Share a Table Page 246

Paul went down to the river, where Jews would gather on a Sabbath. Luke recounts:

We Share a Table Page 247

The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul’s message.

We Share a Table Page 247

So we find Paul in the household of Mrs. Lydia.

We Share a Table Page 248

Paul’s being invited into Lydia’s home would not have been unprecedented.

We Share a Table Page 248

There were many itinerant philosophers plying the roads of the Roman Empire. Paul’s speaking in the market in a city square (Greek *agora*; Latin *forum*) would not have seemed uncommon, and in fact he might not have been the only speaker that day.

We Share a Table Page 248

Philosophers who impressed were invited into homes, like Lydia invited Paul to her home.

We Share a Table Page 248

She honored Paul by inviting him in, so it would likely have been expected for Paul to reciprocate her gift by speaking (performing) at one or more dinner parties.

We Share a Table Page 248

Even elite rhetorician Cicero was asked to read something he had recently written.



We Share a Table Page 248

It is quite possible the church spread in Philippi (and elsewhere) by Paul speaking in homes such as Lydia's.

We Share a Table Page 248

For example, we read Paul was hosted in the home of Jason in Thessalonica (Acts 17:7).

We Share a Table Page 248

When that home welcomed Paul as a guest, then he would be expected to reciprocate their hospitality by sharing something.

We Share a Table Page 248

The gospel would then spread through this new patron's network.

We Share a Table Page 249

We see Paul dealing with these very real problems.

We Share a Table Page 249

Paul calls the issues immorality, drunkenness, and division: vices.

We Share a Table Page 250

Paul warns the Thessalonians: "It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control your own body [possess one's own vessel] in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the pagans, who do not know God" (1 Thess 4:3–5).

We Share a Table Page 250

The Greeks idiom "possess [one's] own vessel" was a blunt expression that translates well into an equally blunt modern idiom: keeping one's toga zipped.

We Share a Table Page 250

Paul may well be targeting the common sin of a slave owner sexually abusing young (often male) slaves, tragically known as a *delicium*.

We Share a Table Page 250

Note that Paul in the next verse says that by abstaining from sexual immorality a Christian man can avoid wronging a *brother*: "that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is the avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned you" (1 Thess 4:6 NASB).

We Share a Table Page 250

Paul is giving a new value.

We Share a Table Page 251

Paul notes this, saying:

We Share a Table Page 251

To counter, Paul argues they all call the same God *Abba*.



We Share a Table Page 251

This is why Paul is passionate.

We Share a Table Page 251

Paul deals with this by providing new boundaries: “So then, my brothers and sisters, when you gather to eat, you should all eat together” (1 Cor 11:33).

Conclusion: A Shared Family History Page 252

When the Philippian jailer asked Paul and Silas,

Conclusion: A Shared Family History Page 252

Paul and Silas had a view to reach his household, not only him.

God as Patron Page 255

He ends Acts by describing Paul: “He proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ—with all boldness and without hindrance!” (Acts 28:31).

God as Patron Page 256

Paul writes of “giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you [plural] to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light.

God as Patron Page 256

The western end of the earth was at Gibraltar, which is likely why Paul wants to go to Spain (Rom 15:28).

Putting Patronage Back into Paul Page 256

PUTTING PATRONAGE BACK INTO PAUL

Putting Patronage Back into Paul Page 256

Paul expected his hearers to understand these dynamics very well when he used the patronage language *charis* and *pistis* to explain the work of God, Christ, the cross, and grace in believers’ lives.

Putting Patronage Back into Paul Page 256

We want to continue to dig even deeper into the way Paul used patronage to explain the gospel.

God Is a Wronged Patron Page 257

Paul wrote to the church in Rome to draw them into his mission to the Gentiles.

God Is a Wronged Patron Page 257

Paul begins by explaining how Jews and Gentiles are reconciled to God.

God Is a Wronged Patron Page 257

It will not surprise that the thought and language in Paul’s letter to the Romans is deeply collective and has as a backdrop kinship and patronage.

God Is a Wronged Patron Page 257



After an introduction, Paul begins to explain the gospel by saying, “The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness” (Rom 1:18).

God Is a Wronged Patron Page 258

Paul continues his description of sinful humanity in Romans: “For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.

God Is a Wronged Patron Page 258

Paul highlights the way people have not acknowledged God, not honored him, not thanked him.

God Is a Wronged Patron Page 258

Paul is not saying people were rude.

God Is a Wronged Patron Page 258

In a Mediterranean way, Paul is providing an easily understandable explanation for why God’s wrath is on all people (Rom 1:18).

God Is a Wronged Patron Page 258

Paul’s Jewish audience would surely have agreed that the Gentiles were under God’s wrath.

God Is a Wronged Patron Page 258

Around the time of Paul, there was a very popular Jewish book called the Wisdom of Solomon.

God Is a Wronged Patron Page 259

Paul’s Jewish audience may have nodded along when Paul said people who denied God were without excuse and deserved wrath, assuming Paul meant Gentiles.

God Is a Wronged Patron Page 259

In Romans 2, Paul challenges who belongs in the we, by suggesting that just hearing the law read doesn’t make us we: “All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law.

God Is a Wronged Patron Page 259

Paul attacks the idea of who we the righteous are.

God Is a Wronged Patron Page 259

Paul agrees it’s good to boast in having the law, since boasting means giving something honor and recognizing its worth.

God Is a Wronged Patron Page 259

Paul concludes that circumcision (the law) only “has value if you observe the law, but if you break the law, you have become as though you had not been circumcised” (Rom 2:25).

God Is a Wronged Patron Page 259

Speaking as a fellow Jew, Paul concludes, “What shall we conclude then?”



Ephesians

God Is a Wronged Patron Pages 259–260

As an individualist, I miss some of what Paul is doing here.

God Is a Wronged Patron Page 260

Like his Jewish readers, Paul agrees the issue is collective: there are two groups.

God Is a Wronged Patron Page 260

Paul’s audience thinks, “Yes, Jews and Gentiles.”

God Is a Wronged Patron Page 260

Paul says no. One group is those under sin: “For we have made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under the power of sin” (Rom 3:9).

God Is a Wronged Patron Page 260

Paul describes it as a patron’s gift, because we the clients are not worthy or deserving.

God Is a Wronged Patron Page 260

Paul is using the ancient system of patronage to stress—in ways ancient people readily understood—that God gives us this gift on the basis that he wants to benefit us because he can.

God Is a Wronged Patron Page 260

(Paul explains this further in Rom 5.) But Paul’s use of patronage language adds a dimension that I often miss: a patron’s gift creates an ongoing relationship.

For Paul, Abraham Was a Faithful Client (He Trusted God, and It Was Credited to Him as Righteousness)
Page 261

For Paul, Abraham was a faithful client (he trusted God, and it was credited to him as righteousness).

For Paul, Abraham Was a Faithful Client (He Trusted God, and It Was Credited to Him as Righteousness)
Page 261

Paul has shown that we have a relationship with God through trusting in his benefaction, his grace, to us.

For Paul, Abraham Was a Faithful Client (He Trusted God, and It Was Credited to Him as Righteousness)
Page 261

In fact, Paul argues that this is not a new development in how people relate to God and become his people.

For Paul, Abraham Was a Faithful Client (He Trusted God, and It Was Credited to Him as Righteousness)
Page 261

To explain this, Paul goes right back to the beginning of the story of the Jewish people: Abraham.

For Paul, Abraham Was a Faithful Client (He Trusted God, and It Was Credited to Him as Righteousness)
Page 261

Understanding this statement is key to understanding Paul.



Ephesians

For Paul, Abraham Was a Faithful Client (He Trusted God, and It Was Credited to Him as Righteousness)

Page 262

The key for Paul is that this declaration of Abraham being considered righteous, after he trusts God, comes in Genesis 15.

For Paul, Abraham Was a Faithful Client (He Trusted God, and It Was Credited to Him as Righteousness)

Page 262

For Paul, this is a beautiful image of how trust and righteousness are related.

For Paul, Abraham Was a Faithful Client (He Trusted God, and It Was Credited to Him as Righteousness)

Page 262

This was key to Paul because Abraham's righteousness was declared before the law was given, and also before the son was provided.

For Paul, Abraham Was a Faithful Client (He Trusted God, and It Was Credited to Him as Righteousness)

Page 262

For Paul, the beauty is that anyone, whether Jew or Gentile, can trust God.

For Paul, Abraham Was a Faithful Client (He Trusted God, and It Was Credited to Him as Righteousness)

Page 262

Paul wants us to see that Abraham trusted God and so was considered righteous.

For Paul, Abraham Was a Faithful Client (He Trusted God, and It Was Credited to Him as Righteousness)

Page 262

Paul helps the believers in Rome to see all those who trust in the cross, both Jew and Gentile, are trusting in God's faithfulness as Abraham did.

God, Our Patron, Gives Grace Page 263

Paul uses patronage to explain to the Roman church how Jewish and Gentile Christians are united.

God, Our Patron, Gives Grace Page 263

Paul speaks with collective imagery.

God, Our Patron, Gives Grace Pages 263–264

It is worth underlining again that Paul's argument in Romans is how Jews and Gentiles have both received reconciliation to God, and therefore to one another by grace, the gift (*charis*) that our patron has given all of us.

God, Our Patron, Gives Grace Page 264

Paul's point is addressing we, not me.

God, Our Patron, Gives Grace Page 264

We individualists might benefit from seeing the patronage and collectivism of Paul's words.

Fellowship Page 265

"One another" language permeates Paul when he talks about how believers are to relate in community.



Fellowship Page 265

Paul writes, “So in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others [one another]” (Rom 12:5).

Fellowship Page 265

For Paul, the church really is to be a family: “Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another” (Rom 13:8), “accept one another” (Rom 15:7), “serve one another humbly in love” (Gal 5:13).

Fellowship Page 265

Paul calls the church a body to illustrate this mutual dependency among members.

Fellowship Page 265

We read Paul and the New Testament picture of church better when we read it as “we strengthen *us*.”

Fellowship Page 265

For Paul, this is the meaning of fellowship in the church: “Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing” (1 Thess 5:11).

We Now Have a Paraclete Pages 271–272

He has provided protection and provision, and now he says he’s leaving them—but he is providing another broker, who comes from the Father, the Spirit of truth.

We Are Also Brokers, but Never Patrons Page 273

Paul writes to the Ephesians,

But Aren’t Patronage and Such Things the Problem? Page 279

Paul gives spiritual blessings to the Roman church and expects to be reciprocated with material blessings to pay for his trip to Spain (Rom 1:11; 15:28), just as he notes that the churches in Achaia and Macedonia received spiritual blessings from Jerusalem and Paul is expecting these churches to reciprocate with material blessings (Rom 15:26–27).

But Aren’t Patronage and Such Things the Problem? Page 279

Is Paul wrong to expect reciprocity?

But Aren’t Patronage and Such Things the Problem? Page 279

His gifts have strings attached, and Paul glories in it.

Redeeming Collectivism with Love Page 280

When Paul faces the challenges in Corinth, he responds with love: “It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Redeeming Collectivism with Love Page 280

Paul argues it is the solution to all problems.

Redeeming Collectivism with Love Page 280

When Paul wrote 1 Corinthians 13, he wasn’t at a marriage retreat.



Ephesians

Redeeming Collectivism with Love Pages 280–281

Paul doesn't solve these problems by suggesting individualism.⁸

⁸ Richards, E. R., & James, R. (2020). [*Misreading Scripture with Individualist Eyes: Patronage, Honor, and Shame in the Biblical World*](#) (pp. x – 281). IVP Academic.