

# Ephesians

## The Church Universal:

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Grace Baptist Church

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## Ephesians

Paul wrote Ephesians during his first imprisonment in Rome, around AD 62. Paul had ministered in Ephesus for about 3 years and was generally familiar with the churches in and around Ephesus. It is believed that his letter was an “encyclical letter”, meaning it was a letter intended to be circulated and read by the churches located in and around Ephesus. There is not specific problem or reason that caused the letter to be written. The theme of Ephesians was the establishment (the calling) of the church, and the conduct of the church.

The city of Ephesus was an important sea port on the west coast of Asia Minor. Ephesus was widely known for its Temple of Artemis (Diane), considered one of the Seven Wonders of the ancient world. The city was a recognized commercial, political, and religious center. It was a wealthy and influential city, made up of diverse peoples and much religious idolatry (Acts. 19: 23-41).

**Ephesians 1:1-2.** Paul opened his letter to the Ephesians with a simple greeting. Paul stated that he was an apostle of Christ Jesus, meaning he had seen the resurrected Christ and was chosen by God to lay the foundation of the church through the declaration of the Gospel. Paul addressed the holy, consecrated individuals (saints) in Ephesus who were believers in Christ Jesus; extending a greeting that God’s grace and peace be with them. Paul was focused on the believers in Ephesus who had taken a stand against the idolatry prevalent in the city of Ephesus.

***Ephesians 1:3-14.*** Note: *Ephesians 1:3-14 is one sentence in the original Greek text. We will break this one sentence down into three segments: 3-6, 7-10, and 11-14.*

## ***Ephesians 1:3-6. Spiritual Blessings and Predestination – God the Father***

**Ephesians 1:3.** Paul begins with a statement that God is to be blessed / praised. The translated word “blessed” is the Greek word “eulogetos”, which means “to speak well of” – we would use the word praise. [Note: this Greek word is the foundation of the English word, “eulogy”.] We are to speak well of God because of He blessed us with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul continues... we have been blessed. The translated word “blessed” is the Greek word “ho euolgesas” meaning “to benefit or prosper”. We have been blessed – meaning God has bestowed benefits to those who believe in Him, His children. Paul used the past tense participle “has blessed” to establish that this blessing from God has occurred in eternity past. The blessing is every spiritual blessing (gift) – every spiritual benefit needed for our spiritual life. Paul is stating that these spiritual benefits (gifts) have already been bestowed on the believer by God, so they do not have to ask for them but rather appropriate them by faith. A good illustration of this principle is Joshua as he was leading Israel. Joshua did not have to ask God for the Promised Land since God had already promised (bestowed) that land to Israel. What Joshua had to do was enter the land (action by faith) to enjoy the land already promised.

The place of these spiritual blessings is the heavenly sphere, as opposed to the earthly sphere. The believer will fully experience these spiritual gifts in heaven, as this is the source of these blessings. Paul was drawing a comparison to the earthly worship of idols and the spiritual worship of Christ. The focus was on eternal...not temporal.

The sphere of these spiritual blessings is in Christ. The believer has these spiritual blessing because of Christ.

**Ephesians 1:4.** Paul continues the theme of the bestowment of spiritual blessings, which is occurring because of who God is and His work as a Triune God. God blessed the believer because God the Father chose the believers in God the Son (Christ) before creation...in eternity past. This choosing was an election – God’s sovereign work of choosing some of mankind to be believers in Christ. Salvation is God’s doing, not man’s (Ephesians 2:8-9). Salvation is an act of grace, based on God’s will (Ephesians 1:5,9,11). Salvation requires an individual to take responsibility to believe in Christ (Ephesians 1:13, II Thessalonians 2:13).

The purpose of God’s election is for those who believe to be holy and blameless before Him for eternity. Holy, in this use, means moral purity. Blameless, in this use, means free from sin. Together, in this passage, it means that the believer is set apart to God without blemish.

The phrase “in love” is somewhat in dispute. Numerous manuscripts do not have this phrase. Other manuscripts have the phrase “in love” as the first two words of verse 5. It is considered a modifying phrase to either verse 4 or verse 5. The phrase does support the truth that God is love and it is because of His love that those who are to believe were elected.

**Ephesians 1:5.** Paul writes, the cause of God’s election of a believer is God’s predestination (“proorisas” – meaning “marked out beforehand”) of the believer. God’s predestination was for a believer (one who was elected and has taken responsibility to believe) is to be adopted as a full fledged son of God through Jesus Christ (the agent of the adoption). Predestination precedes election. God looked forward to the destiny of the adoption of mankind who believed into His family. God looked down on sinful humanity and elected (chose, called) individuals to be believers (Romans 8:30).

God’s election is done in love and it is based on the good pleasure of His will. God is delighted to impart His spiritual blessings on His

children. God is not constrained by any outside force to do anything; it is His will to pour out His grace on believers in Christ Jesus.

**Ephesians 1:6.** Paul writes, the ultimate purpose of God's election of men to salvation is the glory of God, the praise of His name through redemption. Believers ought to praise God because their salvation is all of God's grace (unmerited favor). That is why they were chosen – to give Him praise for their redemption through Christ.

God loves His Son; and because the chosen believers are in the Son, they also are objects of His love. As believers, we are accepted of God because of His Son, Jesus Christ.

### ***Ephesians 1:7-10. Spiritual Blessings – Redemption – God the Son***

**Ephesians 1:7.** Paul declares that we have redemption in Christ. Redemption denotes the payment of the required ransom to release a person from bondage or slavery. There are three aspects to a believer's redemption:

- 1) Christ's blood sacrifice on the cross paid the required ransom to God to release the believer from the bondage of sin (I Cor. 6:20),
- 2) Christ's blood sacrifice on the cross removed the believer from the curse of the Law (Gal. 3:13), and
- 3) Christ's blood sacrifice on the cross not only released the believer from the bondage of sin, but introduced him into the freedom of grace, which is the forgiveness of sins (I Peter 1:18-21).

The redemptive work of Christ – a blood sacrifice required by the justice of God - delivers the believer from slavery to sin, which means that Christ's death was an atoning sacrifice. The sacrificial, substitutionary death of Christ was the means of redemption – and this was accomplished in accordance with the riches of God's grace. The cost of Christ's blood is the measure of (according to) the wealth of God's unmerited favor (grace) to every believer.

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**Ephesians 1:8.** The redemption provided for those who are predestined and elected – and who believes – brings forgiveness of sin, limitless grace, and divinely bestowed spiritual understanding (wisdom and prudence). God's grace is given to enable believers to understand His will. God gives understanding (insight / prudence) to apprehend God's revelation. God gives wisdom to correctly discern and apply God's revelation. God has provided this understanding and wisdom so the believer can grasp divine purpose (as seen in the past) and see (apply) relevance in their present time.

**Ephesians 1:9.** The understanding and wisdom given to the believer by the grace of God, makes known the mystery of God's will and purpose, which He set forth in Christ. Mystery, as used in scripture, refers to the revelation of something that was previously hidden and unknown, or was only vaguely known. The mystery referred to here is to "unite all things in Christ" (verse 10). Mystery is used 6 times by Paul in Ephesians. This mystery focuses on the inclusion of the Gentiles with the Jews. The mystery referred to in Ephesians 3:3 indicates that the Gentiles would be equal heirs to the Jews in the body of Christ. These truths were unknown to the O.T. prophets, but were revealed by the N.T. apostles.

**Ephesians 1:10.** God's will and good pleasure was and is to bring all things in heaven and earth under the headship (authority / rule) of Christ. This will be accomplished "in the dispensation of the fullness of times". [Note: Different translations use – "a plan for the fullness of time", or "a view to an administration suitable for the fullness of time", or "when times have reached their fulfillment".] This verse is interpreted differently by dispensational and reformed theologians.

It is my personal interpretation that this is a reference to the millennial Kingdom – the Kingdom that the Jews were / are looking forward to – the Kingdom in which the Messiah will reign. "Bringing together / gathering together in one all things in Christ" means the "summing up of all things in Christ". In the Millennium, everything

(things in heaven and on earth) will be restored and brought under the rule of Christ – including the Jews and Gentiles. This is the dispensational interpretation of this verse.

The reformed interpretation does not view this as a millennial Kingdom, but rather the end of time when Jew and Gentile believers enter into eternity with Christ in the new heaven and new earth.

[Note: “even in Him” or “in Him” should not close verse 10, but should be the beginning of verse 11.]

### ***Ephesians 1:11-14. Spiritual Blessings – Sealed - God the Holy Spirit***

**Ephesians 1:11-12.** Paul adds to the explanation of the “mystery” described in verses 8-10 by explaining the relationship and brotherhood of the Jewish and Gentile believers. Paul focuses attention to the Jewish believers in the initial opening of verse 11 through the usage of “we”, which is different than the all-inclusive “we” used in verses 3-10. The interpretation of “we” at the beginning of verse 11 is determined by the use of the word “also” in verses 11 and 13; specifically the term “you also” in verse 13 is a reference to Gentile believers, which means the “also we” in verse 11 is a reference to the Jewish believers.

It is “in Him” (Christ) that each believer has obtained an inheritance. The phrase “we have obtained an inheritance can also be interpreted “were made His inheritance”, which is also true. The primary interpretation here would be applied to the Jewish believers, who were predestined (chosen – “obtained by the casting of a lot” – *‘eklerothemen’* – used only once in the N.T.). The Jewish believers were chosen because they were predestined – a principle Paul described earlier in verses 3-6. While the primary interpretation is focused on the Jewish believers, the principle truth applies to the Gentile believers as well.

This predestined choosing by God is according to the plan and purpose of God, who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of His will. The word “works” is the same word from which we get the words “energy” and “energize”. It is God’s sovereignty that “energizes” His will.

The purpose of God’s choice of the Jewish believers is that they might be for the praise of His glory, because they were the first to hope in Christ. It is God’s will that the sinner be set free from sin in Christ, and it is His will that all things be headed up in Christ – including the Jewish believers who first trusted Him.

**Ephesians 1:13-14.** “In Him you also” is a reference to the Gentiles who believed in Christ. When they heard the Word of truth (the Gospel of salvation) and believed, they were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit. This truth applies to all believers. God’s spiritual blessings for believers are based on: 1) the sovereign election by God the Father – vs.3-6, 2) the redemptive work of God the Son – vs.7-12, and 3) the sealing by God the Holy Spirit – vs.13-14. [Note: The use of the word “after”, in the KJV translation, creates the connotation that the sealing of the Holy Spirit is a second work of grace – occurring after hearing and believing. This is an incorrect understanding. The believer is sealed by the Holy Spirit the moment they hear and believe.]

Each believer is sealed in Christ. God is the One who seals, Christ is the sphere in which the seal is done, and the Holy Spirit is the instrument of the seal. The word “seal” indicates security (Matt. 27:62-66, Eph. 4:30), authentication and approval (John 6:27), certification of being genuine (John 3:33), and identification of ownership (II Cor. 1:22, Rev. 7:2, 9:4).

The Holy Spirit, who is the instrument of the seal, is also the deposit (earnest money) guaranteeing the inheritance of the believer. The seal of the Holy Spirit is a down payment with a guarantee of more to come. The believer is sealed with the Holy Spirit until the redemption

(the receiving of our inheritance, which is a final release from the presence and power of sin) of those who are God's possession – to the praise of His glory.

*Paul has just finished encouraging the readers of Ephesians by explaining three spiritual blessings they have from God: 1) Predestination – God the Father – vs. 3-6; 2) Redemption – God the Son – vs. 7-10; and 3) Sealed - God the Holy Spirit – vs. 11-14. He concludes the opening to his letter to the Ephesians with a statement of thanksgiving and a prayer.*

*Because of the believers acquisition of every spiritual blessing: election, predestination, adoption, grace, redemption, forgiveness, wisdom, understanding, knowledge of the mystery of God's will, sealing of the Holy Spirit, and inheritance, Paul prays that the readers of his letter will come to know God personally and intimately. Ephesians 1:15-23 is one sentence in the Greek, so the original readers of this sentence would have understood it as one thought. This sentence can be broken into two segments – vs. 15-18a and vs. 18b-23.*

**Ephesians 1:15-18a.** Paul had heard of the Ephesians faith in Christ and their love for all believers (saints). This demonstrates that a proper relationship with God should result in a proper relationship with other believers. Because of their active demonstration of love from Christ and each other, Paul continued to give thanks for them remembering them in his prayers.

His prayer was a request to God the Father, the God of Glory, that He would give them the spirit of wisdom and revelation. [Note: Some translations use the word "Spirit" instead of "spirit", but it is better understood from the original Greek to be a disposition or attitude of an individual versus the Holy Spirit.] Wisdom ('*sophia*') refers to giving accurate insight into the true nature of things. Revelation ('*apokalupsis*') means the unveiling (uncovering) of the object discussed. The purpose of having wisdom and revelation is to know

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God better (personally and intimately), including God's character and will. Paul included in his request that the eyes of the believer's heart would continue to be enlightened. Paul desired that they continue to have true spiritual insight into God, His character and will.

**Ephesians 1:18b-23.** Paul continues his prayer that the Ephesian believers know God. His prayer was that they may know (have a factual knowledge) three facts.

- 1) The hope of His calling. God's calling and salvation provides absolute certainty of victory. God's calling has already occurred, so it is secured.
- 2) The riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints. Those who are called of God...those whom God has purchased (at great personal price) will become God's inheritance. A believer's inheritance is final redemption from sin (vs. 14). God's inheritance is the believer's in Him.
- 3) The incomparably great power for us who believe in Him. The word "power" means spiritually dynamic and living force. God directs this power to believers in Him. It stands ready to be used by believers. Paul uses three additional words to describe this "power".
  - a. Working ('*energeian*') – energetic
  - b. Mighty ('*kratous*') – power that overcomes resistance
  - c. Power ('*ischyos*') – strengthPaul then describes this "power" in action so the readers will understand what this means.

- a) God raising Christ from the dead.
- b) God seating Christ at His right hand in heaven.
- c) God exalting Christ above all other authority – present or future.
- d) God placing all things under Christ's feet.
- e) God's appointment of Christ as Head over the Church. Chronologically in history - this is the first time that the

universal church (all believers through all ages) is mentioned as Christ's body.

Note: The word "fills" is challenging to understand in the context it is written in. It is best understood by this translation of verse 23: "Which is His body, which is being filled by the One who fills all things with all things (blessings)".

*This ends Paul's prayer for the Ephesian believers. After Paul taught in his opening sentence of the Ephesian letter that each believer receives spiritual blessings - election, predestination, adoption, grace, redemption, forgiveness, wisdom, understanding, knowledge of the mystery of God's will, sealing of the Holy Spirit, and inheritance. In his prayer for the Ephesians, Paul taught that believers can come to know God intimately through the call of salvation, that God has an inheritance in the believers in Him, and that the great power of God is available to believers.*

*In Ephesians chapter 1, Paul explained God's eternal plan in predestining (selecting) and choosing (electing) those who would be responsible to believe in Christ when they heard the gospel message...and that those believes would be brought under the headship of Christ as a part of the body of Christ (the Church). Beginning in chapter 2, Paul will explain how God makes unbelievers believers and places them into the body of Christ.*

**Ephesians 2:1-10:** *In Ephesians 2:1-10, Paul describes how unbelievers who deserve God's wrath are saved by His grace, through faith. Ephesians 2:1-7 is one sentence in the Greek. The subject of that sentence is God. The three main verbs are "made us alive...with" (vs. 5), "raised up together" (vs. 6a), and "made us set together" (vs. 6b). Therefore the main assertion in Ephesians 2:1-7 is that God made unbelievers believers, made them alive, raised them up, and seated them with Christ.*

**Ephesians 2:1-3. Man's condition as an unbeliever.** Paul explains that natural man is spiritually dead in transgressions (false steps) and

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sin (acts of missing the mark). This means that man deliberately acts against God and His righteousness. The use of the plural of these two nouns means that man is repetitious in his involvement in sin, based on man's sinful nature, which results in a spiritually dead state of being.

Paul further defines the state of those who are spiritually dead.

- 1) They follow the ways of the world; they follow the lifestyle of the unbeliever.
- 2) They follow the ruler of the kingdom of air; Satan.
- 3) They allow the spirit (the atmosphere controlled by Satan) to work in them in conscious, active rebellion against God (sons of disobedience).
- 4) All men have lived or are living in this state; they follow the lustful desires and thoughts of the flesh and the mind.
- 5) All men, by natural state, are deserving of wrath because unbelief and disobedience create a relationship to God's wrath.

**Ephesians 2:4-5. The grace of God gives life to the believer through Christ.** The conjunction "But" is placed in an emphatic position in the sentence and introduces God's action toward unbelievers in contrast to what was previously described. God, who is rich in exhibiting undeserved kindness, acts of behalf of unbelievers. His action is based on His great love (agape) for us. God's mercy and love has made us alive through and with Christ, even though we were spiritually dead in sin without any ability to commend ourselves to God. This act of God is an act of grace (it is by grace you are saved).

**Ephesians 2:6a. The grace of God raises the believer with Christ.** Believers have been raised up with Christ; positionally resurrected. This is an immediate and direct result of a believing faith. Believers share a new, powerful, and unique position with Christ (Col. 3:1-2).

**Ephesians 2:6b-7. The grace of God seats the believer in Christ.**

Believers are seated with Christ in heavenly places (heaven). Believers are where Christ is (Eph. 1:20). Believers have a dual citizenship: earth and heaven.

Note: Christ died and was raised physically (Eph. 1:20). Unbelievers are dead spiritually, are made spiritually alive by grace through faith, and are raised with Christ spiritually (Eph. 2:5-6). Christ is physically seated in heaven (Eph. 1:20). Believers are seated spiritually in heaven (before physical death) (Eph. 2:6).

In eternity, God will show (display / demonstrate) the incomparable riches of His grace. All in heaven will marvel (for eternity) over the incredible kindness and love of God. The appropriate expression of God's love to those who are spiritually dead is to give them life, which is incomprehensible.

**Ephesians 2:8-9.** The incomparable riches of His grace is built upon in verses 8 and 9. It is by grace that the unbeliever is given the opportunity to be saved by faith. Faith is the means by which one accepts God's free salvation.

This salvation does not have its source in man; it is the gift of God. This salvation does not have its means through the work of man; it is the grace of God. Therefore, since no man can bring salvation to himself by his own efforts, a believers boasting in salvation can only be in Christ.

**Ephesians 2:10.** This salvation is God's workmanship; it is God's masterpiece. Believer's, therefore, are God's masterpiece created in Christ to do good works. Good works cannot save, but good works are evidence of salvation. God has prepared a path of good works for believers, which He will perform in and through them as they walk by faith.

**Ephesians 2:11-13.** Paul begins this section using a strong emphatic term – "Therefore". Because the believer is God's masterpiece (His workmanship), Paul commands the Gentiles (the "uncircumcision") to remember their former position before God as an unbeliever. There was a great social and spiritual gap between the Gentile (the "uncircumcision") and the Jew (the "circumcision") that had existed for generations.

This historical gap had created many problems over the centuries because of the physical difference (circumcision) and the spiritual difference (one God); between the Jew (the chosen) and the Gentile (the not chosen). This gap was evidenced by the five privileges that had given to the Jews and not to the Gentiles. The Gentiles were: 1) separate from (without) Christ, they had no hope of a national Messiah; 2) excluded and alienated from citizenship in Israel; 3) foreigners to the covenants of promise – Abrahamic, Mosaic / Palestinian, Davidic, and New Covenants; 4) without hope; and 5) without God. The Gentiles were in a desperate position because they were a people who had no meaning, no hope, no purpose, and no direction in life. This is a description of us before Christ.

"But", Paul again uses this definitive, emphatic conjunction to state a change. But now the Gentiles, the ones who were far away from God, and the Jews, have been brought "near" through the blood of Christ. Now the Gentiles, who believe in Christ, are brothers with the Jews. It is by grace through faith that every person who trusts in Christ alone is brought into spiritual union and intimacy with God. It was and is sin that separates man from God. It is Christ's blood sacrifice that can remove that sin barrier by simple faith in Christ.

Paul describes the union of the Gentiles (uncircumcised) and the Jews (circumcised) in Ephesians 2:11-13. Paul continues to explain this new union between believing Jews and Gentiles in the body of Christ, which he introduced in Ephesians 1:22-23, in Ephesians 2:14-22.

**Ephesians 2:14.** Paul explains this new union between believing Jews and Gentiles. Christ is the peace between Jewish and Gentile believers. He has made the two groups one. He has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, between the Jew and the Gentile.

Paul may have had the wall in the Jewish temple that separated the Court of the Gentiles and the Court of the Jews in mind to symbolically illustrate what Christ had done. He was definitely referring to the barrier of spiritual and social separation that existed between the Jew and Gentile when he wrote that Christ had destroyed this barrier of hostility. Christ had destroyed this barrier when the Jew and Gentile believed in Him as Savior.

**Ephesians 2:15-16.** The hostility between the believing Gentile and Jew no longer existed because of Christ's death; His sacrifice on the Cross. Christ rendered the Law "inoperative" in the life of the believer (Romans 10:4). The Law was the cause of the hostility between the Jew and Gentile. It was Christ through His fulfillment of the Law and His sacrificial death on the Cross that abolished all of the O.T. ceremonial laws, feasts, and sacrifices, which was the cause of the hostility.

Christ has two purposes in ending the hostility. The first purpose was to create in Himself "one new man" out of two – thus making peace. This "new (completely unlike what it was before) man" is called "one body", which is the church (Eph. 1:22-23). This new body is not Jewish, it is not Gentile; it is Christ – a new single entity called a Christian.

Christ's second purpose was to reconcile the Jewish and Gentile believer to Himself in "one body". This reconciliation was accomplished through the Cross. Christ's death on the Cross put to death the hostility that existed between the Jew and Gentile.

**Ephesians 2:17-18.** The word "and" links verse 17 with verse 14 – Christ is our peace. Christ not only is our peace but He preached peace; a peace that was based on the reconciliation through His death. This peace was available to the Gentile (far away) and the Jew (near) (Eph. 2:12). It is through the peace of Christ that was obtained by His sacrifice, that the Jewish and Gentile believers have access to God the Father through the Holy Spirit.

Paul has indicated in verses 14 -18 that the Jew and Gentile have been united: 1) the two have become one (vs. 14); 2) one new man was created out of two (vs. 15); in one body both have been reconciled (vs. 16); and both have access by one Spirit (vs. 18). The Jew has not been made a Gentile, the Gentile has not been made a Jew – they have been made one – a believer in Christ (a Christian).

**Ephesians 2:19.** Paul concludes: "so then / consequently / now therefore" "you" (Gentiles) are no longer strangers / foreigners / aliens but are fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household. Paul could have clearly stated Israel here but he does not. The context of the verse is "one man" (vs. 15) and "one body", the church (vs. 16), not Israel.

**Ephesians 2:20-22.** Paul explains this new relationship in verses 20-22. This "new man" and "one body" are built on the "foundation of the apostles and prophets" with Christ Jesus Himself as the "Chief Cornerstone". This "new man" and "one body" began on the Day of Pentecost, not sometime in or during the O.T. The validation of this beginning is found in verse 22, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the life of each believer. This did not occur until Pentecost.

Paul describes the church as a building, a temple in which God dwells. This temple is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets - a reference to N.T. apostles and prophets, not O.T. prophets. The foundation of this temple consists of the apostles and prophets with Christ Himself being the Chief Cornerstone. A cornerstone was used to set the foundation and align (or square) the building. The temples

foundation (the apostles and prophets) needed correct alignment, which is Christ Himself, which could have only occurred during the N.T.

The entire temple (building) is joined together in Christ. The Greek word translated “joined together” denotes that the various parts of the temple were skillfully fitted to each other. This temple (building) is growing as both believing Jews and Gentiles are being joined together into this temple in Christ.

God places individual believers into the temple being built. The temple is a dwelling place in which God lives by His Spirit (I. Cor. 3:16, II Cor. 6:16). This is not the O.T. temple, but rather a reference to a N.T. temple. The Holy Spirit indwells individual believers with no preference if they are Jew or Gentile...with no conversion of a Gentile to a Jew...but only those who believe in Christ. It is the believers in Christ who are being fit together in this temple. And this temple is built on the apostles and prophets with Christ being the Chief Cornerstone and it is indwelt by God, through the Holy Spirit.

*In Ephesians 3:1-13, Paul introduces a parenthetical thought where he describes his calling and ministry as an apostle to the Gentiles. Paul wrote this to assure the Gentile readers that their share of the inheritance promised is authentic because of its divine origin (the mystery of Christ).*

**Ephesians 3:1.** Paul begins with the words “for this reason”, which is a reference back to Ephesians 2:11-22, which explains that the Jewish and Gentile believers are united in one body in Christ. Paul was imprisoned in Rome because of this truth. Yet he viewed himself to be a prisoner of Christ, not of a government, for his ministry as an apostle to the Gentiles.

**Ephesians 3:2.** Paul begins a new sentence in verse 2 that lasts until verse 13. Verse 2 is the introduction to a conditional sentence, with verse 13 being the conclusion of his thought.

Paul writes that the administration (stewardship / dispensation) of God’s grace was given (entrusted) to him to dispense grace (sharing the gospel) to the Gentiles. God had commissioned Paul to go to the Gentiles with the gospel, which is why Paul considered himself as an apostle to the Gentiles.

**Ephesians 3:3.** Paul uses the phrase “that is / how that” at the beginning of verse 3, which is a reference to the grace mentioned in verse 2. It is God’s grace that will provide Paul with the explanation of the mystery – a truth hidden before but revealed now. This mystery was briefly written about in Ephesians 2:11-22, but it will be clearly revealed in Ephesians 3:6.

**Ephesians 3:4.** Paul writes that those who read this will be able to understand his (Paul’s) insight into the mystery of Christ by reading what Paul had written (Colossians 1:9-2:2). Paul’s insight was not his own but is what God, through His grace, had revealed to him.

**Ephesians 3:5.** Paul continues...that this mystery was not made known to men in other O.T. generations but it is now revealed to N.T. apostles and prophets through the Holy Spirit. The word “revealed” means “to uncover or unveil something that has previously been completely covered or hidden”. This mystery was revealed by the Holy Spirit. The recipients of this revelation were the N.T. apostles and prophets... and Paul was the one who declared it.

**Ephesians 3:6.** Paul reveals this mystery – defining what the revealed truth is. The unveiled mystery is that the Gentile and Jewish believers are:

- 1) Heirs together / fellow heirs of God’s riches;
- 2) Of the same body – the body of Christ; and
- 3) Sharers together in the messianic promise in Christ.

The Gentile and Jewish believers are joined together as one in Christ through the gospel. The Gentile and Jewish believers are joined together in a wholly new thing – the body of Christ. The Gentile and

Jewish believers are equals in Christ – a revolutionary concept for those who were reading Paul’s writing.

**Ephesians 3:7.** Paul states that he is a servant of this gospel. A service (servant’s work) that has its basis in the gift of God’s grace; given to Paul through the working of His power. Paul’s service, as an apostle to the Gentiles, was initiated by God’s grace and continued by the work of His power through the Holy Spirit.

**Ephesians 3:8.** Paul continues with his declaration of being a servant of Christ to the Gentiles, which was a gift given to Paul by God through the Holy Spirit. Paul thought of himself as less than the least of all of God’s chosen people. This is not false humility on the part of Paul since he had been opposed to Christ and his ministry and a vigorous persecutor of body of Christ, the church.

Paul’s ministry had two-fold focus. One – he was the apostle to the Gentiles (Romans 11:13), preaching to the Gentiles the gospel of Christ and the riches available to them through the gospel. Two – he was the communicator of the revealed “mystery”, the body of Christ, and he was to explain the administration of the body of Christ.

**Ephesians 3:9.** Paul’s declaration of the “mystery” was to all men, Jew and Gentile, so they would see the fellowship of the body of Christ – with emphasis on the union of the Jew and Gentile into a new unique body known as the body of Christ. This “mystery” had been hidden in God from the beginning of creation. God had in His mind this truth as a part of His eternal plan even before creation.

**Ephesians 3:10.** A purpose of Paul’s ministry in declaring the mystery of the body of Christ was to make known the manifold wisdom of God to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms. God had done the seemingly impossible by reconciling believing Jews and Gentiles into one unique body, the church – the body of Christ. The church is the visible evidence of God’s wisdom, which is multifaceted – like the many facets of a diamond.

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It is a staggering thought that the church on earth is observed by spiritual powers and beings, both good and bad. These spiritual powers and beings observed the uniting of the believing Jew and Gentile into a unique, single, unified body, which portrayed the multifaceted wisdom of God to them. The church, the revealed “mystery” of God, has a purpose which is to publicly demonstrate the wisdom of God.

**Ephesians 3:11.** It is God’s purpose to accomplish this “mystery” through Christ Jesus our Lord. This purpose was accomplished in Christ through His life...death...and resurrection. It is in Christ that the believing Jew and Gentile become one body. It was true in Paul’s day and it is true today.

**Ephesians 3:12.** It is through faith in Christ that believers have the right to address and approach God with confidence. It was God’s eternal plan, accomplished in Christ that allows us as believers to address God freely and confidently.

**Ephesians 3:13.** Paul concludes his parenthetical thought, which began with verse 2, here in verse 13. Because it is Paul’s ministry to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, a ministry given to Paul by the grace of God, the Gentile believers should not be discouraged because of Paul’s suffering for them. His sufferings were for their gain and glory, because it was through his sufferings that more Gentiles were being reached with the gospel message.

*Paul, having stated that positionally the Gentile and Jewish believers are one body (the body of Christ), now prays that they might be united experientially. Paul desires that they might genuinely know and experience Christ’s love, which in turn will be exhibited to each other. Paul’s prayer is written as one long sentence, beginning with verse 14, ending with verse 19.*

**Ephesians 3:14-15.** Paul begins with the phrase “For this cause / reason”, which is a repeat phrase from Eph. 3:1, just before he

redirected his thought to further explain the mystery of the body of Christ and his ministry to declare that mystery. Paul continues by explaining his posture in prayer – kneeling – and to whom he is kneeling – God the Father.

God the Father is the One from whom all creation is one family... under the ‘fatherhood’ of God. It is through God the Father that every created being derives its name. God is the first father and the only One with an ‘underived’ fatherhood.

**Ephesians 3:16-17a.** Paul’s prayer begins with a petition – “to be strengthened in the inner man”. Paul is petitioning that God, according to the standards of His glorious riches, might strengthen (being strong to overcome resistance) believers with power through the Holy Spirit in their inner man. The result of this petition is that through faith Christ might dwell (be at home) in the believer’s heart; Christ is to become the dominating factor in a believer’s attitude and conduct.

**Ephesians 3:17b-19.** Paul continues his prayer by stating the purpose of his petition – “to comprehend Christ’s love and to be filled with God’s fullness”. Paul uses a two metaphor’s to describe his desire that Christ be the center of a believer’s life; being rooted (like a plant) and established / grounded (like a building on a foundation) in love. The Greek words used here are in the perfect tense, meaning that it is a past action with continuing results.

The purpose of Paul’s petition and purpose in prayer is that they, as Gentile and Jewish believers (all), may have power (inherent strength) to grasp how wide, long, high, and deep is the love of Christ. Paul’s expressed desire is for the believer to experientially know the love of Christ, which supersedes all knowledge; meaning the more a believer knows about Christ, the more amazed they are at Christ’s love for them.

Paul’s final expression of purpose is that each believer be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. The fullness of God is only in Christ...and only through Christ can a believer be made complete. It is through Christ that this divine fullness is the believer’s. Paul’s prayer is that this fullness be experientially realized in each believer’s life. Experiencing God’s moral excellence and perfection will cause each believer to love each other as one in Him.

Note: Paul develops a reference to the Trinity in these previous verses: God the Father (vs.14), God the Holy Spirit (vs.16), and God the Son (vs.17).

**Ephesians 3:20-21.** Paul closes his prayer with a doxology. He praises God, who is able to do far more than one could ask or imagine, according to the standard of His power that is at work within us. Paul ascribes to God glory, which is manifest in the church (where the miracle of unifying love will occur) through Christ Jesus, who made the union of Gentile and Jewish believers possible. Praise to God for this accomplishment, which will continue throughout eternity.

*After presenting doctrinal content related to the mystery of Christ – the body of Christ unifying the Jewish and Gentile believer – in chapters 1 – 3, Paul now begins to explain the practical application of those truths. Paul will now focus on how the unified Jewish and Gentile believers are to walk (live) together.*

**Ephesians 4:1.** Paul begins by exhorting the Jewish and Gentile believers to live a life worthy of their calling. The basis for this statement is what he previously wrote in Ephesians 1 – 3, where he declared that he was a prisoner of the Lord (Eph. 3:1).

“Worthy” means “equal weight”; so to “walk worthy” means that the believer’s calling and conduct should be in balance. “Called” refers to the believer’s salvation and their union into the body of Christ. Therefore, a believer’s conduct concerns both one’s personal life as well as one’s responsibility to other believers in the body of Christ.

**Ephesians 4:2-3.** Paul went on to list the virtues that are to be predominate in the believer's life.

- 1) Humility (lowliness) – In the culture of Paul's day, humility was considered a vice only to be practiced by slaves. There was no Greek or Latin word for humility and it is believed that Paul created this word and used it in his ministry. Humility comes as a result of a believer recognizing who he/she is before God, with Christ being the supreme example of humility. Paul's emphasis on unity can only be accomplished by humility because pride creates disunity.
- 2) Gentleness (meekness) – Meekness is having one's emotions under control; it is not weakness. Meekness is the opposite of self-assertion, rudeness, and harshness. Meekness is the product of humility.
- 3) Patience (longsuffering) – Patience means "long tempered" and refers to a "resolved" patience that is an outgrowth of humility and gentleness. In addition, patience means to never give up but endure to the end, even in times of adversity. It is self-restraint that does not hastily retaliate for a wrong.

The attitudes of humility, gentleness, and patience establish the foundation for unity; they are carried out in one's conduct by bearing with one another in love and by making the effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. Believers are not only to create unity but they are to maintain and guard that unity. Believers are to maintain unity and peace even when they have differences.

**Ephesians 4:4-6.** Paul lists the elements of unity based on the three Persons of the Trinity. The unity of the Trinity is the basis for unity that should exist in the Body of Christ, the church.

- 1) One body – this refers to the universal church; all believers.
- 2) One Spirit – this refers to the Holy Spirit who indwells the believers, which are the church.

- 3) One hope – this refers to all believers who have a common hope regarding their future with God.
- 4) One Lord – this refers to Christ, the head of the church.
- 5) One faith – this refers to the body of truth given to the believers and their faith they have placed in Christ as their personal Savior.
- 6) One baptism – this refers primarily to the act of water baptism, which is the believer's public confession of their faith in Christ. A secondary meaning is the baptism of the Holy Spirit which occurs at the time of salvation.
- 7) One God – this refers to God the Father and his relationship to all believers. The use of "all" four times by Paul draws the focus to...
  - a. "of all" – meaning all believers
  - b. "above all" – meaning God is sovereign over the believers
  - c. "through all" – meaning God lives through the believer
  - d. "in you all" – meaning God manifests Himself through the believer.

**Ephesians 4:7-8.** Paul changes his focus from the basis of unity to spiritual gifts that are used to preserve unity. Each believer receives grace...as Christ apportions it to them. Grace is not something a believer earns; it is something Christ provides (gives). Since each believer receives grace, all believers are on the same level in exercising their gifts given to them by Christ. Ephesians 4:8 is a paraphrase, by Paul, of Psalm 68:18-19. The essence of this Psalm is a military victor who has the rights to give gifts to those who served with him. Christ, having won a victory over sin, death, and Satan, has redeemed a captive people. He is the Victor and has the ability to give gifts as He deems correct.

**Ephesians 4:9-10.** Paul adds a parenthetical thought as commentary on "descended" and "ascended". Before Christ could ascend He had to descend. There is a lot of discussion about what is meant by "to

the lower parts of the earth”. There are numerous thoughts. It is my opinion that “descend” has two thoughts – one, Christ descended from Heaven to Earth, and two, Christ descended from Earth into Hell. It is my opinion that the clearer understanding is Christ descending from Earth to Hell, as it was Christ’s destination between the crucifixion and resurrection. It was in Hell that He cast all sin from His being and claimed victory over sin, death, and Satan. From there He ascended as a “Victor”, fulfilling all scripture, gaining the right to be the Head over the Church. Christ one day will take all that who believe in Him to Heaven, but before that day occurs He will give believers with spiritual gifts as gifts to the church.

*Note: Ephesians 4:11-16 is one sentence, the 6<sup>th</sup> of 8 long sentences in Ephesians.*

**Ephesians 4:11.** From the previous explanation of Christ being the “Victor”, which gives Him the authority to give gifts. Paul continues. Christ Himself gives gifts of gifted believers to the Church.

- 1) Apostles. This refers to the 12 disciples who had seen the risen Christ. This includes Matthias who replaced Judas. Paul was also an apostle, but was uniquely set apart to be an apostle to the Gentiles. The apostles were the men who initially carried the gospel message with God’s authority to all of mankind. The term “apostle” means “one sent as an authoritative delegate”. (NOTE: The gift of apostles was a foundational gift, which gift ceased after the first generation of believers.)
- 2) Prophets. This refers to specifically commissioned men, after the resurrection of Christ, who were sent to a local group or congregation of people. They provided edification, exhortation, compassion, and discernment of truth to the early church. They were used to reveal God’s will to the local group and also preserved the teachings of the apostles before the biblical canon was complete. (NOTE: The gift of N.T.

prophets was a foundational gift, which gift ceased after the first generation of believers.)

- 3) Evangelists. This refers to men and women who proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ to unbelievers. Today we would best understand this term as missionaries because it refers to an itinerant ministry.
- 4) Pastors and / in particular Teachers. This refers to one office but to either two kinds of people who fill the office or the two characteristics within a person who fills the office. This gifted believer (who we believe is a man) ministers to a local congregation. The Pastor / Teacher is to comfort and guide other believers, like a shepherd and sheep, while instructing them in God’s truth.

**Ephesians 4:12.** Paul went declares the purpose of these gifted believers to the Church – they are to prepare and equip other believers to serve. The literal interpretation of “perfecting” (preparing / equipping) is to mend or repair nets, to restore for proper use. Gifted believers are to minister the Word (God’s Truth) to others so they are readied to become involved in ministry to others. The goal of this purpose is to build up and edify the body of Christ. This includes all believers, no exceptions. All believers are gifted by Christ to serve others.

**Ephesians 4:13.** Paul continues, this service of ministry to the Church is to continue until all the Church (the Body of Christ) attains (arrives at the determined destination):

- 1) Unity of the faith (body of doctrinal truth) and full knowledge of the Son of God.
- 2) Maturity; as a perfect, complete man.
- 3) Christlikeness; unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

**Ephesians 4:14.** Paul states the intended purpose (or result) of gifted believers ministering to believers – so they will not be like immature children who are easily swayed and confused by cunning (dice-playing) men who deceitfully scheme for their own benefit. False teachers cause confusion regarding the truth in order to bring believers into their own schemes (plans / design / purpose).

**Ephesians 4:15-16.** Paul concludes that speaking the truth in love (truthing in love), as a spiritually mature believer, will enable believers to grow up into Him, with and in reference to all things. Christ is the source of the believer's growth. Christ is the Head of the Body of Christ (the Church), from which the Body derives its capacity for growth and activity. Every member of the Body is joined by being carefully fitted together....and each member of the Body is held (brought together) by means of every supporting ligament (according to the standard of the measured working of each believer).

When this occurs, this causes the Body of Christ to grow and build itself up in love. Each believer is to function in Christ's Body by God's enabling grace in accord with the measure of the gift that Christ has bestowed. When each believer accomplishes that measure which has been given as a gift – the Church grows properly. In this unity of structure is variety of function. Each believer contributes to the unified growth of the Body when he / she allows their gift to function in service to others.

Paul has declared and explained to the reader of his letter – the body of Christ, the unity of the body of Christ, the gifts that Christ has given to the body of Christ...and the responsibility of each believer to edify one another to grow the body of Christ and maintain its unity.

*Paul now describes how a believer is to walk in their life, first from a negative perspective (Eph. 4:17-19) then from a positive perspective (Eph. 4:20-24).*

**Ephesians 4:17-19.** Paul states that the believer is to no longer walk (referring to their daily conduct) as the Gentiles (or unbelievers) do. Paul gives 4 characteristics of the ungodly lifestyle, which the believer is to forsake.

- 1) Do not walk in the futility of the unbeliever's thinking. The word "futility" (vanity) means being void of a useful aim or goal. Unbelievers do not have a true purpose of mind to guide their life or their conduct. Their rational processes are distorted and they do not understand the purpose of their life, the purpose of moral living, nor do they understand God's revelation of truth.
- 2) Do not walk in life alienated from the life of God. Unbelievers are ignorant of God's life; therefore they are ignorant of God's truth. This ignorance is a willful act on the part of the unbeliever and it causes moral blindness and separation from God.
- 3) Do not walk in a life being past feeling. Unbelievers are morally insensitive. They live life in such a way that their actions become a pattern of sin and a continual turning away from God. This pattern of actions repeats itself and with each cycle it creates more apathy in their life about moral and spiritual things.
- 4) Do not walk in lewdness and uncleanness. Unbelievers become more behaviorally depraved as they willingly give themselves to sensuality. They continue to lose moral restraint as they become greedy to indulge themselves in immoral and impure actions. Ultimately self-indulgence becomes their purpose in life because it will consume them. A life given over to self-indulgence and self-centeredness ultimately ends in a life seeking self-gratification without any restraint or regard for others.

**Ephesians 4:20-24.** Paul redirects the reader's attention to the believer and what they have learned, which is in contrast to the characteristics of the life of the unbeliever. The believer did not come to know Christ through the lifestyle of the unbeliever. The believer came to know Christ through learning; they learned of Christ by hearing Him or by being taught about Him. Jesus Christ is the Subject and Sphere of the believer's learning, because He is the Truth.

The content of the believer's learning of Christ is two-fold.

- 1) The believer is to put off the old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires. Self-centered and self-indulgent lusts and desires (the characteristics of the unbeliever's life) are deceitful. They promise joy and happiness (which is temporary) but they only deliver emptiness and pain (which is permanent).
- 2) The believer is to put on the new self, which has been created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. Believers live a life based on truth, not deceitful lies. Believers have been made new in the attitude of their minds. They no longer have the characteristics of the unbeliever in their life. The righteousness and holiness of God delivers permanent joy and happiness.

These two "learning's" of the believer are not commands; they are facts that are learned by the believer and are observed in the life of a believer by others. Believers are new people in Christ and they can no longer live as the unbeliever lives.

*In Ephesians 4:17-24, Paul describes how a believer is to conduct their life. In Ephesians 4:25-32, Paul exhorts the believer to practice the truth previously given to them in his letter to the Ephesians.*

**Ephesians 4:25. Speak the truth.** Paul states that the believer is to tell the truth. Believers are not to speak falsehoods, fabricate stories, or exaggerate facts. The believer's words should conform to reality, but they are to be spoken in love (Eph.4:15). The reason believers are

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to speak the truth is that all believers are members of one another in the body of Christ...and truth is required for the body to function as God designed.

**Ephesians 4:26-27. Be angry against sin and sin not.** By implication, Paul states that the believer can be angry about injustice, immorality, and ungodliness...but it is to be an unselfish anger that is based on love for God and others. But even justifiable anger is to be dealt with and put away before the day is over. The reason believers are to deal with their anger daily is because such anger, if held on to, will allow Satan to gain a foothold in a believer's life, which can be used to lead the believer away from the love of Christ. If anger begins to control the believer instead of the believer controlling the anger – the believer will fall into sin.

**Ephesians 4:28. Work to meet your needs.** Paul states that the believer is not to steal. Stealing in any form is a sin and is not to be in the life of the believer. A believer is to work; producing what is beneficial for himself / herself, family, and others. A believer working with their own hands is beneficial because it provides for their own material needs and it enables them to help others.

**Ephesians 4:29-30. Speak helpful words.** Paul states that the believer is to not to speak unwholesome (rotten – spoiled fruit or putrid fish) words; but rather is to speak good, beneficial words. Good words benefit (give grace or enablement) the hearer by instructing, encouraging, correcting, or uplifting the hearer. A believer's words are to be truthful and loving – ministering to the hearer.

God the Holy Spirit is grieved when a believer refuses to change their life and speech; their sin causes Him to sorrow. The believer is to be aware of the Holy Spirit in their daily life because it is the Holy Spirit who is the guarantor of the believer's eternal redemption. It is the Holy Spirit who seals (one who has paid the down payment) the believer until the believer receives his / her new body.

**Ephesians 4:31-32. Be kind, be compassionate, be forgiving.** Paul states that the believer is to get rid of (put away):

- 1) Bitterness – piercing, sharp (poison within), smoldering resentment
- 2) Rage (wrath) – outbursts of anger in the passion of the moment
- 3) Anger – settled in feeling of anger, deep internal hostility
- 4) Brawling (clamor) – shouting, out of control
- 5) Slander – evil speaking
- 6) Malice – ill will, wickedness, evil

The believer is not to be known for these 6 characteristics in their life, but is to be known for:

- 1) Kindness – what is suitable or fitting to a need
- 2) Compassion (tenderhearted) – inner emotions of affection
- 3) Forgiveness – being gracious, give graciously as a favor

The believer is to exhibit these 3 characteristics because God has exhibited (and continues to exhibit) these characteristics to use through Christ. God has forgiven the believer of all their sin when they placed their personal faith in Christ....so the believer should be a reflection of what God has done from them to others by exhibiting these 3 characteristics coupled with the 4 exhortations to:

- 1) Speak the truth.
- 2) Be angry against sin, but sin not.
- 3) Work to meet your needs.
- 4) Speak helpful words.

When a believer's life is an example of Christ's life...and these characteristics are a reality in the believer's life, the believer will be a good testimony for Christ in all they do....and the body of Christ is built up and the unity of the body of Christ is maintained.

*In Ephesians 5, Paul exhorts the believer to practice the truth previously given to them in his letter to the Ephesians by telling them to “walk in love”.*

**Ephesians 5:1-2.** Paul states that each believer has no greater purpose than to be an imitator of God...this is what a believer should do because he/she is God's child. The “and” in verse 2 is better translated as “that is” ... meaning that the believer is to imitate God by walking (living) in love.

The ultimate example of this is Christ. Christ loved us and sacrificed Himself for mankind, with His sacrifice being effective for those who believed in God (prior to His coming) and those who would believe in Him (after His coming). He voluntarily gave Himself up because of His love for us, the believer. Christ's sacrifice was an offering that was acceptable to God.

There were 5 offerings described in Leviticus. The first 3 offerings were the: 1) burnt offering (Lev. 1:1-17), which depicted Christ's perfection; 2) the grain offering (Lev. 2:1-16), which depicted Christ's total devotion to God by the giving of His life to God; and 3) the peace offering (Lev. 3:1-17), which depicted Christ's work of reconciling man to God. These 3 offerings were a “soothing aroma to the Lord”. The other 2 offerings – the sin offering (Lev. 4:1-5:3) and the trespass offering (Lev. 5:14-6:7) were required by God but they were repulsive to God. These offerings depicted Christ becoming sin in order to redeem man. The entire set of offerings pleases God completely because it resulted in man's redemption to those who believe in Christ.

**Ephesians 5:3-4.** Paul contrasted his challenge to “walk in love” by telling the believers that they had the responsibility to abstain from evil practices. The sin identified in Eph. 5:3-4 are self-centered vices, the opposite of self-sacrificing love, which the believer should not even have a hint of in their life. These self-centered sins are:

- 1) Sexual immorality
- 2) Moral impurity of any kind
- 3) Greed
- 4) Shameless talk and conduct / degrading talk
- 5) Stupid words / foolish talk
- 6) Vulgar jesting (innuendo) / frivolous wit

The believer's life should be a demonstration of humility, service to others, and thankfulness / gratitude.

**Ephesians 5:5-6.** Paul sternly warns the believers that the reason they are to abstain from these evil deeds is that those who practice these deeds are not a part of God's kingdom – they are not a child of God. These evil deeds are a sign of self-centered idolatry, because they are putting their desires before God as idols in their life.

Believers should not be deceived into thinking that this warning is empty words (words without content). These words are true, because those who practice sin (willful disobedience) will become the objects of God's wrath. A believer is to be an imitator of God, not an imitator or Satan or other men.

**Ephesians 5:7-10.** Paul writes... "Because of these things" (what has been written in Eph. 5:1-6), do not become involved with those who practice sin. A believer should not become partners with those who are objects of God's wrath. The reason they should not is because the believer is no longer a part of darkness (sin).

A believer is now a light in the Lord. Since they are children of the light – they should live as children of light exhibiting the fruit of light (Spirit), which is goodness, righteousness, and truth. To live as children of light they are to discern (put to the test) what pleases the Lord. The truth is that as a believer walks in the light of truth – the knowledge of the Lord's will for their life becomes clear (Romans 12:1-2).

In Ephesians 5, Paul exhorts the believer to practice the truth previously given to them in his letter to the Ephesians by telling them to "walk in love" because they are "children of light".

**Ephesians 5:11-13.** Paul instructs the believers that they are not to be "sharers together" with the unbeliever's fruitless deeds of darkness (sin). A believer is to show forth the "fruit of light (Eph. 5:9), which is a direct contrast to the fruitlessness of darkness, because sin provides no benefits to oneself or others.

Believers are to expose the deeds of darkness (sin) by conducting themselves as "children of light" (Eph. 5:8). Expose means to reprove or convince one through argument or discussion. The focus of this passage is primarily on the believer exposing the sin of another believer who has fallen into sin, not the believer exposing the sin of the unbeliever. God is the One who exposes the sin of the unbeliever (I Cor. 5:12-13).

The believer is to be careful about how they discuss sin, publicly and privately. Paul exhorts the believer not to discuss or talk about the deeds of darkness (sin). Such discussion is not beneficial for believers, because they are to be focusing on Christ, who is the Light and the believer is the child of Light.

All deeds of darkness are exposed by Light, because it is Light that makes everything visible. The light of a believer, through the fruit of Light, will make visible the sin in the life of the believer who is sinning or in the life of the unbeliever.

**Ephesians 5:14.** Paul concludes this instruction with an invitation – "this is why it is said" (therefore) – to those who are living in darkness (sin) to "wake up" and "rise from the dead" for "Christ will shine on you" with His life-giving Light. This invitation comes from a paraphrase of Isaiah 26:19, 51:17, 52:1, and 60:1. It is thought that this "quotation" given by Paul is from an early Christian hymn.

**Ephesians 5:15-17.** Paul exhorts and instructs the believer to be wise in their walk. The literal interpretation is “Look therefore carefully how you walk” but is best understood “Therefore look that you walk carefully”. Believers are to walk carefully, meaning accurately or precisely with great care. They are not to walk as fools, meaning those who do not believe in God.

The manner of the believer’s walk is to make the right use of the time and opportunity given to them by God. The Greek word for time in this passage means a fixed, measured, allocated time – a clear reference to the lifetime of the believer given to them by God.

The reason for this careful walk of the believer is that the days are evil. Many are walking in sin and it is the responsibility of the believer to make full use of the time and opportunity given to them by God....to help turn those who are walking in darkness to light.

Therefore – the believer is to know and understand (comprehend intellectually) the will of the Lord. God has revealed His will to the believer in and through the Word of God (Bible). The believer is not to be senseless or unwise about God’s will for their life, but they are to be wise concerning God’s will.

**Ephesians 5:18-21.** Paul explains how wisdom and understanding, as an intellectual and spiritual capacity, works in the believer’s walk (conduct). Paul begins with a negative exhortation – “Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to excessive, riotous, incorrigible, wasteful living”. A drunken man acts abnormally because the alcohol is controlling him. Paul uses this negative illustration of control to contrast the positive exhortation – “Be controlled with the Spirit”.

A believer is to be filled with the Holy Spirit so the Holy Spirit can control them. A believer yielded to the Lord and controlled by the Holy Spirit will manifest the fruit of the Spirit (Light). The Holy Spirit indwells the believer – therefore the believer has all of the Holy Spirit within them. Paul’s exhortation to the believer is that the Holy Spirit

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is to have all of the believer / the entire believer, meaning the Holy Spirit is to fill and control the believer.

Paul gives 4 results that show that the Holy Spirit fills and controls the life of the believer.

- 1) Communicating with other believers through psalms (O.T. songs sung with stringed instruments), hymns (N.T. praise songs) and spiritual songs (general term. This is a public focus.
- 2) Communicating with the Lord through singing and making melody (singing with a stringed instrument) in your heart. This is a private focus.
- 3) Thanking God continually for all things; thankfulness for who God is and what He has done for us through His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.
- 4) Submitting ourselves one to another; a submission based upon a reverence for God – who He is and what He has done...and will do. A Spirit-controlled believer is willing to serve others and be submissive to them....versus exalting themselves and lording over them.

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- 2) Communicating with the Lord through singing and making melody (singing with a stringed instrument) in your heart. This is a private, individual focus.
- 3) Thanking God continually for all things; thankfulness for who God is and what He has done for us through His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.
- 4) Submitting ourselves one to another; a submission based upon a reverence for God – who He is and what He has done...and will do. A Spirit-controlled believer is willing to serve others and be submissive to them....as compared to exalting themselves and lording over them.

***Ephesians 5:22-33 through Eph. 6:9.*** Paul changes from exhortation, which is to be wise by being controlled by the Holy Spirit, to application of the exhortation in specific, everyday relationships; husband / wife (Eph. 5:22-33), parent / child (Eph. 6:1-4), master / servant (Eph. 6:5-9). In each of these relationships Paul commands the first party to be submissive and/or obedient, and the second party to demonstrate their submissiveness by their care and concern for the first party.

**Ephesians 5:22-33.** Paul focuses the first application of wisdom, control of the Holy Spirit, and submission to the husband / wife relationship. The husband / wife relationship is the clearest and closest example of the relationship of Christ and the Church...and

should be the leading example to all mankind of the application of wisdom, control of the Holy Spirit, and submission.

**Ephesians 5:22-24.** Paul begins with right ordering of the marriage relationship to illustrate and explain submission. Paul writes a command that the wife is to submit to her husband. This submission is not the husband's to command of his wife but rather it is the wife's to willingly and lovingly offer. The submission of the wife is not like the obedience owed by a child to its parents. The submission a wife offers to her husband is her service to the Lord (Col. 3:18).

The wife's submission is limited only to her husband and cannot be applied to all men. A wife's submission is to the man God has given to her as her personal, intimate possession. This submission is in deference to the ultimate leadership of the husband for the health and harmonious working of the marriage relationship.

The reason for the wife's submission is that the husband is the head of the wife. The role of the husband is God-ordained because it is a replica of Christ's own loving, authoritative headship over the Church. Just as Christ is the head of the Church, so is the husband to be the head of the wife.

The submission of the wife to the husband does not mean the wife is inferior. It means that she recognizes that the husband is the head of the home and she is to respond to his leadership without usurping his authority. The wife's submission requires the husband to protect, provide, preserve, and love his wife as Christ, the Savior, protects, provides, preserves, and loves the Church. When the husband does what he is required, the wife will be blessed in her willing submission.

**Ephesians 5:25-30.** Paul now turns to the duty and responsibility of the husband; the husband is to love his wife by giving himself up for her. The supreme responsibility of the husband is to love their wife with the same unreserved, selfless, sacrificial love that Christ has for the Church. The husband is to seek the highest good for his wife, just

as Christ does for the Church. This clearly indicates that the husband is not to “lord over” his wife like a master over a servant. But rather husband is to lead his wife in the “submit-love” relationship in such a way that it is a harmonious balance of submission and love in the marriage partnership.

Paul went on to explain how Christ’s relationship with the Church is the perfect example of the “submit-love” relationship. Christ gave Himself completely to the Church through His death, so He could make the Church holy, set apart to Himself as His own forever. He did this by cleansing the Church by the “washing with water by the word”. This is not baptismal regeneration, but it is a metaphor where regeneration is pictured as “being cleansed by water”.

The ultimate purpose of Christ’s death is to present the Church in splendor to Himself. The Church will be radiant, holy, and blameless (without stain, wrinkle, or blemish) when it is presented to Christ at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. The reason Christ gave of Himself was so He could have the perfect bride....to be with Him forever.

Because Christ gave Himself for the Church, the Church is an extension of Christ. In the same manner, when the husband gives himself to his wife, the wife is the extension of the husband...and visa-versa. A husband is to care for his wife just as he cares for his own body. The husband and wife relationship should be so intimately joined that they are one. Because of this, when a husband cares for his own body he cares for his wife at the same time....which also means when he cares for his wife he cares for his own body at the same time.

This is how Christ cares for the Church, the body of Christ. Christ loves the Church and we, as believers, are a part of His body, the Church. So as Christ cares for Himself, He cares for the Church....just as when the Church cares for itself, it cares for Christ.

**Ephesians 6:1-4.** Paul goes on to address the parent / child relationship. A child is to obey their parents. This is a command to the child but it requires a willingness on the part of the child to submit to the authority of the parent. The obedience of a child to a parent is like obeying the Lord Himself, because the parents of the child have been ordained by God to be the authority in the child’s life.

This command is the first (primary) commandment for a child to learn. It is also a command with a promise – that the child who is obedient will enjoy a prosperous and long life on earth (Ex. 20:12; Deut. 5:16). This is a general principle promise: obedience requires submission and self-discipline which brings stability and longevity as compared to disobedience which rejects submission and self-discipline, which in turn yields self-centeredness and self-indulgence resulting in a shorter life.

Paul also addresses fathers – the representative head of the family. The principles that Paul explains applies to parents, father and mother. Fathers are not to provoke a child to anger through unreasonable demands, petty rules (stricture), or favoritism. Instead the fathers are to provide for the child’s physical and spiritual needs through proper discipline, direction, and correction (primarily through their life as an example). This instruction is to be “in the Lord”. Just as a child is to obey the parents “in the Lord”, so are the parents to train and instruct a child “in the Lord”. Christ is to be the center of their family life and relationships.

**Ephesians 6:5-9.** Paul then addresses the master / servant relationship. In the culture of Paul’s day slavery existed. Paul recognized the existence of the institution of slavery but never condemned nor praised the institution, but rather recognized it as reality. Paul did address the relationship between the master / servant (slave, bondservant). The principles taught by Paul apply to us today in our work relationships.

A servant's responsibility to their master (owner, boss, supervisor) is outlined by Paul. They are to obey their master while showing respect, fear, and sincerity as a service to Christ. Paul aligns the responsibility of the servant with the responsibility of a believer; a believer is to show respect, fear, and sincerity to Christ as they do the will of God, therefore the servant is to respond in like manner to their master. This service is to be consistent, whether the master is there or not, and it is to be motivated from the heart to serve with goodwill and a peaceable spirit.

The reason for this type of service and attitude is that the Lord will reward the servant one day. He is the impartial Judge. He is not a respecter of persons. He will accurately judge the performance and motivation of the servant...and will reward accordingly.

Masters are to treat their servants in the same manner as the servants are to treat their masters. They are to please the Lord; they are not to threaten them but they are to treat them justly and fairly. Masters are to recognize that they are also servants. Christ is the Master and all earthly masters will stand before Him one day and give an account of themselves. When that day comes, Christ the Master, will show no partiality, but will judge the earthly master on what they have done...and will reward accordingly.

**Ephesians 6:10-17.** *Paul now focuses on how the believers can be victorious in their "walk in love" as "children of light". The believer described in Eph. 1-3, who lives a spirit-controlled life outlined in Eph. 4-6:9, can be sure to be involved in spiritual warfare with Satan, because Satan does not want the believer to be a positive example of the life of Christ to others. Paul sets forth the basic truths regarding the enemy, the battle, and the preparation for battle in Eph. 6:10-17.*

**Ephesians 6:10.** Paul exhorts the believer to be strong in the Lord and the power that overcomes resistance. The believer can be strengthened by the Lord and the Lord's resources. Satan's power is already broken through the victorious life, death, and resurrection of  
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Christ. Yet in the life of the believer the battles of temptations occur regularly. The Lord's power, the strength of the Holy Spirit, and the force of biblical truth are required to achieve a life of victory here on earth.

**Ephesians 6:11-13.** Paul uses an analogy to describe the believer's spiritual defense against Satan and worldly temptation. Paul begins by stating that the believer is the one responsible for putting on the full armor of God, which he describes later on the this chapter, to stand in defense against the attacks of Satan. It is interesting to note that Paul does not instruct the believer to prepare for offensive attacks but rather to prepare to defend what has already been conquered.

This spiritual warfare is not physical, but spiritual. The believer is to defend against cunning and deceptive schemes of Satan that include the temptation to sin, to do immoral things, to believe false theology, and to seek after the world and its enticements. This spiritual battle pits the believer against 4 defined spiritual demonic forces.

- 1) Principalities (rulers)
- 2) Powers (authorities)
- 3) Rulers of darkness (cosmic power over this present darkness)
- 4) Spiritual hosts of wickedness (spiritual forces of evil)

The sphere of their activity is in the spiritual realm against the believer.

Paul writes – Therefore, having made all the necessary preparations (putting on the full armor of God), the believer is now ready to stand in defense of conquered territory...the spiritual victory over Satan, his forces of evil, sin and death. This stand is to be taken by the believer without wavering; a stand taken every day until the Lord returns and the believers enters into eternity with Christ.

**Ephesians 6:14-17.** Paul now describes the full armor of God the believer is to put on. The first 3 pieces of armor described are to be worn daily; the second 3 pieces of armor are to be put on when the

actual fighting begins. For the believer all 6 pieces of armor are used daily.

Paul begins with the imperative “stand”. The believer is not to be fearful in preparing for battle or when entering into battle. Paul instructs the believer to “stand” because victory is assured through Jesus Christ. Paul now begins to describe the full armor of God that each believer is to “put on”.

- 1) Belt of Truth. The belt on the Roman soldier went around the waist and served as a place to hang weapons and cinch up loose hanging clothing. The belt provided freedom of movement as well as a resource during battle. Truth refers to the believer’s integrity, faithfulness and self-discipline. It is the believer’s devotion and commitment to live without hypocrisy.
- 2) Breastplate of Righteousness. The breastplate of the Roman soldier protected the soldier’s chest and vital organs from enemy attack. The breastplate was made of heavy leather with horns and hoofs sewn into the leather to make it very difficult for sword, spear, or arrow to penetrate. Righteousness refers to the sanctifying righteousness of Christ that comes by the believer faithfully living in obedience to and communion with Christ. When this occurs, Christ’s righteousness produces practical daily righteousness in the life of the believer...which becomes their spiritual breastplate.
- 3) Boots of the Gospel of Peace. The boots of the Roman soldier had nails, similar to spikes, in them to grip the ground during combat. The Gospel of Peace refers to the believer’s stability during spiritual battles, which comes from the good news of the gospel which gives peace to stand in battle. It is the confidence of the gospel and the peace the believer has with God that provides stability during spiritual battles.
- 4) Shield of Faith. The shield of the Roman soldier was a 2 1/2’ wide, 4 1/2’ long piece of wood that was overlain with linen and oil-treated leather. The shield protected the soldier

against arrows and swords. Faith refers to the believer’s trust in God; God’s Word and God’s promises. The believer’s continued resolute faith in the Lord can stop and extinguish all of the flaming arrows of Satan.

- 5) Helmet of Salvation. The helmet of the Roman soldier had various styles, but the helmet was worn when the soldier was going into battle and was going to face danger directly. The helmet protected the head. Salvation refers to the believer’s assurance of salvation, not the obtaining of salvation. Salvation presents safety from Satan’s attacks (because Satan cannot win once a person is saved).
- 6) Sword of the Spirit. The sword is an offense as well as a defensive weapon. The sword being referred to here is a sword that is approximately 18” long that the Roman soldier used in close combat. The sword given by the Spirit to the believer is the Word of God. God’s Word is the only weapon that a believer needs to fend off Satan’s attacks (example – Christ’s temptations – Matt. 4:1-11). The truth of the Scripture will always defeat Satan and his demonic forces.

**Ephesians 6:18.** Paul uses an analogy to describe the armor of God, which the believer is to put on in preparation for spiritual warfare. The offensive weapon in this spiritual warfare is the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God. The power of the believer to put on and use the armor of God is prayer; the believer’s greatest resource.

When the enemy attacks the believer is to:

- 1) Pray at all times (always pray)
- 2) Pray with all prayer and supplication (pray with thoroughness and intensity)
- 3) Pray with all perseverance (pray with alertness and persistence)
- 4) Pray for all saints

The prayer of the believer is to be “in the Spirit”, which focuses on the submission of the believer’s will to the will of God. The object of

the believer's prayer is the other saints of God who are also engaged in spiritual warfare.

**Ephesians 6:19-20.** Paul then asks the readers of the letter to pray for him that he would have the boldness and faithfulness to continue to proclaim the gospel in clarity. Paul knew why he was imprisoned in Rome. Paul knew he was an ambassador, albeit an ambassador in prison, for a new entity, the Church – the mystery of the gospel. Paul desired to speak boldly, yet clearly, with the appropriate words and speech.

**Ephesians 6:21-22.** Paul introduced Tychicus to the readers of the letter. Paul considered Tychicus a dear brother and a faithful servant in the Lord. Tychicus was a convert from Asia Minor (Turkey) and was a faithful companion to Paul at various times in Paul's ministry. It appears that Tychicus was the bearer of Paul's letter to the Ephesians. He was to inform them of Paul's welfare – how he was doing and what he was doing – for the purpose of encouraging them, in addition to delivering the letter.

**Ephesians 6:23-24.** Paul closes his letter to the Ephesians with a benediction; an unusual benediction from Paul when compared to his other benedictions. Paul closes with a mention of five major spiritual qualities:

- 1) Peace to the brothers (found only here in the N.T., a clear reference to the issue addressed in his letter)
- 2) Love with faith (love with its foundation in hope)
- 3) Grace
- 4) Love for the Lord Jesus Christ

The source of peace, love, faith, and grace is from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. The love that the believer is to have is an undying love; literally a love that is incorruptible and immortal. The reality of the believer's love is to be a love that is pure and not corrupted by wrong motives or disloyalties.

With this benediction Paul closes his letter to the Ephesians. Paul sought to address a major spiritual problem between the believing Jews and believing Gentiles by instructing them on the mystery of the gospel, the church in his letter to the Ephesians. In his letter he instructed them on how, as believers, they were to walk in love as children of light, with their lives focused on peace, love, faith, and grace as they fought the daily spiritual battles in God's power through the control of the Holy Spirit.

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