NOTES ON THE NEW TESTAMENT

Paul's Epistle to the

Ephesians

Gene Cunningham

As Jesus Christ prepared to send the disciples for the first time throughout Israel with His message, He included in their instructions this admonition: *"Freely you have received, freely give"* (Matt.10:8). This six-word summary of grace explains the financial policy of the publications and audio ministries of Basic Training. All audio materials and publications are provided **without charge** to anyone who requests them. For a list of available material, visit our website.



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"Endure hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus."
(2 Timothy 2:3)

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NOTES ON THE NEW TESTAMENT

Preface

While I was teaching in Myanmar/Burma in March 2019, some of my long-term, advanced students suggested that I go through the New Testament and provide basic notes, which they could then be able to print as a study Bible. They specifically asked that I focus on issues that are a major area of confusion in the churches where they work. Therefore, the following commentary will focus on these five primary areas:

1. What is the nature of God's grace and how is it received?
2. What is God's plan of salvation and the clear message of the Gospel?
3. What is the Bible's teaching on the security and assurance of the believer?
4. How is the believer to live the Christian life and be effective in witness/service?
5. What does prophecy say about the last days and the order of end-times events?

Practical Suggestions

These notes are purposely brief in nature. This work is not intended to be a complete commentary. All through the work I have kept in mind those who live in remote areas of our world, who labor to both understand and to teach others the Word of God. They do not have access to Bible school or seminary training. Neither are they able to afford the vast array of books available to pastors and teachers who live in more advanced countries.

I encourage all who utilize these notes to study them with an open Bible. Pray for the illumination of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:15–23; 3:14–21) as you study. Read the context of the passage carefully. Look up and compare the references that are provided. Above all, let the Word of God, and not these notes, guide your insight into God's Word. As I always tell my students: "Never take my word for anything; search the Scriptures and prove what is true" (Acts 17:10–12; 1 John 4:1).

Before you begin any study of the Word of God, take a few moments to make sure that you are in fellowship with God, filled by means of the Holy Spirit. Comprehension, like everything else in the Christian life, is a gift that can be appropriated only by faith. The Bible clearly lays out three requirements that must be met before we can expect to understand God's Word. All three require nothing from us but faith.

1. *We must be believers in Jesus Christ* (John 3:16).
   It is impossible for unbelievers to understand the Word of God (1 Cor. 2:14). Jesus declared to the leading religious leader of His day that apart from spiritual birth, man is blind to the things of God. *"That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit ... You must be born again"* (John 3:6–7).

2. *We must be filled by means of the Spirit* (1 Corinthians 2:12).
   Only the Spirit of God knows the thoughts of God. As believers, we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, but when we sin, we break fellowship with God and cease to function in the power of the Spirit. When we confess our sins, God is always faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). The moment we confess, we are restored to fellowship and are again under the control of the Holy Spirit and, therefore, able to learn.

3. *We must approach in faith* (Hebrews 11:6).
   Only when we approach in humility, with child-like faith, will the Word of God make sense to us (Matt. 18:4; Heb. 11:3). Where we find Scripture at odds with our ideas or our desires, we must submit to the authority of the Word. Intimacy, understanding, and power are reserved for those who are willing to do God's will (John 7:17).

DEDICATION

"This will be written for the generation to come,
that a people yet to be created may praise the Lord."
Psalm 102:18

While it is my hope and prayer that these notes will be helpful to all current students of the Word of God, I send them forth with a special dedication to the 144,000 Jewish evangelists who are yet to come on the scene of world history (Rev. 7:1–8). They will be the heroes of the faith in the coming time of Tribulation following the soon coming Rapture of the Church (1 Thess. 4:13–18).

To these brothers and sisters of the future, I want you to know you have been thought of, prayed for, and loved—before you even knew your mission. We of the Church Age salute you for the sufferings you will endure and the victories you will win. We bid you to be strong in the Lord, for your victory is sure in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. May the labor put into these notes by many hands and through many prayers, be a help to you as you boldly proclaim the name of Jesus Christ in a dark and dangerous time!

INTRODUCTION

The epistle to the Ephesians has been both a blessing and a "mystery" to many Bible students and scholars through the ages. Some have called it "the Queen of the Epistles," and others "the Alps of the Epistles." Coleridge said that Ephesians was "the divinest composition of man," according to the scholar, William Barclay (*The Letter to the Ephesians: The Daily Study Bible Series*). Yet, the thoughts and sentence structure of the epistle have confounded many. In the Greek, passages like Ephesians 1:3–14, 15–23; 2:1–9; and 3:1–7 are all one long sentence.

It appears that this epistle was an extended development of Colossians, just as Romans is to Galatians. Barclay points out that there are more than 55 verses in the two letters that are exactly the same in the original Greek. Additionally, we find at least seventy words in Ephesians that are not in any other letter that Paul wrote. Paul's inspired thought soars into realms found nowhere else in Scripture.

Paul wrote this epistle while he was in prison in Rome. He mentions his imprisonment in Ephesians 3:1; 4:1; and 6:20. The words, *"in Ephesus"* from Ephesians 1:1 are not found in early manuscripts. Some have suggested it may be *"the epistle from Laodicea"* mentioned in Colossians 4:16. Most likely it was a circular epistle to all the churches of Asia Minor.

Ephesus was an important city in the ancient world. It was a Roman capital, a wealthy center of the merchant trade, and was home to the Temple of Diana, considered one of the "seven wonders of the world" at the time (Dr. Warren Wiersbe, *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the New Testament*).

Where Colossians emphasizes Jesus Christ, resurrected, and seated in Heaven, as the Head of His body—the Church (Col. 1:18), in Ephesians Paul stresses the Church as His body on Earth (Eph. 1:22–23; 3:6–7). In this letter, Paul places great emphasis on the *"mystery,"* that is, the previously unrevealed plan of God for this present Church Age (Eph. 1:9–10; 3:1–11). The epistle is built around two prayers of Paul for the church: first, that we would receive enlightenment concerning our "riches in Christ" (Eph. 1:15–23), and second, that we would receive enablement from His Holy Spirit to live in the power of the risen Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 3:14–21). Also, there are two main sections of the book: In chapters 1–3, Paul explains the position and the power we have *"in Christ"* by faith. Then, in chapters 4–6, he teaches us the practice, and the worthy walk (Eph. 4:1) that should reflect our position.

Bible expositor, G. Campbell Morgan, presents an interesting theory that the book of Ephesians is *"the last exposition of the words of Jesus Christ at Caesarea Philippi, 'Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it … I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom'"* (Matt. 16:18–19 KJV). He goes on to say, *"Paul was the steward of the mystery of the Church. In this letter, then, we have the last exposition of the meaning of Christ"* (G. Campbell Morgan, *Concise Survey of the Bible*, p. 476). In this sense, chapters 1–3 deal with the building of the Church; Ephesians 4:1–6:9 have to do with the "keys to the kingdom" in the sense of Christian conduct, and Ephesians 6:10 to the end has to do with the warfare by which the powers of hell are defeated.

One last note in relation to the outline of the book: It has long been noted that Paul builds the epistle around three postures of the Christian. First, we are **"seated"** with Christ (Eph. 2:6), which relates to our position in Christ (chapters 1–3). Second, we are to ***"walk worthy"*** (Eph. 4:1), which relates to Christian conduct (Eph. 4:1–6:9). Finally, we are to ***"stand firm"*** against the forces of Satan (Eph. 6:11, 13–14), which concludes the book. Many books and studies on Ephesians have followed the "Sit, walk, stand" theme.

PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS

EPHESIANS CHAPTER 1

This first chapter is in two main sections. First, Paul introduces ideas he will develop further in the epistle, such as our rich blessings in Christ, resulting from the combined work of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in effecting our eternal salvation (Eph. 1:1–14). Secondly, he prays for the illumination of the Holy Spirit to give us an understanding of the things he is writing (Eph. 1:15–23).

The Doctrine of Positional Truth (Chapters 1–3)

In the first three chapters of Ephesians, Paul writes about "positional truth"—our standing and acceptance before God due to being united with Jesus Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. Paul will deal with this in detail in Ephesians chapter two. Paul sets forth this truth every time he uses the phrase "in Christ" or "in Him." The repetition of these phrases in his writings demonstrates just how important this concept was to his thinking and life.

The Blessings of our Union with Christ
Ephesians 1:1–14

In this section Paul identifies the work of God the Father (vv. 1–6), God the Son (vv. 7–12), and God the Holy Spirit (vv. 13–14), in bringing us into His blessings. Like stanzas in a song, each section ends with the praise of His glory.

Our Blessings from the Father (vv. 1–6)

1:1 ***"Paul, an apostle … by the will of God."*** Both Paul's commission as an apostle to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15–16), and his authority (2 Cor. 10:8; 13:10) were not of his own choice, but of God's call and purpose for him. ***"To the saints … and faithful in Christ Jesus."*** All who believe in Jesus Christ are saints, "set apart" to God by the Holy Spirit (vv. 13–14). The word *"faithful"* speaks of those who are believers *"in Christ Jesus."* We are *"saints"* because we are those who believe in Him. The plural masculine word *pistois* ("faithful") indicates that they are "saints" because they are "believers" in Christ Jesus (compare 2 Cor. 6:15; Gal. 3:9; 1 Tim. 4:3; Titus 1:6). Paul is not making a distinction here between *"spiritual"* versus *"carnal"* believers (1 Cor. 3:1–2; Heb. 5:12–14). Otherwise, who would the warnings against carnality in Ephesians 4:17–19; 25–32; 5:3–7, 15–18 be addressed to?

1:2 ***"Grace to you and peace."*** Paul's typical greeting (Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:3; Gal. 1:3; Phil. 1:2) combines both Hebrew and Greek greetings. It also presents a fundamental spiritual truth: only by receiving God's grace through faith can we enter into His peace (Rom. 5:1; Col. 3:15). ***"From God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."*** This greeting and provision of grace and peace come directly from God to every believer in Christ Jesus.

1:3 ***"Blessed … the God and Father."*** To "bless" God means to praise, honor, and glorify Him for what He has done for us through Jesus Christ. ***"Who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing."*** Every believer is in possession of every possible blessing bought by the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. ***"In the heavenly places in Christ."*** The storehouse of heavenly blessings is available to all who are in Christ Jesus by faith. We who believe are already seated with Christ in the heavenly realms (Eph. 2:6; Col. 3:1–4). These spiritual blessings, which will be identified throughout the epistle, are our heavenly birthright.

1:4 ***"He chose us in Him."*** It should be noted that *"us"* is plural, not singular. In eternity past, God chose to bless those *"in Him,"* that is, all Church Age believers, with ***"every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places"*** (v. 3). ***"That we should be holy and without blame before Him."*** This is the standing of every believer before God. Due to the work of Christ, all our sins have been blotted out, and the righteousness of Jesus Christ has been imputed to us (2 Cor. 5:17–21).

1:5 ***"In love having predestined us."*** Note that I take the *"in love,"* ending v. 4, as relating to His work of predestination. Predestination is not used here in the sense of being pre-determined to believe, but in the sense that all who believe in this present Church Age are to comprise the ***"adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself."*** In eternity past, God determined in advance that all who believe in Jesus Christ would receive the privilege of *"adoption"* into His family (the Church), and this was done ***"according to the good pleasure of His will."*** In other words, *"It pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell"* (Col. 1:19), and through Christ, *"the Father ... has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light"* (Col. 1:12). The point is that God the Father is pleased to shower upon us, His children, positions of great privilege and power.

1:6 ***"To the praise of the glory of His grace."*** God is to be blessed and praised for all that He has done for us through His grace (v. 3). ***"He has made us accepted in the Beloved."*** We are acceptable to a holy and just God because we are in Christ, who is *"the Beloved."* In other words, we are as acceptable to God as Jesus Christ is! When He sees us, He sees His own beloved Son in us. This again shows that the address, *"to the saints and faithful brethren"* (v. 1), is inclusive of all who believe in Jesus Christ, because we are all holy and acceptable in His sight, through Christ Jesus.

<u>The Father's Blessings Summarized</u>

1. He has showered us with every possible spiritual blessing (v. 3).

2. *"He chose us"* (the Church), before time began, to be *"in Christ,"* and therefore, *"holy and without blame"* (v. 4).

3. He pre-determined that all who believe in Christ during the Church Age (from Pentecost to the Rapture of the Church), would be adopted into His family (vv. 4–5; Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:5–7). This gives each and every member of the Church of Jesus Christ a unique standing, with surpassing privileges that no believer of other ages possessed. Paul's extended prayer (Eph. 1:15–23; 3:14–19) is that we might know and utilize these great privileges and possessions.

4. He made us acceptable to Himself through Jesus Christ (v. 6).

<u>Our Blessings from the Son</u> (vv. 7–12)

1:7 ***"In Him we have redemption through His blood."*** On the cross, Jesus Christ paid the debt of all our sins (1Cor. 15:3; 2 Cor. 5:21; Col. 2:14; 1 John 2:2). By trusting in His saving work, we have ***"the forgiveness of sins."*** Our complete and total forgiveness is but one of a multitude of *"spiritual blessings"* (v. 3) that comprise the ***"riches of His grace."*** Note that *"riches"* is a key concept in this book (Eph. 1:7, 18; 2:7; 3:8, 16).

1:8 ***"He made to abound."*** The word means "to overflow," like the cup in David's Psalm 23:5. We will never, in this life, be able to comprehend or contain all that God has done for us. He will be revealing these things to us throughout all eternity (Eph. 2:7). ***"In all wisdom and prudence."*** Only by the illumination of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:17–19) can we hope to grasp the greatness of God's grace to us in Christ!

1:9–10 ***"Having made known to us the mystery … that in the dispensation of the fullness of times."*** Here, Paul introduces the doctrine of the mystery of the Church Age. He will develop it more fully in Ephesians 3:1–12. Paul is revealing what Jesus meant when He said, *"On this rock I will build My church"* (Matt. 16:18). At the time, the disciples did not understand what He was talking about. Now, because of Paul's revelation of the mystery, we do. In short, it refers to new revelation never before given to men but now revealed to members of His Church. This *"dispensation"* refers to this present Church Age, and to the doctrines that relate to Church Age believers. ***"He might gather together in one all things in Christ."*** The truth that God would create a new body of believers, composed of both Jew and Gentile (Eph. 2:11–22), was never before known.

1:11 ***"In Him also we have obtained an inheritance."*** Every child of God, by faith in Christ, shares in an eternal inheritance (Gal. 3:29; 1 Pet. 1:4–5). This eternal inheritance was ***"predestined"*** or pre-determined by God to fulfill His perfect plan for human history, and to display His infinite wisdom (Rom. 11:33–36; Eph. 3:10–11).

1:12 ***"That."*** This little word is crucial because Paul is about to define what he means about God's *"purpose"* and *"the counsel of His will"* in v. 11. ***"That we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory."*** Those early believers were the beginning of God's plan for the Church working out in history, which would, in eternity, result in His praise and glory forever and ever.

The Son's Blessings Summarized

1. By His blood (the cross) we have redemption—sin's penalty paid in full (v. 7a).

2. We also have full and total forgiveness of sins (v. 7b).

3. Through Christ's provisions we have the revelation of "the mystery," God's plan for the Church (vv. 8–10).

4. By faith in Christ, we enter into an eternal inheritance (v. 11).

5. Finally, the Church in eternity will be a cause for glorifying God forever (v. 12; Rev. 5:8–14).

Our Blessings from the Holy Spirit (vv. 13–14)

1:13 ***"In Him you also trusted."*** The recipients of the letter are included in the praise of v. 12. ***"After you heard … having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise."*** This is the order of the promise of eternal salvation. First, ***"the gospel of your salvation"*** must be heard. *"Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God"* (Rom. 10:17). Then, when anyone believes the gospel message (Rom. 1:3–4, 16–17; 1 Cor. 15:3–4), they are instantly sealed by the Holy Spirit for eternal life (1 Cor. 12:13; 2 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 4:30).

1:14 ***"Who is the guarantee of our inheritance."*** Every believer is sealed by the Holy Spirit, and that seal guarantees our entrance into eternal life and an eternal inheritance. The indwelling Holy Spirit (John 14:16–18; Rom. 8:9–11) is God's "down-payment" on His ***"purchased possession,"*** the Body and the Bride of Christ. All of these wonderful provisions are intended ***"to the praise of His glory."*** We owe eternal praise to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit for all the rich blessings that are ours in Christ.

The Spirit's Blessings Summarized

1. Although not strictly stated, it is the Holy Spirit who motivates the preaching of the Gospel, and convicts sinners of its truth (John 15:26–27; 16:7–13).

2. The Holy Spirit seals every believer for eternal life. This is the basis of the security of our salvation (v. 13).

3. The Spirit is our guarantee that we will enter into eternal life (v. 14).

Paul's Prayer for Enlightenment

Ephesians 1:15–23

Paul's prayer is actually in two parts in this epistle. In Ephesians 1:15–23, we have the first part of the prayer. Here, he prays for the Holy Spirit to give us illumination and understanding regarding God's amazing plan. Then, in Ephesians 3:14–21, he prays that the Holy Spirit will empower us to live Christ-centered lives.

1:15 ***"After I heard of your faith."*** This statement tells us that Paul is writing, not just to the Ephesians, but to many believers he had never met (Col. 1:3–4, 7–8; 2:1–2). ***"And your love for all the saints."*** Here is the sure sign of new life in Christ (John 13:34–35; 1 John 3:14; 4:7–8, 11–12).

1:16 ***"Do not cease to give thanks … making mention of you in my prayers."*** Love for fellow believers compels us to both give thanks and to pray for their needs (Rom. 1:9; Eph. 6:18; Phil. 1:4–5; James 5:16).

1:17 ***"The spirit of wisdom and revelation."*** The Word of God is supernatural wisdom and can only be understood by the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit (John 14:26; 16:13). ***"In the knowledge of Him."*** The focal point of all revelation—the Word of God—is the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 1:30; Col. 1:15–19; Heb. 1:1–4).

1:18 ***"Your understanding being enlightened."*** This illumination requires a desire to know, believe, and obey on our part (John 7:17; 14:21; Heb. 5:12–14). ***"The hope of His calling … the riches of the glory of His inheritance."*** The word *"hope"* in the Bible speaks of confident assurance of future possession. It leads us to an eager expectation of our ultimate eternal possessions. The language here actually speaks of the household of the saints as Jesus' inheritance. He considers us His eternal treasure!

1:19–20 ***"The exceeding greatness of His power toward us."*** God demonstrates His power by saving us, by sanctifying and purifying us, and by using us as partners in His great plan (2 Cor. 4:1, 5–7; 5:14–21; Col. 1:11–14). ***"The working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ."*** The greatest demonstration of divine power is the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Paul's point is that the power of Jesus' resurrection life is available to every believer (Gal. 2:20; Phil. 2:10). ***"And seated Him at His right hand."*** This was the fulfillment of prophecies such as Psalm 2:6 and 110:1. However, Paul wants every believer to understand that we are seated there with Him (Eph. 2:6; Col. 3:1–4). We have His authority and power to live supernatural lives in the power of the Spirit (Titus 2:11–14).

1:21–23 ***"Far above all principality and power and might and dominion."*** These terms are used for angelic powers and authorities, both holy and fallen (Rom. 8:38; Eph. 6:12; Heb. 1:5–14). ***"He put all things under His feet."*** Jesus Christ reigns in total authority (Matt. 28:18). ***"Gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body."*** This is an astounding statement. All that the Father has given the resurrected Son is for the benefit and blessing of His body—the Church—the family of God. Not only this, but Paul says that the Body of Christ, made up of every believer in Him, is ***"the fullness of Him who fills all in all."***

Summary: The Mystery of God's Will

1. In this chapter, Paul tells us that God had a master plan before the world began.

2. This plan is called a "mystery" because it was not revealed to the prophets of the Old Testament.

3. This plan was put into effect by the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. His resurrection power makes it possible.

4. The focus of the plan was to create a new spiritual creation (2 Cor. 5:17), made up of every believer in Jesus Christ—His body.

5. To these newly created people He gave His Spirit to indwell them, His completed Word to guide them, and His mission to share in (Matt. 28:18–20; Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8).

6. Paul prays that we will comprehend this great plan, that we will lay hold of the hope of our calling, and utilize the power that is made available to us through His Spirit to accomplish His will.

EPHESIANS CHAPTER 2

In this chapter, Paul continues to expound on the outworking of God's amazing plan to produce the masterpiece of His plan, *"His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus"* (Eph. 2:10), made up of both Jewish and Gentile believers, who become one body in Christ Jesus. Where chapter one focused on our possessions in Christ, this chapter looks at our position in Christ.

The Blessings of Our Position in Christ

Ephesians 2:1–10

Throughout chapter 2, Paul is developing what he means in Ephesians 1:23 by *"His body."* He is speaking of the family of God, newly formed, made up of both Jew and Gentile, both reconciled to God and to each other.

What We Were without Christ (v. 1–3)

2:1 ***"And you … were dead."*** The words, *"He made alive,"* are in italics because they have been brought up from v. 5. In vv. 1–3, Paul lists five characteristics of those who are without Christ. The first is that we are spiritually dead in Adam (Rom. 5:12; 1 Cor. 15:22), and therefore live ***"in trespasses and sins."*** All mankind without Christ is enslaved to sin (Rom. 6:19–21).

2:2 ***"In which you once walked."*** The second spiritual characteristic of those without Christ is that they can only live ***"according to the course of this world."*** The way of this world is sin, corruption, and death—followed by eternal condemnation (John 3:19; 1 John 2:15–17). The third quality of the lost is that they live ***"according to the prince of the power of the air."*** This of course refers to Satan, who seized dominion of this world when Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden (2 Cor. 4:4; 1 John 5:19; Rev. 12:9). Satan rules by *"the power of darkness"* (Col. 1:13), and only Jesus Christ can deliver someone from his domain. Fourth, the lost are identified as ***"sons of disobedience"*** due to the power and impact of Satan's spiritual influence.

2:3 ***"Among whom also we … were by nature children of wrath."*** Here, Paul switches from "you" (meaning Gentile believers) to *"we,"* referring to Jewish believers. Jewish unbelievers, with all their devotion to the law, were just as lost as Gentiles and shared in all five of the conditions mentioned here. All who are without Jesus Christ live their lives under the wrath of God (John 3:18, 36).

Summary: Five Spiritual Characteristics of the Unsaved

1. They are spiritually dead in the realm of sin.
2. They live life on a course to eternal destruction.
3. They are unconsciously slaves under the rule of Satan.
4. They are under the influence of the spirit of rebellion against God.
5. They are by their fallen nature children of Adam, condemned to wrath.

What We Become by Faith in Christ (vv. 4–10)

2:4 ***"But God."*** This phrase introduces a great contrast between the lost and the saved. Compare it with the phrase in v. 13, "*But now in Christ Jesus*." ***"Rich in mercy, because of His great love."*** God's mercy to sinners is due to *"His great love"* for sinners (John 3:16; Matt. 11:19). His mercy moved Him to send Christ as a mediator for sinful men (Isa. 53:10–12; 1 Tim. 2:5–6; Luke 5:24; Rom. 2:4).

2:5–6 ***"Made us alive together with Christ."*** Those who trust in Jesus Christ share His resurrection life (Rom. 5:8–10, 17; 6:5, 23). ***("By grace you have been saved").*** This parenthesis, which will be repeated in v. 8, is designed to define "salvation" in terms of three things God does for those who believe in Christ:

1. He makes them alive (v. 5).
2. He raises them up with Christ (v. 6).
3. He causes them to sit with Christ in the heavenly realm (v. 6).

Our union with Christ is complete, both regarding His past work on the cross, which brings forgiveness, and regarding His present session at God's right hand (Psalm 110:1–2; Heb. 12:2), which provides spiritual power. Therefore, His mercy removes our condemnation, while His grace provides us with justification and power.

2:7 ***"That in the ages to come."*** That is, through all the endless *"ages"* of His eternal kingdom. ***"He might show the exceeding riches of His grace."*** Like a trophy of world history, the Church will shine throughout all eternity as evidence of ***"His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."***

2:8 ***"For by grace you have been saved."*** This is a summary of vv. 4–7. Flowing from the love of God, His mercy removed our condemnation from us, and His grace provided for our justification by adding the righteousness of Jesus Christ to our account before God. ***"Through faith."*** Faith is a declaration of helpless and undeserving dependence upon the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross. Faith is the total absence of works (Rom. 4:4–5). It is the confession that we have nothing to offer but trust in our victorious Savior. ***"That not of yourselves; it is the gift of God."*** Many try to make this refer to faith, but the grammar of Greek will not allow this. The *"that"* here refers back to the working of God in vv. 5–6. Scripture constantly affirms that the *"gift"* is eternal life (John 4:10; Rom. 6:23). Three times in chapter three, Paul speaks of grace as a gift that has been given to him (Eph. 3:2, 7–8). John 1:12 and 3:15 make it clear that all men have the power to believe if they will receive the truth.

2:9 ***"Not of works."*** No human effort or work is included in the act of faith (Rom. 4:4–5). Sinful man contributes absolutely nothing to God's gift of eternal life. ***"Lest anyone should boast."*** If any part of our salvation was due to any work on our part, we could take credit for it. As it is, by grace through faith, we can only boast in the grace of our Lord (Jer. 9:24; 1 Cor. 1:31; 2 Cor. 10:17).

2:10 ***"His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus."*** Every believer is a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17). The Church, the Body of Christ, is God's masterpiece. We are created ***"for good works, which God prepared beforehand."*** God has a plan for each and every believer. This includes our prayer life (1 Thess. 5:17–18; Heb. 13:15), our witness to the lost (Matt. 28:18–20; John 15:26–27; Acts 1:8), and our ministry through our spiritual gift (Rom. 12:3–8; 1 Cor. 12:4–11; 1 Pet. 4:10–11). In the plan of God, every believer is to be a priest to God (1 Pet. 2:9), an ambassador to the lost (2 Cor. 5:18–20), and a minister to fellow believers (Rom. 12:3–8; 1 Pet. 4:10–11).

Summary: What We Become in Christ by Grace through Faith

1. We are made spiritually and eternally alive.

2. We share in His resurrection life.

3. We are seated with Him in victory and power.

4. We are His masterpiece in time and His trophy in eternity.

5. We are a new creation designed for good works that He planned for each of us.

The Blessings of One Body in Christ
Ephesians 2:11–22

In vv. 1–10, Paul has clarified what God has done for each believer as an individual. Now, in vv. 11–22, he shows how God is building the Church corporately into a spiritual temple, indwelt by the Holy Spirit. He is expounding on Jesus' statement, *"on this rock I will build My church"* (Matt. 16:18).

The Gentiles without Christ (vv. 11–12)

2:11–12 ***"Remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh."*** That is, in unbelief, they were ***"called Uncircumcision,"*** a term of contempt by the Jews. ***"Without Christ."*** Apart from faith in Christ, there was no way Gentiles could enter into the blessings of God anticipated by the Abrahamic (Gen. 12:1–3) and later covenants (Rom. 9:4–5). ***"Aliens from the commonwealth … strangers from the covenants of promise."*** All of the Old Testament *"covenants"* looked forward to fulfillment in the coming Messiah. ***"Having no hope and without God in the world."*** This is the desolate condition of every soul without Jesus Christ.

By Faith both Jew and Gentile are One in Christ (vv. 13–16)

2:13 ***"But now."*** Again, this goes with the *"but God"* statement in v. 4. By faith in Christ, the Gentiles, who were *"afar off"* (v. 17), have been ***"brought*** **[made]** ***near by the blood of the cross."*** Paul is speaking here of the work of reconciliation, by which former enemies are made into friends and family (Rom. 5:6–11).

2:14 ***"He Himself is our peace."*** In Christ, both Jew and Gentile find common ground and standing before God. ***"Has broken down the middle wall of division."*** In the Temple, a wall separated Gentile proselytes from Jewish worshippers. The penalty for a Gentile that trespassed that wall was death (Acts 21:28–29).

2:15 ***"Having abolished in His flesh the enmity … the law of commandments."*** By fulfilling all the Law of Moses for every believer (Matt. 5:17; Rom. 10:4), Jesus Christ removed the basis for the distinction between Jew and Gentile. ***"To create in Himself one new man … making peace."*** The central truth of the "mystery" Paul has been expounding is that God has created an entirely new, spiritual company, called the Church—the Body of Christ (Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:27; 2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 5:15).

2:16 ***"That He might reconcile them both to God."*** Both Jew and Gentile, apart from Jesus Christ, are separated from God. All mankind are by nature enemies of God (Rom. 5:10). However, further enmity between Jew and Gentile was created by the Jewish misconception that their unique calling made them superior to Gentiles (Rom. 2:1–6, 11–29). ***"Putting to death the enmity."*** By His finished work on the cross, Jesus Christ has removed the *"enmity"* of sinners toward God, and of Jew toward Gentile—but only for those who are in Christ.

The Body of Christ is the Temple of the Spirit (vv. 17–22)

2:17 ***"He came and preached peace."*** As the one and only Mediator between God and men (1 Tim. 2:3–6), the Lord Jesus came with a message from God to men, of reconciliation and peace through faith. ***"You who were afar off … those who were near."*** By the covenants and the promises, the Jews had been brought near, while the Gentiles, apart from Old Testament revelation, were far off.

2:18 ***"Through Him*** **[by faith in Jesus Christ]** ***we both have access*** **[both Jew and Gentile believers]** ***by one Spirit*** **[the indwelling Spirit]** ***to the Father."*** In this brief sentence, Paul shows 1) that each member of the Godhead (Son, Spirit, and Father) is involved in our salvation, and 2) that all who believe in Christ have free and full access to the throne of grace (1 Cor. 12:13; Heb. 4:14–16).

2:19 ***"Fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God."*** As believers, our citizenship is in Heaven (Phil. 3:20). In eternity, we will inhabit the New Jerusalem with all the saints (Heb. 11:10). All believers of all ages will make up this household, and yet the Church will remain unique as the Body and Bride of Christ (Eph. 5:25–27, 32).

2:20–22 The Church here is described as a temple (1 Pet. 2:5). ***"Built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets."*** That is, this temple is built by the work of evangelism and the Word of God. ***"Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone."*** This figure for Christ shows that the whole building is fashioned around Him (Psalm 118:22–23; Matt. 21:42; 1 Pet. 2:4–8). ***"Grows into a holy temple in the Lord."*** Unlike the Jewish temple, which was destroyed in 70 A.D., this spiritual temple continues to grow through 1) the work of evangelism and missions, and 2) the spiritual growth of each individual believer. ***"You are being built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit."*** God does not dwell in earthly temples made by man, but He indwells His own temple, which is the Church (Acts 7:48–50; 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19–20).

EPHESIANS CHAPTER 3

In chapter three, Paul concludes his explanation of the mystery of this present Church Age, and of the unique revelation and spiritual provisions for those who live between Pentecost and the Rapture of the Church.

The Mystery of Christ Revealed

Ephesians 3:1–13

The Message of the Mystery (vv. 1–6)

3:1–2 ***"For this reason."*** This phrase is repeated in v. 14, where Paul begins his prayer for the recipients of the letter, and for us, based on the unique provisions made for those living in this present Church Age. ***"Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles."*** Paul sees his imprisonment as a part of God's plan for reaching the Gentiles with the Gospel, fulfilling his expression of hope in Romans 15:29–33. God often fulfills our hopes and desires in ways we could not anticipate, and do not desire. Yet His plan is always perfect, and Paul had the spiritual maturity to see this and be thankful for it. If not for his arrest and imprisonment we would not have the prison epistles (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon). ***"The dispensation of the grace of God."*** The word translated *"dispensation"* can refer to "the law of the household," and speaks of the duties of the Steward (the chief servant in the house) of the house in carrying out the wishes of the master of the household. **"*Which was given to me*."** God ordained Paul as the "Apostle to the Gentiles" (Acts 9:15–16; 22:21; 26:16–18). Therefore, as the steward of the household of Jesus Christ (Heb. 3:6; Gal. 6:10; Eph. 2:19), Paul was given the task of revealing the "mystery," the plan of God for Church Age believers, through his thirteen epistles (or fourteen, as I believe, including Hebrews—based on the passage in 2 Pet. 3:15–16).

3:3–4 ***"By revelation He made known to me the mystery."*** This has been Paul's topic since vv. 1:9–10, where he had ***"briefly written already."*** Paul's ***"knowledge in the mystery of Christ"*** is unfolded more fully in Ephesians than any other epistle, but is also mentioned in Romans 11:25; 16:25; 1 Corinthians 2:7; 15:51; Colossians 1:26–27; 2:2; 4:3; 2 Thessalonians 2:7; and 1 Timothy 3:9, 16. Only by correctly interpreting and understanding all these passages can we gain a full picture of just how unique the Church Age is in all of human history.

3:5 ***"Which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men."*** No prophets of the Old Testament knew or wrote about the Church Age. The doctrines and provisions of the Church Age were not revealed until Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles, received a divine revelation about them. ***"Revealed to His holy apostles and prophets."*** The Church Age was first hinted at to the original apostles by Jesus (Matt. 16:17–19; John 16:13–14). However, the full understanding and recording of it were left to Paul.

3:6 ***"That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body."*** The union of Jew and Gentile into one new body was a truth unknown in the Old Testament (Eph. 2:14–3:7). That Gentiles could be saved was never in question (Isa. 11:10; 42:1, 6; 49:6; 60:3; 61:9; Mal. 1:11). The great truth of the mystery is that the Gentiles would be grafted into Israel, in a way that would ultimately bring Israel back to God (Rom. 11:11–25).

The Ministry of the Mystery (vv. 7–13)

3:7 ***"I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God."*** Paul is referring here to his spiritual gift as an apostle. Like all spiritual gifts, it was not given because of any merit on Paul's part. ***"Given to me by the effective working of His power."*** Only the Holy Spirit is able to make spiritual gifts effective in those gifted for various areas of service (Rom. 12:3–8; 1 Cor. 12:1–18, 27–31; Eph. 4:11–16; 1 Pet. 4:10–11).

3:8 ***"To me … less than the least of all the saints."*** Note Paul's self-evaluation in 1 Corinthians 15:9; 2 Corinthians 12:11; and 1 Timothy 1:15. ***"The unsearchable riches of Christ."*** What Paul means here is that, apart from the revelation given by God, no man could ever discover the treasures we have in Christ (Rom. 11:33–36; 1 Cor. 2:12–13).

3:9 ***"The fellowship of the mystery."*** This again refers to the union of Jew and Gentile in one spiritual body (Eph. 2:11–22). ***"Which … has been hidden in God."*** Not until the coming of Jesus Christ into the world could this *"mystery"* be revealed (Heb. 1:1–4). Jesus Christ is both Creator and Redeemer of all creation (John 4:42; Col. 1:12–19).

3:10 ***"That now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church."*** This new creation of the Body of Christ is also a new revelation to the angelic realm. ***"Principalities and powers in the heavenly places."*** Though this would include all angelic beings (1 Pet. 1:12), Paul uses this phrase, especially for the fallen angelic realm (Rom. 8:38; Eph. 6:12). Satan's fallen realm is made to realize the infinite wisdom of God through His formation of the Church, made up of all members of the human race. It will be the Church that will judge fallen angels (1 Cor. 6:2–3).

3:11 ***"According to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord."*** The eternal salvation of all who believe in Jesus Christ was God's plan before the world began (Eph. 1:4; Heb. 4:3; 1 Pet. 1:20; 2 Pet. 3:9; Rev. 13:8; 17:8).

3:12 ***"In whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him."*** Note the repetition of the thought *"In whom … in Him."* This phrase is a summary of all that we have because of our spiritual position before God in Christ (Eph. 1:6; 2:4–6; Col. 3:1–4; Heb. 4:14–16; 10:19–25). While we may fail in our practice of the faith, our position before God never changes!

3:13 ***"Therefore … do not lose heart."*** For mature believers who understand the mystery of our spiritual union with Christ and with each other, there is never a reason to lose heart (Rom. 8:28–39). ***"My tribulations for you, which is your glory."*** Paul knew his sufferings were all designed by God to enrich the Church. If we believe that Romans 8:28–39 is true, we know that nothing can happen to us that God will not use for His glory and the furtherance of His perfect plan.

Paul's Prayer for Enablement

Ephesians 3:14–21

Previously, Paul prayed for **enlightenment** for all believers to understand what he is revealing about God's perfect plan for the Church (Eph. 1:15–23). Now he breaks into a prayer for **enablement**—strength from the Holy Spirit for each of us to comprehend and to live in His power. This prepares the way for chapters 4–6, which deal with living out the Christian way of life.

3:14 ***"For this reason."*** This is the repeated phrase (resumes) from v. 1. ***"I bow my knees to the Father."*** Take note that Paul mentions the Father, the Son, and the Spirit in vv. 14–16. Each member of the Godhead is involved in strengthening us.

3:15 ***"From whom the whole family … is named."*** The *"family"* here refers to the family of faith, both those alive on Earth and those who are already in Heaven. The idea of the family—father, mother, and child—is closely related to the three members of the divine family. It is worth looking at Psalm 128—a family Psalm.

3:16 ***"That He would grant you."*** That is, "to give you" by His grace. God's grace comes to us through the channel of His Word, and by the inner working of His Spirit. ***"According to the riches of His glory."*** Our spiritual wealth in Christ is one of the main themes of Ephesians (Eph. 1:3, 7, 18; 2:7; 3:8; see also Col. 1:27). ***"To be strengthened with might."*** Paul uses two words for strength: the first refers to inherent ability to do things, the second speaks of authority or dominion. ***"By His Spirit in the inner man."*** Here, the *"inner man"* speaks of the newly created spirit of the believer (2 Cor. 5:17), or the *"new man"* (John 3:6; 2 Cor. 4:16; Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10). The term "new man" is also used by Paul collectively for the Body of Christ (Eph. 2:14–16).

3:17 ***"That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith."*** The word *"dwell"* means to "be at home" in us. Christ already indwells every believer through His Spirit (John 14:16–18; Rom. 8:9–11; Eph. 2:22). This is the idea of abiding in Christ, that He might abide in us for fellowship and power (John 15:4–5, 7–10; 1 John 1:7). Jesus Christ is at home in hearts by prayer and obedience to His Word (John 14:21, 23; 15:7; Gal. 2:20; Col. 1:23). ***"Being rooted and grounded in love."*** These figures come from both the agricultural and the construction world. They speak of attaining an advanced stage of spiritual growth and maturity, making it possible to experience the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22–23).

3:18 ***"Able to comprehend with all the saints."*** All believers are capable of comprehending spiritual truth by learning God's Word in the fellowship and power of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:16; Eph. 5:18). ***"Width and length and depth and height."*** The four dimensions given here speak of the complete scope of Christ's love.

3:19 ***"To know the love of Christ."*** Every believer experiences the initial effect of the *"love of Christ"* when we believe in Him and receive the gift of eternal life (Eph. 2:4–6). ***"Which passes knowledge."*** Paul is speaking here of more mature knowledge. Since the love of Christ is infinite, we will never cease to increase in greater knowledge of it (Eph. 2:7). ***"That you may be filled with all the fullness of God."*** Because *"God is love"* (1 John 4:8, 16), the more we learn, understand, and experience Him, the more we are filled with His love (John 1:16–19; Col. 2:6, 9–10).

3:20 ***"Now to Him who is able."*** This spiritual growth and stability is not our doing. It is the work of God within us as we grow in grace and truth (2 Pet. 3:18). ***"To do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think."*** As we continue steadfastly in spiritual growth, we can experience ways in which God surpasses all our expectations. ***"According to the power that works in us."*** This is the power of the indwelling Spirit combined with the power of God's Word as we learn it (Rom. 16:25–27; 1 Cor. 2:9–10; Col. 1:28–29).

3:21 ***"To Him be glory in the church."*** God the Father is glorified through His work in the Church (vv. 10–12). ***"By Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen"*** Here, we see that ultimately all glory goes to the Father, through the work of Jesus Christ, and that glory will last throughout all the ages of eternity (Eph. 2:7).

<u>The Duty of Practical Christian Living</u> (Chapters 4–6)

In chapters 1–3, Paul revealed the doctrinal side of the *"mystery"* of God's plan (positional truth). The spiritual riches we have in Christ are set forth. He will now address the practical side of how this plan should work out in our lives.

From 4:1 to 6:9, Paul deals with the walk of faith, which is how we are to invest our spiritual wealth into this fallen world. Then, in 6:10–20, he instructs us in the warfare of the believer—how we can live victoriously on this earth.

EPHESIANS CHAPTER 4

This chapter explains how we are to *"walk worthy"* of the Lord. Paul uses the metaphor of walking to illustrate our lifestyle. We walk worthy by maintaining unity (vv. 1–6), growing in maturity and service (vv. 7–16), and in the sanctification of the Holy Spirit (vv. 17–32).

Walking in Unity

Ephesians 4:1–6

4:1 ***"The prisoner of the Lord."*** Paul is paying a price for his faith and service. He wants to remind us that *"all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution"* (2 Tim. 3:12). ***"Walk worthy."*** The Greek word used here means "to balance the scale, to have equal weight." Our practice should reflect our position (chapters 1–3). ***"The calling"*** refers to our identity in Christ, our spiritual vocation. We are to be *"salt"* and *"light"* in this world (Matt. 5:13–16).

4:2 ***"Lowliness and gentleness."*** In the Greek language, these are the very words Jesus used to describe Himself (Matt. 11: 29). They speak of the humility of mind and *"gentleness"*—restraint in dealing with others (Phil. 2:3). ***"Longsuffering, bearing with."*** Again, these words speak of attitude first, of patient endurance while bearing the burdens of others (Rom. 15:1–3, 15–21). The ***"love"*** mentioned here is not natural, but rather supernatural. This is an expression of the *"fruit of the Spirit"* (Gal. 5:22–23; Col. 3:12–16).

4:3 ***"Endeavoring to keep."*** This means "to work hard, to be diligent so as to safeguard something of great value." ***"The unity of the Spirit"*** is that spiritual unity resulting from our union with Christ described in vv. 4–6. Christ cannot be divided (1 Cor. 1:13). ***"The bond of peace."*** The word *"bond"* is from the same root word used in v. 1 for *"prisoner."* Just as Paul was bound by Rome, we are all bound together in Christ. These bonds are to be maintained in *"peace."* There can only be peace in the Body of Christ when there is a unity born out of mutual humility and forbearance. The chief focus of Jesus' high priestly prayer was for unity (John 17).

4:4–6 In these verses, Paul sets forth the seven pillars of spiritual unity. These are not things we produce, but what the Spirit of God has secured for us all by the new birth. ***"One body"*** speaks of the Body of Christ, made up of all who believe in Him (1 Cor. 12:12–27). ***"One Spirit"*** is the Holy Spirit who indwells each of us (John 14:16–17; Rom. 8:9–11). ***"One hope"*** is the hope of eternal life. When the Bible uses *"hope"* in this way, it means "confidence, assurance, certainty" (1 Cor. 13:13; Eph. 1:18; Titus 2:13). ***"One Lord"*** speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ (John 13:13; 14:6). ***"One faith"*** is the shared belief of all who are trusting in Jesus Christ alone for eternal life. He is the only way to the Father (John 14:6). ***"One baptism"*** is the baptism of the Holy Spirit, that unites us with Christ (Eph. 1:13–14; 1 Cor. 12:13). ***"One God and Father of all"*** means that by faith in Christ we enter into the family of God (Mal. 2:10; Gal. 3:26–29). ***"Above all … through all … in you all"*** describes the omnipresence and omnipotence of God. He is all-powerful and ever-present.

Walking in Growth, Maturity, and Service

Ephesians 4:7–16

4:7 ***"To each one of us grace was given."*** This refers to the *"grace"* by which each believer is given both a spiritual gift and the enablement/power to develop and use it (Zech. 4:6; 1 Cor. 12:7, 11). ***"According to the measure of Christ's gift."*** No two believers, even having the same gift, will have the same measure of power or effect. Consider the parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14–30). Spiritual gifts are not natural talents, but abilities received at the moment of salvation (Rom. 12:3–8; 1 Cor. 12:1–14:40; 1 Pet. 4:10–11).

4:8 ***"When He ascended."*** This refers to the ascension of Jesus Christ following the resurrection (Luke 24:50–53; Acts 1:9–11). ***"He led captivity captive."*** At that time, Jesus took the souls of all Old Testament believers from Paradise (Abraham's Bosom) into Heaven with Him (Luke 16:19–31; 23:43). ***"And gave gifts to men."*** Note that in Psalm 68:18, which Paul refers to here, it says, *"You have received gifts among men."* Paul is quoting from the Septuagint (Greek) version of the Old Testament. Where the Hebrew version sees Christ receiving these gifts for men, the Greek version looks at His giving them to men. The Holy Spirit, who inspired both David and Paul, thus gives us a full picture of how spiritual gifts are provided for the Church. These gifts are a part of the spoils of His victory, which He shares with men (Isa. 53:12; Psalm 110:1–3).

4:9 ***"He … first descended into the lower parts of the earth."*** After His death on the cross, the Lord Jesus went into Sheol/Hades, which had two parts: one called "Torments," and the other called "Paradise/Abraham's Bosom" (Luke 16:22–26). He released the saints from Paradise and took them with Him into Heaven. Paul tells us that Paradise is now in the presence of God (2 Cor. 12:1–4).

4:10 ***"He who descended is also the One who ascended."*** Jesus spoke of this to Nicodemus (John 3:12–15). Christ came down from Heaven to go to the cross for us, then He ascended back to Heaven to serve as our High Priest (Rom. 8:31–39; Hebrews chapters 5, 7–8, 10). ***"That He might fill all things."*** This idea of filling indicates full supply and control, as in the filling of the Spirit (Eph. 5:18; see also Col. 1:19; 2:9–10).

4:11. ***"He Himself gave."*** This stresses that Christ and no other has done this. ***"Apostles … prophets … evangelists … pastors and teachers."*** These are the primary communication gifts for the instruction and edification of the Church. Prior to the completion of the written New Testament Scriptures, apostles and prophets received divine revelation. Now that the written Word is complete, there is no new revelation from God. Evangelists are gifted to win men to faith in Christ. Their strength is in a powerful presentation of the gospel message. I take *"pastors and teachers"* to refer to the same gift. You will note that the same construction is used in Acts 13:1 as *"prophets and teachers,"* where both titles refer to the same five men.

4:12 ***"For the equipping of the saints."*** The purpose of communication and teaching gifts is to bring the members of the Church to spiritual maturity (Heb. 5:14–6:1; 2 Pet. 3:18). ***"For the work of ministry."*** Each member of the Body of Christ has a ministry to fulfill (2 Cor. 5:18–20). This can not be achieved without spiritual growth and maturity. ***"For the edifying of the body of Christ."*** Spiritual gifts are not for personal gain, but for the strengthening of fellow believers (1 Cor. 14:12, 19).

4:13 ***"Till we all come to the unity of the faith."*** There are three forms of *"unity"* spoken of in this chapter. First, there is our spiritual unity in Christ (vv. 4–6). Jesus Christ has already secured this unity. Second, there is *"unity of the faith"* (v. 13). This is speaking about spiritual maturity in our understanding of God's Word and comes only through growth. Finally, there is functional or operational unity (vv. 15–16), which is the Body of Christ building itself up as each member ministers their gift effectively. Paul illustrates this process by three terms: ***"knowledge of the Son of God"*** refers to the learning of sound doctrine; ***"a perfect man"*** simply means spiritual maturity; and ***"the stature of the fullness of Christ,"*** which is a picture of a body able to perform as it is intended to do.

4:14 ***"No longer be children."*** The word used here means little babies. ***"Tossed … and carried"*** pictures instability and insecurity in the face of false teachings. ***"Every wind of doctrine"*** speaks of teachings that change like the wind. False teachers rely on ***"trickery … cunning craftiness"*** and like a prowling beast they **"[lie in wait for]** ***deceitful plotting."*** Spiritual maturity in the Word of God gives discernment (1 Cor. 11:3; Heb. 5:14) to spot and avoid false teachers and their destructive teachings. Immature believers are easily led astray by false teachers.

4:15 ***"Speaking the truth in love."*** The teaching of God's Word, in the love of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22), is set in contrast to false teachers who are motivated by greed and malice to promote their destructive lies. ***"May grow up … into Him."*** Jesus Christ is both the goal and the standard for all spiritual growth. As the Head, He is the Authority and Guide for the Body (Heb. 12:2).

4:16 ***"From whom"*** again emphasizes that all spiritual growth comes from Jesus Christ as the source and supply. ***"Joined and knit together"*** is another picture of unity. ***"By what every joint supplies"*** seems to picture the provision of the teaching gifts. Using the supply from those in teaching positions, individual believers engage in ***"effective working … [doing their] share"*** of ministry, resulting in the edifying, or building up, of the Body ***"in love."*** Every time Paul uses *"love"* he is reminding us that the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22–23; 1 Cor. 13:4–8) is essential.

Walking in Sanctification

Ephesians 4:17–32

This section sets forth the contrast between the carnality of immature believers and the spirituality of those who are growing in grace and truth. Sanctification refers to separation from the world as we "grow in grace and truth" (2 Pet. 3:18).

4:17–19 It is best to see this section as a unit, setting forth seven characteristics of the Gentiles that believers ought to avoid. It is a warning to the carnal believer, who continues to live and act like unsaved men (1 Cor. 3:1–3). It is amazing that there is a faction within Christianity that denies that a true believer can be carnal. The weight of Paul's warnings in all his epistles demolishes this idea. Paul warns that we ***"should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk."*** What a waste this warning is if such a thing is impossible for believers! The ***"futility of their mind"*** refers to the vacuum of the soul not founded on Christ. Without the illumination that comes from the light of the truth, the ***"understanding*** **[becomes]** ***darkened."*** This process also occurs in the soul of a believer who rejects sound biblical teaching. That even believers may become ***"alienated from the life of God"*** is proved by Paul in Galatians 5:1–4. When believers *"grieve the Holy Spirit"* (v. 30), His work in their lives is hindered. ***"Because of… ignorance."*** This refers to ignorance of the Word of God. ***"Because of the blindness*** **[hardening]** ***of their heart."*** That the hardening of the heart is a danger to believers is seen in many passages (Mark 6:52; 8:17; 16:14; Heb. 3:8, 12–13, 15; 4:7). ***"Being past feeling"*** speaks of spiritual insensitivity to the Word, and the ways, of God. ***"Have given themselves over"*** actually means to betray oneself. If a believer turns from the path of growing up in Christ, even his end result is ***"lewdness*** **[licentiousness]** ***… uncleanness … with greediness."*** This refers to the insatiable pursuit of self-gratification of an empty soul (Jer. 2:13). Either we will live for Jesus Christ, or we will live for self-satisfaction. Paul gives us examples of believers whose lives ended in this way (1 Tim. 1:19–20; 2 Tim. 4:10). None of this means the loss of salvation, but rather it reveals that backsliding or reversionism is a danger to those who do not go on to maturity (Heb. 5:11–14; 6:1). This gradual spiritual decline in the life of the carnal believer is described also in the five warning sections of the book of Hebrews (Heb. 2:1–4; 3:7–4:13; 5:11–6:12; 10:26–39; 12:25–29).

4:20 ***"You have not so learned Christ."*** The worldview of the believer is to be shaped by Jesus Christ (John 6:45). We who believe are called by Jesus to *"learn from Me"* (Matt. 11:29). We learn from Him through His Word. The word translated *"learn"* is from the same root word as that translated "disciple" in other passages. A disciple is both a learner and follower.

4:21 ***"If indeed you have heard Him."*** This could be translated, *"*[Since] *... you have heard Him"* (Eph. 1:13–14). Paul had no doubt about their salvation. ***"And … been taught … as the truth is in Jesus."*** Paul will now review what he had previously taught these Ephesians during his stay with them (Acts 19:1, 8–10; 20:17–31).

4:22–24 These verses show the opposite of the downward spiral of vv. 17–19. The upward path of growth is followed as we ***"put off … your former conduct."*** This sinful conduct (vv. 17–19) is the fruit of ***"the old man,"*** referring to the domination of the sinful nature (Rom. 6:11–14). ***"Which grows corrupt"*** shows that not only can the sin nature not improve, but it also actually progresses from bad to worse. ***"Be renewed in the spirit of your mind."*** This renewal can come only by submitting to the Spirit of God and learning His Word (Rom. 12:1–2). ***"Put on the new man."*** The phrases *"put off ... put on"* picture the removal of a soiled and dirty garment, and the putting on of clean clothing. When we daily confess our sins (1 Cor. 11:27–31; 1 John 1:9), we receive cleansing and restoration to fellowship so that we can *"walk in the light as He is in the light"* (1 John 1:7). ***"Created … in true righteousness and holiness."*** The "new creature" of Christ within the

believer (2 Cor. 5:17) reflects the nature of Jesus Christ. The new man is *"holy and without blemish"* (Eph. 5:26–27).

4:25 In vv. 25–32, Paul shows us how to put off the old ways and put on the character and conduct of Christ. ***"Putting away lying … 'speak truth.'"*** (Zech. 8:16) Believers learn, within the protection of the local church, how we are to conduct ourselves in the world. Both the teaching of God's Word and the interaction with ***"members of one another,"*** our fellow believers, we learn—like children in a family—how we are to conduct ourselves.

4:26 ***"Be angry … do not sin."*** Only godly anger against sin can prevent us from engaging in it (Psalm 4:4; 37:8). ***"Do not let the sun go down on your wrath."*** This can have two meanings: If your anger is righteous indignation against sin, then deal with the sin and be done with it. But if others provoke your anger, do not allow it to fester. Anger prolonged leads to the poison of bitterness (Heb. 12:15; 1 Pet. 2:1–3).

4:27 ***"Nor give place to the devil."*** Unrestrained anger in the soul gives the devil a base of operations to work all manner of evil against us.

4:28 ***"Let him who stole steal no longer."*** The best way to "put off" sin and "put on" righteousness is to replace sin with what is good. One who was a thief can ***"labor, working with his hands … that he may … give him who has need."*** Victory over sin is not gained when we just stop sinning. It is gained when we replace sin with spiritual conduct, trusting the Spirit of God to enable us in right conduct (Gal. 5:16; Eph. 5:18). Here, instead of robbing others, the former thief becomes a source of help to others.

4:29 As in the example above, the believer replaces ***"corrupt word*** **[communication]*"*** with a conversation that is ***"good for necessary edification."*** The goal of our conversation should shift from what is destructive to that which builds others up. If we seek to exalt ourselves, we will be divisive. If we magnify Jesus Christ, we will bring harmony. ***"That it may impart grace to the hearers"*** indicates a conversation that is full of God's Word and points to the Lord Jesus Christ. Good conversation builds relationships, where evil communication destroys them (Prov. 16:27–30; James 3:1–12).

4:30 ***"Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God."*** The Spirit of God is grieved by sins in our life, whether they are sins of the mind, of the tongue, or of the body. Rather, we are to submit to the filling and enabling of the Spirit in our lives (Eph. 5:18, 22–23). ***"By whom you were sealed for the day of redemption."*** The sealing ministry of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 1:21–22; Eph. 1:13–14) secures the eternal salvation of every believer. No good that we try to do can secure our salvation, and no sin we commit can threaten it. It is forever secured by the seal of the regenerating and indwelling Spirit.

4:31–32 ***"Let all bitterness … be put away … and be kind … tenderhearted."*** With these words, Paul summarizes the thought begun in vv. 22–24 with the words *"put off ... put on."* The departure from sinful conduct must be balanced by Christ-like living. ***"Forgiving … even as God in Christ also forgave you."*** All conflict and division within the Body of Christ would be resolved if we would treat others as God has treated us. He has done this for Christ's sake, based on His sacrifice. We ought to show our love for Him by treating others in the light of the cross of Christ (Matt. 6:12–15).

EPHESIANS CHAPTER 5

Paul exhorts us to become imitators of God in our Christian walk. This is possible only by being filled by means of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Walking in Love

Ephesians 5:1–7

There are six commands in this section, beginning with the command to become imitators of God.

5:1 ***"Therefore"*** links the following commands to the theme begun in v. 4:1 of *"walking worthy of the* [our] *calling."* ***"Be imitators of God."*** We do this by imitating Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 11:1; 1 John 3:16–18) as He is revealed in the Gospel accounts. ***"As dear children"*** could be translated "as beloved children." Children in a loving family always have a desire to imitate their parents.

5:2 ***"Walk in love"*** is the chief way to imitate God, because *"God is love"* (1 John 4:8, 16; 5:1). Paul says of the Spirit-filled believer, *"the love of Christ compels us"* (2 Cor. 5:14). The fruit of the Spirit is love (Gal. 5:22), but this is divine love, not capable of being produced by man. ***"As Christ also has loved us."*** The sacrificial life and death of Jesus are the standards we are to use as a measure of Christ-conformity (Luke 22:27; John 13:13–15, 34; Rom. 8:29; 1 Thess. 4:9; 1 John 2:6). ***"For a sweet-smelling aroma."*** The self-sacrifice of Jesus Christ on our behalf was an acceptable sacrifice to God (Lev. 1:7–9; 2:9), just as our lives are to be (Rom. 12:1–2; 2 Cor. 2:14–15; Phil. 4:18).

5:3 ***"Let it not even be named … as is fitting for saints."*** The word *"saint"* means "a set-apart one, one who is set apart to God." From the moment we believe in Jesus Christ, we are *"called to be saints"* (1 Cor. 1:2). The words "to be" are not in the original text. God calls us *"saints,"* because we are "set apart" to Him in Christ. Here, Paul exhorts that our positional sanctification in Christ (1 Cor. 6:11) now must become active sanctification/separation (1 Thess. 4:3–7; 5:23). By using both the outward sin of ***"fornication*** **[sexual immorality]*"*** and the inward sin of ***"covetousness,"*** Paul reminds us that all active sins begin in the mind/heart (Prov. 4:23; Matt. 12:34; Luke 6:45; Rom. 14:23b).

5:4 ***"Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting … but rather giving of thanks."*** Having dealt with sins of the mind and of the body in v. 3, Paul now deals with sins of the tongue (James 3:1–12). The believers' speech ought to be filled with grace and truth so as to lead nonbelievers to Christ and to edify those who are children of God (Prov. 10:21; Col. 4:6; 1 Pet. 3:15).

5:5 ***"For this you know … has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God."*** This verse has caused many Christians struggling with sin to doubt their salvation. It must be pointed out that every believer is a *"new creation"* (2 Cor. 5:17), and is no longer counted among those who are lost, but is now a saint (1 Cor. 6:9–11). Sin in the believer's life is disciplined as in a father/child relationship (1 Cor. 11:31–32; Heb. 12:3–11). Jesus Christ paid for all our sins: past, present, and future. Unbelievers have no inheritance in God's eternal kingdom (Gal. 19–21), but every believer has a secure and assured inheritance (Rom. 8:16–17; Gal. 3:26–29; 1 Pet. 1:3–5).

5:6 ***"The wrath of God comes on the sons of disobedience."*** The *"sons of disobedience"* represent unbelievers (Eph. 2:2). However, when believers live like unbelievers, they share the same consequences of those sins (2 Sam. 12:7–15; 1 Cor. 3:3; Heb. 10:29–31; 12:3–11, 25–29).

5:7 ***"Therefore do not be partakers with them."*** This verse makes it clear that Paul is talking about unsaved people, and he does not want believers to become *"partakers"* in their sins, as well as partakers in the judgment of those sins. By exercising self-judgment, which includes not only confession but correction, the believer can avoid partaking in that judgment (1 Cor. 11:28, 31) In addition, God judges His own people first (Deut. 32:36; Heb. 10:26–31; 1 Pet. 4:17). This also includes the Judgment Seat of Christ, where every believer will be judged regarding faithful service, and receive or lose rewards accordingly (Rom. 14:10–12; 1 Cor. 3:11–15; 2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 3:11).

Walking in the Light
Ephesians 5:8–14

5:8 ***"For you were once darkness."*** At the moment we believe in Jesus, we are transported into the kingdom of Christ (John 3:19; Col. 1:12–13; 2:13–15). Now we ***"are light in the Lord"*** (Matt. 5:14–16). Therefore, we are to *"walk in the light"* of God's Word (Psa. 119:105, 130; Isa. 2:5; John 8:12; 12:35–36; 1 John 1:7).

5:9–10 ***"The fruit of the Spirit."*** The indwelling Spirit reproduces the character of Christ in us (Rom. 5:3–5; 8:29; Gal. 5:22–23). ***"Goodness, righteousness, and truth."*** These qualities define what Paul means by *"light"* in vv. 8 and 14. ***"Finding out what is acceptable to the Lord."*** Obedience in our lives is what pleases God and proves the perfection of His will (John 14:21; Rom. 12:1–2; 1 Thess. 4:3).

5:11 ***"Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness."*** There is no common ground between light and darkness (2 Cor. 6:14–18). *"Fellowship"* involves participating with unbelievers and in the sinful activities mentioned in vv. 3–5. The unsaved world is under the control of the powers of darkness (Eph. 6:12). As children of light, our task is to ***"expose them."*** The word *"expose"* can also mean "to reprove or rebuke."

5:12 ***"Things which are done by them in secret"*** should not even be topics of our conversation. What men try to hide in secret, God will expose and judge (Luke 8:17; 1 Cor. 4:5).

5:13 ***"But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light."*** Light reveals the true nature of things. When the *"light"* of God's Word shines on the activities of unsaved men, the evil motives behind them are revealed. While sin seeks to conceal, the light exposes. Be the light! Living in the light gives us freedom from fear and shame (Gen. 2:25; 3:7–10 cf. 1 John 1:7)

5:14 ***"Awake … arise from the dead."*** Paul imitates the prophet Isaiah (Isa. 26:19; 60:1) in calling the people of God to awaken to the light of God's Word and come out of the "sleep" of carnality (Rom. 13:11; 1 Cor. 3:3; 1 John 1:6). Christians are not to *"sleep"* (1 Thess. 5:4–7), like the disciples in the Garden (Matt. 26:40, 43, 45), but to be alert and active. It should be pointed out here, in regard to the reference in 1 Thessalonians 5:4–7, that a different Greek word is used for *"sleep"* than in 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18. In the earlier passage, *"sleep"* speaks of the rest of the believers' body in the grave. In the second passage, the word used is a negative term used for those who are unaware or unconscious of what is going on around them.

Walking in Wisdom
Ephesians 5:15–21

5:15 ***"Walk circumspectly."*** These words mean to "exercise caution and vigilance" in daily life. ***"Not as fools but as wise."*** Wisdom walks with caution and good judgment. The whole book of Proverbs is about the contrast between the wise man and the fool (Prov. 14:15–16).

5:16 ***"Redeeming the time."*** Every moment that we live in the Spirit and by faith is an investment in eternity. ***"The days are evil."*** The light of a faithful believer's life may win others out of the grip of Satan (Col. 4:5). Time is our most precious possession. Every moment passes and will never come again. We should use every minute for eternity!

5:17 ***"Understand what the will of the Lord is."*** True wisdom is not the accumulation of knowledge. It is to simply know and do the *"will"* of the heavenly Father. Wisdom seeks to know the will of God, by Bible study and prayer, and to obey His will moment by moment.

5:18 ***"And do not be drunk … but be filled with the Spirit."*** Where drunkenness dulls the senses and diminishes ability, the filling of the Spirit quickens our senses and empowers our actions. Drunkenness is "being under the influence" of alcohol, with the parallel "being under the Spirit's influence." The first step to being filled is to empty ourselves of self-will (Luke 9:23), then to be filled with the Word of God (Col. 3:16). Sin breaks our fellowship with God, and therefore must be confessed and cleansed (1 John 1:9), so that we may again walk in the light of His Word (1 John 1:7; 2:6). Another description of the filling of the Spirit is to abide in Christ (John 15:1–10).

5:19 ***"Speaking to one another … giving thanks … to God the Father."*** Evidence of the Spirit-filled life includes inner joy, the desire to edify others, and gratitude to God in all things (1 Thess. 5:16–20).

Walking in Relation to Others
Ephesians 5:21–6:9

5:21 ***"Submitting to one another."*** This is an expression of Christian humility (Phil. 2:1–8). ***"In the fear of God."*** Our reverence for God ought to be evident in our love for fellow believers.

5:22 ***"Wives, submit to your own husbands."*** Just as Christ submits to the Father (1 Cor. 11:1–3) so wives should to their husbands. Submission is not subjugation. Submission in all areas of life demonstrates the recognition that God has established both authority and order in life. ***"As to the Lord."*** A wife can recognize that this is her God-given role in life (Col. 3:18, 23).

5:23 ***"For the husband is head … as also Christ is head … and He is the Savior of the body."*** Headship means authority for leadership, protection, and provision. Jesus Christ is Head of the Church, and in that role, He sacrificed Himself for us (Phil. 2:5–9). So, husbands are to show their headship, not just in leadership, but in self-sacrifice.

5:24 ***"Just as the church is subject … so let wives be."*** Marriage is to be a living picture of the relationship between Christ and the Church. All marriage problems result first from failure in our relationship to Christ. The refusal of the husband to submit to the Lord (1 Cor. 11:3), or of the wife to her husband, or of children to their parents, all results in a breakdown of the divine order. Without authority, there is only anarchy and chaos.

5:25 ***"Husbands, love … as Christ also loved the church."*** The husband is to imitate the love of Christ, which is self-denying and sacrificial (Luke 9:23; Col. 3:19; Titus 2:14; 1 Pet. 2:21; 3:7, 18; 4:1).

5:26 ***"That He might sanctify … with the washing of water by the word."*** God's Word is the instrument by which the sacrifice of Christ is made effective in us (Rom. 10:17; Heb. 4:12–13). Even so, Christian husbands ought to be the Word-bearer, in both tongue and deed, to their wives and families. Their authority is not to rule over, so much as to lead in spiritual growth (1 Pet. 2:2; 2 Pet. 1:5–7; 3:18).

5:27 ***"That He might present*** **[the church]** ***to Himself."*** Jesus Christ purifies and blesses the Church, as a gift to Himself. So, the husband ought to bless and edify the wife as a gift to himself. The man who carefully tends the garden of his home and family is the rich recipient of his labors.

5:28 ***"So husbands ought to love."*** Before a husband can love his wife *"as Christ loves the Church,"* he must first learn to love her as his own body. Just as he protects, cares for, and nourishes his own body, so he ought to do toward his wife. ***"He who loves his wife loves himself."*** This is because in marriage, husband and wife become *"one flesh"* (Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:5–6). Just as one who takes care of his body reaps the rewards of good health, so the husband who loves his wife will be richly rewarded with God's blessings on his marriage and home. A joyful and loving home is worth more than all the world's wealth!

5:29 ***"Nourishes and cherishes."*** Just as we protect, feed, and care for the body, so we should do in marriage. The word *"nourishes"* is used again in v. 6:4, translated "nurture" or *"training,"* and speaks of tender care in training. The word *"cherishes"* is used in 1 Thessalonians 2:7 to picture the loving care of *"a nursing mother."*

5:30 ***"For we are members of His body."*** Our spiritual union with Christ through faith explains and illustrates His care for us. On Earth, the Church is the Body of Christ, being prepared for our eternal role as the Bride of Christ (Rev. 21:1–2, 9–10). ***"Of His flesh and … bones."*** Paul uses this term instead of "flesh and blood" because *"flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God"* (1 Cor. 15:50). The resurrection body of Christ is made up of flesh and bones (Luke 24:39).

5:31 ***"For this reason … the two shall become one flesh."*** This quote from Genesis 2:24 (see v. 28) reveals that physical union is a picture of our spiritual union with Christ. Many say there will be no marriage in Heaven, based on Matthew 22:30. However, actually, Heaven is an eternal marriage between Christ and His Bride—the Church.

5:32 ***"This is a great mystery."*** Remember from Ephesians 3:1–7 that *"mystery"* means a spiritual truth never before revealed. Nowhere in the Old Testament is the union of Christ and the Church anticipated. In Scripture, "mystery" is new truth revealed in and through Christ. ***"I speak concerning Christ and the church."*** The marriage union is not the mystery, but rather how it portrays the union of *"Christ and the Church."*

5:33 ***"Let each one of you in particular so love his own wife."*** Note here the exclusiveness of marriage, found in the words *"each one ... in particular ... his own."* Just as the first great commandment leads to a fuller understanding of the second (Matt. 22:37–40), so it works in marriage. The more we learn to receive the love of God, and to love our Lord, the more we can love wives, children, and others. All spiritual love is produced by the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18; Gal. 5:22–23)

EPHESIANS CHAPTER 6

This chapter division really comes at a bad place, interrupting the flow of Paul's thought. We resume with his instruction on how we are to relate to others as an expression of our faith.

Walking in Relation to Others (Continued)
Ephesians 6:1–9

6:1–3 ***"Children, obey your parents in the Lord."*** All children are to obey their parents because God has given authority to parents over their children. However, children are not bound to obey parents who command them to do sinful things. The same is true of citizens to rulers (Rom. 13:1–8), and of wives to husbands (Eph. 5:22). These commands come down from the seventh commandment (Exod. 20:12; Deut. 5:16). ***"'That it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.'"*** Obedience to parents is obedience to God, and both may lead toward blessing and a long life (Deut. 5:16; 32:47; 1 King 3:14; Prov. 10:27).

6:4 ***"Fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath."*** We provoke our children when we tell them to do one thing, while we do another (hypocrisy). It is also a provocation if we constantly point out their failures, but never commend their achievements. This is discouraging to children (Col. 3:21). ***"Bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord."*** The word *"training"* means to "nurture and to nourish" (1 Thess. 2:7). *"Admonition"* means to "verbally instruct" them. If we bring them up in the admonition of the Lord, they will see His grace and mercy revealed within the truth of His Word.

6:5–6 ***"Servants, be obedient."*** God has placed authority over every area of life. There is no one, no matter how high their social or political or military position, who is not under some kind of authority. Overall earthly authority is the authority of God Himself. Servants should obey their earthly masters, as good servants of Jesus Christ. ***"With fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart."*** The word *"sincerity"* means "simplicity and single-mindedness." The Greek word *haplotes*, means "single- hearted devotion," translated *"simplicity"* in the KJV (Rom. 12:8; 2 Cor. 1:12; 11:3) *"Fear and trembling"* speak not only of a genuine desire to please one's master (or boss), but to be able to give a good account to the Lord of their service. ***"Doing the will of God from the heart."*** The desire to please God affects every believer, no matter their station in life (Eph. 5:17; Col. 3:22–23). Knowing that God is always watching, we ought to serve—as a slave or employee—so as to please God and do His will.

6:7 ***"With goodwill doing service, as to the Lord."*** Everything we do should be an offering that is acceptable to the Lord (Rom.12:1–2; 2 Cor. 10:5). The love of God and the desire to please Him should affect both how we exercise legitimate authority and how we obey those in authority over us (see the first great commandment in Matt. 22:37–38; 2 Cor. 5:14).

6:8 ***"Whatever good one does, he will receive the same from the Lord."*** God is no respecter of persons (Rom. 2:11; 10:12). No matter what our station in life is, our lives will be evaluated, and our good works rewarded, if we offer our lives as a living sacrifice (Rom. 12:1–2; 14:10–12; 1 Cor. 3:10–15; 2 Cor. 5:10; Col. 3:23–25).

6:9 ***"Masters, do the same things to them."*** Those in positions of power and authority ought to keep in mind that we all will stand before the Lord at the Judgment Seat of Christ (Bema Seat) (2 Cor 5:10) to give an account of how we live (Matt. 12:36). The second great commandment (Matt. 22:39) applies in all areas of life (Rom. 13:8–10).

If we truly learn to become imitators of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 11:1; Eph. 5:1), our lives will be marked by grace, truth, and love (John 1:14; Rom. 8:29; 1 John 2:5–6; 4:17).

The Warfare of the Believer
Ephesians 6:10–20

6:10 ***"Be strong in the Lord."*** This command literally means to receive strength from God. The provision of God's strength is available to every believer. This power comes from understanding our position in Christ (Neh. 8:10; Eph. 1:13–14; 2:4–8). We receive it by learning His Word (Eph. 1:17–23) and by relying on His Spirit (Eph. 3:14–21). ***"In the power of His might."*** Before we can be strong, we must understand our own weaknesses (1 Cor. 1:26–31; 2 Cor. 12:9–10). We can only be strong by faith as we rely on His power (1 John 4:4; 5:4).

6:11 ***"Put on the whole armor of God."*** Paul outlines this *"armor"* in vv. 14–18. We are to *"put on"* the full armor, just as we are to *"put on the new man"* (Eph. 4:24; see Rom. 13:11–14). ***"That you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."*** Only the armor of faith enables us to withstand the lies, schemes, and strategies of the devil (2 Cor. 6:7; 1 Pet. 5:8).

6:12 ***"For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood."*** The spiritual battle involves spiritual enemies and requires spiritual armor and weapons. The word *"wrestle"* speaks of hand-to-hand combat. ***"Principalities … power … rulers … spiritual hosts of wickedness."*** This list shows that Satan has a hierarchy of fallen angels that are well organized and formidable (Rom. 8:38; Rev. 12:7). We fight not against men, but against a hierarchy of demonic powers under Satan's control.

6:13 ***"Take up the full armor of God."*** We must choose daily to put on our spiritual armor. We should face each day like a soldier going into battle. ***"That you may be able to withstand in the evil day."*** This can be any time of temptation, discouragement, or other attacks. Paul assures us here that we can *"withstand"* and *"stand"* in these times.

> **Note:** There is a logical progression of postures in the book of Ephesians. First, we must learn what it means to be **seated** with Christ (Eph. 2:6; Col. 3:1–4). Then, by spiritual growth, we learn to **walk** by faith (2 Cor. 5:7; Eph. 4:1–3; 5:2, 8; Col. 2:6; 2 Pet. 3:9). Finally, we grow to maturity (Heb. 5:14; Jude 3), where we are able to **stand** against the devil and his forces. We must not only follow this progression, but also the order of "putting on the armor."

While we tend to focus our attention on the various items of armor (belt, breastplate, sandals, etc.) it is far more beneficial for us to focus on the spiritual provisions (truth, righteousness, Gospel, faith, salvation, Word of God, prayer). These are God's perfect and complete armor for us to win victory in the spiritual life.

6:14 ***"Stand therefore."*** We always win when we *"stand"* firm in the victory of Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:31–39). ***"Having girded your waist with truth."*** The "belt of truth" speaks of consistent Bible study. The heavy, leather belt was the first thing a Roman soldier put on, as everything else connected to it. ***"The breastplate of righteousness."*** The *"breastplate of righteousness"* is the righteousness of Christ given to all who believe (Isa. 11:5; 59:17; Rom. 4:3, 5; 1 Cor. 1:30; 2 Cor. 5:21). We are to live out that righteousness by faith (Phil. 2:12–13; 3:9).

6:15 ***"Having shod your feet."*** The heavy, Roman combat sandal made progress possible and gave stability in combat, like our modern combat boots. ***"The preparation of the gospel of peace."*** When we study God's Word and live in obedience to it, we will be prepared to testify to the truth of the gospel message (1 Pet. 3:15). The "gospel sandals" pictured here remind us that discipleship involves "going" (Matt. 28:18–20). God's kingdom advances by proclaiming peace with God through faith in Jesus Christ (Isa. 52:7; Rom. 5:1: Eph. 2:14–17).

6:16 ***"Above all, taking the shield of faith."*** The *"shield of faith"* speaks of the ability to counter Satan's attacks with the Word of God, just as Jesus did (Matt. 4:1–11; Luke 4:1–12). ***"The fiery darts of the wicked one."*** The *"fiery darts"* seem to refer to especially painful attacks of the enemy. Only faith can overcome the devil's attacks of doubt, fear, and shame (Rom. 8:31–39; 1 John 5:4–5; Rev. 12:11).

6:17 ***"The helmet of salvation."*** Just as the Roman soldier's helmet protected his head, so our assurance of eternal salvation protects our soul (1 Thess. 5:8). Those who wrongly fear that they can lose their salvation are easy prey for the enemy. ***"The sword of the Spirit … the word of God."*** Because the Romans tended to be small men, between 5 feet 3 inches and 5 feet 8 inches tall, they developed the Roman short sword, called a *machaira*. It traditionally measured the length of the arm from elbow to fingertip. It was easily handled and effective for both defense and offense (Jude 3). The *"sword"* is familiarity with and the ability to apply the *"Word of God"* (Heb. 4:12).

6:18 ***"Praying always."*** Prayer is to the believer what communication is to a soldier on the battlefield. We pray ***"in the Spirit"*** only when we are *"filled with the Spirit"* (Eph. 5:18). Prayer should be a moment-by-moment conversation with God (1 Thess. 5:17–18). Paul tells us our prayer life should be 1) constant, 2) vigilant, 3) persistent, and 4) inclusive of others (Matt. 9:38; Luke 22:40; 1 Tim. 2:1–8; Heb. 4:16; 10:19). It is by an effective prayer life that the Christian soldier is enabled to use his armor and weapons.

6:19 ***"And for me … to make known the mystery of the gospel."*** Paul requests their prayers, knowing that though he is an apostle, he is dependent on their prayer support. He requests that they pray for his boldness and clarity in making the *"mystery"* (Eph. 1:9–14; 3:1–12) of newly revealed truth clear to those to whom he preaches.

6:20 ***"I am an ambassador in chains."*** Though he is a prisoner *"in chains,"* Paul is still an *"ambassador"* of Christ. Each of us shares in this ministry, whatever our position in life may be (2 Cor. 5:18–21). Conditions or changing situations do not change our calling as *"ambassadors for Christ."* ***"That … I may speak boldly."*** Twice (vv. 19–20), Paul stresses the importance of boldness in presenting the Gospel. A reluctant or hesitant witness will not be very effective!

Final Instructions and Farewell

Ephesians 6:21–24

6:21 ***"But that you also may know my affairs."*** Paul is sending Tychicus as a messenger to them. (Acts 20:4; Col. 4:7). He was a trusted companion and faithful servant of God (Num. 12:7; 1 Cor. 4:2; Heb. 3:2–5).

6:22 ***"Whom I have sent to you … that he may comfort your hearts."*** Tychicus would inform them of Paul's situation and bring comfort from the Word of God to them (Col. 4:7–8).

6:23–24 ***"From God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."*** Paul ends the letter as he began it (Eph. 1:2), with a message sent to them from the heavenly "Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ." It is the expressed desire of our Father that we enjoy His ***"peace … and love"*** through His ***"grace"*** which is received through ***"faith."*** A special word of *"grace"* is given to those who ***"love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity."*** How we choose to respond to the teaching of this epistle will determine whether we are included in this faithful group. The word ***"Amen"*** is a word of affirmation ("I believe it"), or of approval ("Let it be so"). It is the desire of the Apostle Paul, as he closes this letter, that all who read it should be among those who genuinely love and serve the Lord Jesus. May we be among them. Amen!

CONCLUSION

What a treasure the book of Ephesians is! In it, Paul reaches the greatest heights of doctrinal insights regarding both our position in Christ, and the riches of grace we have in Him. But Paul does not leave us here with only an expanded understanding of God's gracious provisions in Christ. He goes on to show the practical use of these spiritual riches in a life that is constantly growing and bearing fruit so as to be a blessing to those around us. This little epistle, carefully studied and confidently applied, will have a transforming effect on all who diligently apply themselves to understanding and living out its precepts.

What treasures are ours because of the sacrifice and victory of our glorious Savior!