



**THE
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General Editor



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The EPISTLE of PAUL the APOSTLE to the

Ephesians

TITLE AND AUTHOR

The title of the book comes from the salutation (1:1). The author is Paul, as evidenced by the letter itself (1:1; 3:1). Themes and language common in Paul's earlier letters appear frequently in Ephesians, and the verbal similarities with Colossians are especially striking. However, modern scholarship has challenged both the traditional view on the authorship and recipients of this letter.

In the modern era, Pauline authorship of Ephesians has been questioned. Some scholars say Ephesians appears to be too dependent on Colossians. Although the letter seems like Paul's writing, its phrases tend to build and multiply more than in his earlier letters. The letter strikes some as less instructional and more prayerful. Ideas that are only implicit in his earlier letters (e.g., that beyond local churches there is one worldwide church) become explicit here. The author describes "hearing" of his readers' faith rather than having witnessed its evidence in person, although Paul had ministered for several years in Ephesus (cf. Gal. 4:13, 14; Col. 1:9; 2:1). Such considerations lead many to say that Ephesians was written by one of Paul's students who was attempting to develop some of Paul's ideas, especially those in Colossians.

The language and style of Ephesians differ in some respects from Paul's other letters. Still, they are so similar to Paul's that even if the letter did not bear his name, it is difficult to imagine the church crediting it to anyone else. Furthermore, it seems unlikely that a student of Paul would be so eager to imitate his teacher that he would transcribe verses from Colossians word for word, and yet be so daring as to move dramatically beyond Paul's theology of the exalted and reigning Christ to one of a universal church.

The verbal similarities with Colossians are most easily explained by assuming that Paul wrote Ephesians shortly after completing Colossians. Paul's devotional and prayerful tone reaches its height as he contemplates the eternal and universal significance of Christ's church. In this way, he continues his reflections on the subject that dominated his correspondence with the Colossians—the eternal and universal significance of Christ. Because some early manuscripts lack "in Ephesus" at 1:1 (see Date and Occasion below and ESV text note on 1:1), some have proposed that this epistle was a circular letter addressed not only to Ephesus but also to other churches in Asia (cf. 1 Pet. 1:1; Rev. 1:4, 11). This wider audience could explain not only Paul's mention of "hearing" of his readers' faith but also the fact that his tone is more meditative and less directed to specific local crises.

DATE AND OCCASION

The identity of the letter's original audience has also been questioned. This letter may have had a broader audience than the church at Ephesus alone. Some of the oldest Gk. manuscripts do not include "in Ephesus" in the address of the letter (1:1), reading instead: "to the saints who are also faithful in Christ Jesus." Several early Christian writers seem unaware of a specifically Ephesian address. The letter lacks the personal references and greetings Paul almost always included in his correspondence, and there are other details about which Paul writes that seem to conflict with what we know about his ministry in Ephesus (e.g., 3:1–13).

At the same time, no manuscripts name any other city as the address of the epistle. Many scholars believe Ephesians was written as a general letter to a number of churches in the region, which would be in keeping with the sweeping contents of the letter as a whole. It is possible that Paul originally sent the letter to Ephesus, but as the letter was sent from church to church the address was omitted because the contents had little to do with Ephesus in particular. Or, it may be that the letter was originally in two forms, one for the Ephesians that contained "in Ephesus" and one for general circulation that did not.

Questions about to whom Paul wrote this letter also lead to questions about when he wrote the letter. The imprisonment mentioned in 3:1 and 6:20 is the same as that in Colossians 4:3, 10, 18, and is probably Paul's two-year house arrest in Rome (A.D. 60–62), recounted in Acts 28.

Ephesus was the capital of the Roman province of Asia on the west coast of Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). It lay between the eastern and western halves of the Roman Empire and was among the five most prominent cities in the empire during the first century. During Paul's unusually long stay in Ephesus, it became the center for evangelizing the western part of Asia Minor (Acts 19:10). Paul's affectionate ties with this church are evident in his farewell speech to its elders (Acts 20:16–38).

Ephesus's most prominent civic monument, the temple of the goddess Diana, was one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. The city is described in one inscription as the "nurturer" of

the goddess, and the goddess in turn makes Ephesus the "most glorious" of the Asian cities. People from the area would have appreciated the irony of Paul's words about Christ's nourishing His own body, the church (5:29). They would have appreciated the point of contrast when Paul describes Christ's church as a glorious or radiant bride (5:27). It was also in Ephesus that Paul's preaching of Christ came into dramatic conflict with an important trade dependent on pagan worship (Acts 19:23–41) and that the gospel inspired a great turning away from the occult (Acts 19:17–20). Paul's call to expose the deeds of darkness (5:8–14) and prepare for war against "the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places" (6:12; cf. 1:20, 21; 3:10) would have struck the original readers with special force.

GENRE

Because of its style, some have suggested that the book of Ephesians should be classified as a written sermon or a theological essay. The book, however, generally follows the standard epistolary conventions of the first century (see Introduction to the Epistles). It contains a standard letter opening (1:1, 2), body (1:3–6:20), and conclusion (6:21–24). It should, therefore, be classified as an epistle. As he does in his other epistles, Paul adapts the standard conventions to his own purposes in his letter to the Ephesians. For example, instead of moving immediately from his opening greeting to thanksgiving and prayer as he does elsewhere, he introduces in Ephesians an extended rhapsody (1:3–14) immediately after the greeting and before the thanksgiving. This has resulted in some disagreement concerning whether the body of the text begins with 1:3 or with 2:1. However, because 1:3–3:21 is a coherent unit, it is preferable to identify the beginning of the body of the letter at 1:3.

LITERARY FEATURES

The most striking feature of this book is how it reflects a deeply and thoroughly Pauline approach to thinking about the Christian life. Chapters 1–3 build up the "indicatives," the glorious statements of fact that undergird Christianity. Here Paul lays out the riches that are ours in Christ Jesus through

His work of redemption. Chapters 4–6 then offer the “imperatives,” the commands regarding how we are to live in light of our calling and the riches that are already ours in Christ.

Another important structural feature of this letter is the repetition of the verb “walk.” Believers formerly “walked” in trespasses and sins (2:1) but now have been “created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (2:10). Chapters 4–6, the applicatory section of this epistle, are structured around the Christian’s “walk,” or way of thinking and living. Paul begins this section by urging us to “walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called” (4:1). He later summons us “no longer [to] walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds” (4:17). We are to be “imitators of God, as beloved children. And [to] walk in love” (5:1, 2a). We are to “walk as children of light” (5:8) and “look carefully then how [we] walk, not as unwise but as wise” (5:15). Paul picked up “walking” as a metaphor for one’s pattern of conduct from OT precedents (e.g., Deut. 5:32; 10:12; Ps. 1:1; 119:1).

Although the letter does not frequently quote the OT in a formal manner (see Eph. 4:8), it alludes to it and engages it in other ways. Terms such as “redemption,” “forgiveness,” “adoption,” and “inheritance” evoke specific covenant blessings mentioned in the OT (1:5, 6, 11). Paul invokes such familiar old covenant realities as “circumcision,” “the commonwealth of Israel,” “the covenants of promise,” and “temple” in order to help believers understand the nature and identity of the new covenant people of God (2:11, 12, 21). Furthermore, the phrase “the helmet of salvation” directly picks up terminology from the OT (6:17; cf. Is. 59:17). Other pieces of the “armor of God” allude to weaponry wielded by the Lord, His Messiah, or His messengers in the OT (Ps. 144:1–2; Is. 11:5; 49:2; 52:7). No small part of the literary craft of this epistle is the way in which Paul has seamlessly incorporated OT motifs.

CHARACTERISTICS AND PRIMARY THEMES

One of the key words in this letter is “mystery,” which appears seven times (1:9; 3:3, 4, 6, 9; 5:32;

6:19). The first statement is the most important: Paul tells us that God is now revealing the “mystery of his will,” which is the uniting of all things in heaven and on earth in Christ. The great evidence that this cosmic redemption is happening is the church, the body of Christ, His new humanity (1:23, 2:15). In the church, God is uniting Jew and Gentile, reconciling them and tearing down the “wall of hostility” between them through the cross (2:14). This “mystery of Christ” was hidden in past times (i.e., before the coming of Christ), but is now seen clearly: “the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ through the gospel” (3:6).

That means, then, that the church is central to God’s purpose in the world because it is a sign of the final reconciliation of all things in Christ. The church is God’s precious possession, a colony in which the Lord of history has begun to fashion the renewed humanity after His own image (1:10–14; 2:11–22; 3:6, 9–11; 4:1–6:9). The church is a community where God’s power to reconcile people to Himself is experienced and shared in transformed relationships (2:1–10; 4:1–16; 4:32–5:2; 5:22–6:9). It is a new temple, a building of people, grounded in the sure revelation of what God has done in history (2:19–22; 3:17–19). The church is an organism in which power and authority are exercised after the pattern of Christ (1:22; 5:25–27), and its stewardship is a means of serving Him (4:11–16; 5:22–6:9). The church is an outpost in a dark world (5:3–17), looking for the day of final redemption. Above all, the church is the bride preparing for the approach of her lover and husband (5:22–32).

THEOLOGY OF EPHESIANS

Ephesians is a summary of Paul’s gospel. In ch. 1, Paul reflects on the triune God’s accomplishment of our salvation: God the Father chose His people before the foundation of the world (1:3–6); God the Son accomplished redemption for His people (1:7–10); and God the Spirit applies redemption to us and assures us that the inheritance is ours (1:11–14). Throughout this epistle, Paul reflects on salvation in personal and individual terms (2:1–10), in corporate terms (2:11–22), in cosmic terms (1:9–10; 6:10–20), and in historical terms (3:1–6). Redemption is both individual and cosmic; as such, it has profound implications for the way in

which God's people understand themselves and live together (4:1–5:21). In particular, Paul uses the plural pronouns “we” and “you” (1:12, 13; 2:1–3, 11–22) to emphasize God's dismantling of the dividing wall between Israel (His ancient covenant people) and the Gentiles through the sacrificial death of Christ, by which the two have been made one and given access to God the Father by the Spirit (2:14, 16–18). In summary, this letter impresses upon us how comprehensive and far-reaching the gospel is.

The gospel also transforms the way we conduct ourselves in marriage, in parenting, and in the workplace (5:22–6:9). Paul prefaces these commands regarding our relationships and roles with two significant points: (1) We are to walk in love as Christ loved and as He gave Himself for us in His atoning death and in His active obedience (5:1). (2) We are to submit to one another out of reverence for Christ (5:21). Love and submission then serve as the foundation to our roles as spouses, parents, children, employers, and employees. We are also kept from moralism by remembering the cross and our redemption as that which enables us to live the lives to which Paul calls us in 5:22–6:9.

EPHESIANS IN THE LARGER STORY OF THE BIBLE

In 1:9, 10, Paul tells us that God's purpose, “set forth in Christ,” is “a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in Him, things in heaven and things on earth.” All of history, including the history recorded throughout the OT (4:8, quoting Ps. 68:18), moves toward this goal and destination—the bringing together of all things under the sovereign rule of the crucified and exalted Christ (1:19–22). Christ's mediatorial reign is most visible in the church (1:22; 4:7–14), through whom “the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places . . . according to the eternal purpose that [God] has realized in Christ Jesus” (3:10, 11).

Even so, under the new covenant, “the mystery of Christ” was first made known by the Spirit and through Christ's “holy apostles and prophets” (3:5). This mystery, whose fulfillment was not yet

visible during the era of the OT, was that Jews and Gentiles would be fellow members of the people of God, on equal terms and without distinction (3:6; cf. 2:14, 15). (Although “hidden” in the sense of “not exhibited in history,” the inclusion of the Gentiles by faith in a coming Messiah was also foretold in the OT, as Paul argues elsewhere; cf. Rom. 3:21, 22; 4:1–17; 15:8–12; Gal. 3:5–14.) Christ's universal reign is now on particular display in His church, drawn from all people and nations who stand alongside one another as spiritual equals in Jesus Christ.

CHRIST IN EPHESIANS

This epistle helps us to understand the critical biblical doctrine of union with Christ. The importance of this doctrine is evident from the opening verses of the book. It is “in Christ” that the Father “has blessed us . . . with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places” (1:3) and that in whom He “chose us before the foundation of the world” and “predestined us for adoption” (1:4, 5). It is “in the Beloved” that we have been “blessed” by the Father's “glorious grace,” and in Christ that we have “redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses” (1:6, 7). In Christ “we have obtained an inheritance” (1:11), and “in him . . . you were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit” (1:13).

Furthermore, it was by being united to Jesus Christ in His death and resurrection that we were saved by the grace of God (2:1–10). In Christ, the whole church is “being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit” (2:22) and is the bride of Christ (5:25–33). We are joined to Christ, as the body is to the head, and thus grow into maturity (4:15, 16).

In this letter, Paul particularly emphasizes Christ as raised from the dead as well as our union with Christ in His resurrection. The very same Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead made us alive together with Christ (2:5), presently indwells us (3:16, 17), and is at work in us presently “according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead” (1:19, 20a). Paul's point is plain—in Christ and by the Spirit of the risen Christ, believers have all the resources they need to walk with God in this age.

HISTORY OF INTERPRETATION

Paul's teaching on slavery (6:5–9) has been the occasion of both discussion and controversy, particularly within the last two centuries. For further discussion of this issue, see Introduction to Philemon: History of Interpretation. Ephesians 1:3–14 has played a long and crucial role in the Reformed tradition's understanding of the gospel. This pas-

sage is a concise and at the same time comprehensive statement of the gospel that gives expression to the distinctively Reformed approach to the doctrines of grace. Furthermore, Eph. 2:8–10 is one of the most concise and complete presentations of the doctrine of justification by grace alone through faith alone that can be found in all of Scripture. Ephesians 6:10–20 has often been emphasized in discussions of spiritual warfare.

OUTLINE OF EPHESIANS

I. SALUTATION (1:1, 2)**II. PRAISE TO GOD FOR BLESSINGS IN CHRIST (1:3-14)**

- A. Elected by the Father (1:3-6)
- B. Redeemed by the Son (1:7-10)
- C. Sealed by the Spirit (1:11-14)

III. PRAYER FOR THE CHURCH (1:15-23)**IV. OUR POSITION IN CHRIST (2:1-3:13)**

- A. Reconciled with God and Seated with Christ (2:1-10)
- B. Reconciled with God's People and Growing into God's Temple (2:11-22)
- C. Recipients and Revealers of God's Mystery (3:1-13)

V. PRAYER FOR THE CHURCH AND DOXOLOGY (3:14-21)**VI. OUR WALK IN CHRIST: TOWARD UNITY AND PURITY (4:1-6:9)**

- A. Unity and Diversity (4:1-16)
- B. A New Mind (4:17-24)
- C. A New Walk: In Unity, Love, Purity, Light, and Wisdom (4:25-5:17)
- D. The Filling of the Spirit (5:18-6:9)
 - 1. In worship and submission to one another (5:18-21)
 - 2. Mutual submission in specific relationships (5:22-6:9)
 - a. Husbands and wives (5:22-33)
 - b. Parents and children (6:1-4)
 - c. Masters and slaves (6:5-9)

VII. OUR STAND AGAINST THE SPIRITUAL FORCES OF DARKNESS (6:10-20)

- A. Call to Arms against our Real Enemy (6:10-12)
- B. Our Armor, Weaponry, and Strategy (6:13-20)

VIII. FINAL GREETINGS (6:21-24)

Chapter 1

^{1d}See 2 Cor. 1:1²See 1 Cor. 1:1
^cCol. 1:2²See Rom. 1:7³2 Cor. 1:3; 1 Pet.

1:3/See Rom.

15:6 ³ver. 20; ch.

2:6; 3:10; 6:12

⁴[ch. 2:10;

2 Thess. 2:13;

1 Pet. 1:2]

ⁱJames 2:5;

[Deut. 7:6;

26:18] / [2 Tim.

1:9]; See Matt.

13:35 ^cch.

5:27; Col. 1:22;

1 Thess. 4:7

⁵ver. 11; Rom.8:29, 30 ⁵SeeRom. 8:15 ⁵ver.

9; [Luke 2:14;

Heb. 2:4]; See

Luke 12:32

⁶ver. 12, 14^f[John 3:35;

10:17; Col. 1:13];

See Matt. 3:17

⁷Col. 1:14 ⁷Rom.

3:24; 1 Cor. 1:30;

[ch. 4:30] ⁸SeeActs 20:28 ⁸SeeActs 2:38 ⁸[ch.

3:8, 16; Col. 1:27];

GREETING

1 Paul, ^aan apostle of Christ Jesus ^bby the will of God,
To the saints who are in Ephesus, and ^care faithful ^din Christ Jesus:
^{2d} Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS IN CHRIST

^{3c} Blessed be ^ethe God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing ^fin the heavenly places, ^{4h}even as he ⁱchose us in him ^jbefore the foundation of the world, that we should be ^kholy and blameless before him. In love ⁵he predestined us ²for ^madoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, ^aaccording to the purpose of his will, ^{6o}to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in ⁿthe Beloved. ^{7q}In him we have ^rredemption ^sthrough his blood, ^tthe forgiveness of our trespasses, ^uaccording to the riches of his grace, ⁸which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight ^{9v}making known ³to us the mystery of his will, ^waccording to his purpose, which he ^xset forth in Christ ¹⁰as a plan for ^ythe fullness of time, ^zto unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

¹¹In him we have obtained ^aan inheritance, ^bhaving been predestined ^caccording to the purpose of him who works all things according to ^dthe counsel of his will, ^eso that we who

¹Some manuscripts saints who are also faithful (omitting in Ephesus) ²Or before him in love; having predestined us ³Or he lavished upon us in all wisdom and insight, making known . . .

See Rom. 2:4 ⁹See Rom. 16:25 [See ver. 5 above] ¹⁰[ver. 11; Rom. 8:28; 9:11] ¹⁰See Mark 1:15 ⁹Col. 1:16, 20; [ch. 3:15; Phil. 2:9, 10] ¹¹Deut. 4:20; 32:9; See ver. 14 ⁴ver. 5 ^cch. 3:1; [Rev. 4:11]; See Rom. 8:28 ⁴[Acts 20:27]

1:1 apostle of Christ Jesus. An authorized delegate commissioned and sent by the risen Lord Jesus, with the authority to receive and declare His special revelation. See note on 2 Cor. 1:1.

in Ephesus. Some early manuscripts lack these words, suggesting that this epistle was a circular letter intended to be read by churches in various cities in the province of Asia in addition to Ephesus (cf. Col. 4:16; Rev. 1:4, 11).

1:3–14 The passage, which is one long sentence in Greek, is an expansion on the praise of God's purpose in Rom. 8:28–30. Praise goes to the Father who elects (vv. 4–6), the Son who redeems (vv. 7–12), and the Spirit who seals (vv. 13, 14). Paul reflects on believers' election from eternity, their forgiveness in the present, and their inheritance in the future. Note throughout the repetition of the phrases "in Christ" or "in him," referring to the intimate union God has established between Christ and His people.

1:3 in the heavenly places. Two of the other five instances where this phrase appears in Ephesians have a bearing on its meaning here. Christ was raised from the dead and seated at the right hand of the Father "in the heavenly places," from where He governs "all things to [for the sake of] the church" (v. 22). Moreover, believers have also been raised up and seated with Him "in the heavenly places" (2:6). Christ's victory over death has won believers a series of benefits ("every spiritual blessing") for which Paul blesses the Father.

1:4 he chose us in him. See theological note "Predestination and Reprobation" on p. 1997. Paul rejoices that God chooses people for a relationship with Himself (Rom. 8:29–33; 9:6–26; 11:5, 7, 28; 16:13; Col. 3:12; 1 Thess. 1:4; 2 Thess. 2:13; Titus 1:1). Some suggest that "in him" means God foresaw who would have faith in Christ and on that basis elected them. Not only does this suggestion add a thought that is not in the text, but elsewhere Paul

teaches that the very state of being "in Christ" is something to which one is elected (1 Cor. 1:26–31). Paul says explicitly that the sole ground of God's predestinating love is His own good pleasure (vv. 5, 10; cf. Deut. 7:7, 8), not anything the elect have done or will do (Rom. 9:11, 16). "In him" means that God's choice always has had in view a fallen people in union with their Redeemer (2 Tim. 1:9). Cf. 1 Pet. 1:18–21; Rev. 13:8.

holy and blameless. Cf. 5:27; Col. 1:22. God intends to bring His elect all the way from spiritual death in sin (2:1–5) to the forgiveness of sins in Christ (1:7), and finally to the elimination of all sin from their experience (Rom. 8:29, 30). It is therefore untrue to say that election leads to careless, sinful living (cf. 2:10; 4:1–3, 17–24; 5:25–27).

In love. If "in love" belongs with the preceding phrase, it helps explain the nature of the holiness and blamelessness to which believers are called; this is consistent with the use of the phrase elsewhere in Ephesians (3:17; 4:2, 15, 16; 5:2). If it belongs with v. 5, the phrase explains predestination not simply as a matter of God's decision, but as an act of His love (Hos. 11:1). This understanding is probably better and is consistent with 2:4, 5.

1:5 adoption. See Rom. 8:14–17, 29; Gal. 3:26, 27.

1:6 The thought of God's almighty love leads to an extravagant outpouring of praise (vv. 12, 14) to God, who has not only the power but also the will to overcome all obstacles in bringing the spiritually dead into a living relationship with Himself (expanded in 2:1–10).

grace . . . blessed us in the Beloved. "Beloved" is singular. This recalls the language of Col. 1:13 but also brings into view the Redeemer as Himself an object of God's electing love (1 Pet. 1:18–21; Rev. 13:8) and may echo the Father's words at Jesus' baptism and transfiguration (Matt. 3:17; 17:5). The language of grace dominates vv. 6–8.

1:7 See notes on Col. 1:14; 2:13.

redemption. This means deliverance by paying a price or ransom. In view here is the deliverance from the guilt of sin by the blood of Christ shed at the cross. For the redemption that is yet to come, see v. 11.

1:9 mystery. For Paul, "mystery" is not a conundrum impenetrable to finite human reason, but a truth previously and partially hidden that is now fully revealed through the coming of Christ. See 3:3, 5, 6, 10, and notes; Col. 1:27; Rom. 16:25–27. The use of "mystery" in Paul always has to do in some way with OT prophecies, most of which have begun to be fulfilled during the church age (cf. 3:3, 4, 9; 5:32).

1:10 the fullness of time. This does not refer simply to the future. Christ has already come to bring redemption and adoption (cf. Gal. 4:4, 5, where "fullness of time" refers to the latter days that have begun with Christ's birth and redemptive work).

That Christ is "to unite" all things refers to His managerial or stewarding role in God's economy (translated in ESV as "plan"). This word refers elsewhere in the Greek world to a manager of a household; it is also used this way in Luke 12:42–44. The idea appears to be that the household of the cosmos has become fragmented and in disarray because the household managers allowed this to happen (Adam and his progeny). Christ is a faithful household manager who has come to put the fragmented household back together, especially the splintered relationships in the family of that household.

1:11–14 Paul anticipates what he will say in 3:6 about Jews and Gentiles being "fellow heirs" of the promise in Christ. Believing Jews of Paul's day, "who were the first to hope in Christ" (v. 12), have become heirs by the will of God. Gentiles who have now received the same promise that was made to Israel—the gift of the Holy Spirit—have likewise become heirs, to the praise of God's glory.

were the first to hope in Christ might be ^dto the praise of his glory.¹³ In him you also, when you heard ^ethe word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, ^fwere sealed with the ^gpromised Holy Spirit, ^hwho is ⁱthe guarantee ^jof our ^kinheritance until ^lwe acquire ^mpossession of it, ⁿto the praise of his glory.

THANKSGIVING AND PRAYER

¹⁵For this reason, ^mbecause I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love³ toward all the saints, ¹⁶¹I ²do not cease to give thanks for you, ³remembering you in my prayers, ⁷that ⁴the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, ⁵may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, ⁸having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is ⁹the hope to which he has called you, what are ¹⁰the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, ¹¹and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, ¹²according to the working of ¹³his great might ¹⁴that he worked in Christ ¹⁵when he raised him from the dead and ¹⁶seated him at his right hand ¹⁷in the heavenly places, ¹⁸far above ¹⁹all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above ²⁰every name that is named, not only in ²¹this age but also in the one to come. ²²And ²³he put

¹Or down payment ²Or until God redeems his possession ³Some manuscripts omit your love

²⁰ ²¹See Acts 2:24 ²²See Mark 16:19; Acts 2:33; 1 Pet. 3:22 ²³See ver. 3 ¹2^d ch. 4:10; Col. 2:10; See John 3:31 ⁴1 Cor. 15:24 ⁵ ch. 3:15; Phil. 2:9; [Heb. 1:4] ⁶ [Matt. 12:32] ²² ²³Cited from Ps. 8:6; See 1 Cor. 15:27

¹² ^dver. 6, 14; [Phil. 1:11] ¹³ ^e2 Cor. 6:7; Col. 1:5; 2 Tim. 2:15; [Acts 13:26; 15:7] ^fch. 4:30 ⁵See Acts 1:4 ¹⁴ ^h2 Cor. 1:22 ⁱActs 20:32; [ver. 18] ^jTitus 2:14; See ver. 7 ^kSee 1 Pet. 2:9 ^lver. 6, 12 ¹⁵ ^mCol. 1:4; Philem. 5; See Rom. 1:8 ¹⁶ ⁿCol. 1:9 ¹⁷Rom. 1:9; 2 Tim. 1:3 ¹⁸ ^oSee Rom. 15:6 ¹⁹[Col. 1:9] ²⁰ ^p[Heb. 6:4; 10:32; Rev. 3:17, 18]; See Acts 26:18 ^qch. 4:4; [ch. 2:12] ^rch. 3:8, 16; Col. 1:27; See ver. 7 ²¹ ^sch. 3:7; Phil. 3:21; Col. 1:29; ^t2:12 ^uch. 6:10; [Dan. 4:30]

1:11 all things . . . his will. A sweeping statement on the comprehensive extent of God's will and His sovereign power to enact His entire purpose and plan. Believers have been "predestined" to receive an "inheritance."

1:13 sealed. Like the indelible impression made by a king's signet ring, the Holy Spirit is an inward mark of God's ownership of His people. See theological note "Salvation" on p. 2058.

the promised Holy Spirit. As Jesus says in Luke 24:49, the Holy Spirit is the promise of the Father. Remarkably, this promise is extended to all those who trust in Christ, Gentiles as well as Jews (Ezek. 36:26, 27; Joel 2:28; John 14–16; Acts 1:4, 5; 2:33, 38, 39; Gal. 3:14; 4:6).

1:14 guarantee. The Spirit is not only a fulfillment of God's promise to indwell His people, but also a guarantee that He will bring them to their final inheritance. As a down payment or first installment on their full redemption (2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5), the Spirit is a foretaste of the glory of the age to come (Rom. 8:18–23). This is a prime example that the latter days have begun (the end-time inheritance in the new creation) but are not yet consummated.

possession. Paul's use of the word here can be interpreted in two ways: (1) "Possession" refers to our acquiring the complete inheritance of which the Holy Spirit is guarantee (so ESV). The Old Testament speaks of the Lord as His people's inheritance (Ps. 16:5, 6; Num. 18:20). (2) God's people are His "inheritance," which He will redeem finally and fully in our resurrection (Rom. 8:23). The Old Testament teaches that God chose a people as His inheritance (Deut. 32:9; Ps. 33:12) and purchased them out of bondage to become His prized possession (Ex. 19:5; Deut. 7:6; 14:2; Mal. 3:17). Paul alludes to this theme in v. 18, mentioning God's "glorious inheritance in the saints." Behind the ESV's "we acquire" is the Greek word "redemption," used in v. 7 with reference to God's action in rescuing believers. Thus, the second understanding is more likely (text note).

The goal of the Spirit's sealing work is that it be

"unto the praise of His glory." This is the main point of vv. 3–14, and this phrase is repeated as the goal and main point of the Father's work in vv. 3–6 (cf. v. 6) and of the Son's work in vv. 7–12 (cf. v. 12). Thus, the overriding main point of all of vv. 3–14 is that the work of the Trinity in electing, redeeming, and sealing is to the glory of God. This is why election and predestination are repeated (vv. 3, 4, 11), since God can receive glory for the work of redemption only if that work is all of God. If believers could contribute anything independently to their salvation, then Paul could say that they get a share of the glory, but instead, he says all the glory belongs to God.

1:15 because I have heard. See Introduction: Date and Occasion. Paul had ministered in Ephesus for more than two years, but the time of writing may be as much as five years later. The church had grown considerably since then. It may also be that Paul mentions people who live in the cities where the epistle circulated whose faith and love he knows only by report (v. 1 note).

1:17 wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. See theological note "The Illumination of the Holy Spirit" on p. 2018. Some see Eph. 1:17 as an allusion to Is. 11:2. This Isaiah passage is a prophecy about the coming Messiah's attributes. Accordingly, Christians have this attribute of the Messiah because they are united to Him and are identified with Him (note the repeated "in Christ" or "in Him" in 1:3, 4, 7, 11, 13).

1:18 that you may know. See theological note "Knowledge of Self and Knowledge of God" on p. 1278.

the hope to which he has called you. Paul repeats this theme in 4:4, showing that the unity of believers from diverse backgrounds is central to this hope (cf. 4:13).

his glorious inheritance in the saints. It is amazing that God should so treasure as His inheritance a gathering of people who were once dead in trespasses and objects of His wrath (2:1–3), making His church the venue to display His manifold wis-

dom (3:8–10). This outcome results only from His grace and redounds only to His glory.

1:19–23 These verses distill the New Testament's teaching on the resurrection and enthronement of Jesus (Col. 1:18 note). They also make two vital contributions to understanding Jesus' resurrection and the status of believers. First, the same power that raised Jesus from the dead is at work in believers (2:4, 5; 3:16, 17). Second, Christ enjoys His position as head over everything for the sake of the church. Not only is Christ at the most exalted position in the universe, He is there representing believers (2:6; Col. 3:3) and governing the universe for their sake. The principles of conduct in Ephesians emphasize that authority exists for the sake of service. Jesus' majestic use of power and authority in the interest of His people is the Christian's model (4:1, 2, 7–13; 4:32–5:2, 22–33). Paul reminds his Gentile readers of two specific ways in which Christ's power has blessed them: He brought them from death to life (2:1–10) and from alienation from God's people to inclusion with them (2:11–22). Paul alludes to OT passages cited elsewhere in the NT as fulfilled in Jesus' heavenly enthronement at God's right hand (Ps. 110:1; cf. Mark 12:36; 14:62; Acts 2:34–36; Rom. 8:34; Heb. 1:13) and in the submission of all things under His feet (Ps. 8:6; cf. 1 Cor. 15:25–27; Heb. 2:8, 9).

1:20 seated him . . . in the heavenly places. See theological note "The Ascension of Jesus" on p. 1842.

1:21 above all rule and authority. Ephesus and its environs were a hotbed of occultic arts and strategies for placating and manipulating invisible spiritual powers (Acts 19:11–20). Paul boldly declares that in Jesus' resurrection and ascension, God exalted Him above all unseen forces, and that Jesus wields His supreme dominion for the sake of His church (cf. 3:10 note). "Rule and authority" here focuses on evil powers, as is clear from 6:12 and Col. 2:10 in comparison to 2:15.

this age . . . the one to come. Cf. 1 Cor. 15:24.

²²ch. 4:15; 5:23; Col. 1:18; 2:19; [1 Cor. 11:3; Col. 2:10]

²³/ch. 4:12, 16; 5:30; Col. 1:18, 24; [ch. 5:23; 1 Cor. 12:27] ⁴ch. 3:19; See John 1:16–17; 4:10 [Jer. 23:24; Col. 3:11]

Chapter 2

¹/Col. 2:13; [Col. 1:21] ⁴ver. 5; [ch. 4:18]; See Luke 15:24

²/ch. 4:17, 22; 5:8; Col. 3:7; See Rom. 11:30; 1 Cor. 6:11 [ch. 6:12; Rev. 9:11]; See John 12:31–32; 5:6; [1 Pet. 1:14] ³/Gal. 5:16 [See Ps. 51:5; Rom. 5:12] [2 Pet. 2:14]

⁴ver. 7; Titus 3:5; See Rom. 2:4 ⁵See John 3:16

⁵ver. 1; [Rom. 5:6, 8, 10] ⁶/Col. 2:12, 13; [John 14:19; Rev. 20:4] ⁷ver. 8; See Acts 15:11

all things under his feet and gave him as ^hhead over all things to the church, ²³^fwhich is his body, ^gthe fullness of him ^hwho fills ⁱall in all.

BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH

2 ¹And you were ^kdead in the trespasses and sins ²ⁱin which you once walked, following the course of this world, following ^mthe prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in ⁿthe sons of disobedience—³among whom we all once lived in ^othe passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body ^rand the mind, and ^swere by nature ^qchildren of wrath, like the rest of mankind. ⁴But ^tGod, being ^rrich in mercy, ^sbecause of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵even ^uwhen we were dead in our trespasses, ^smade us alive together with Christ—^vby grace you have been saved—⁶and raised us up with him and ^wseated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable ^xriches of his grace in ^ykindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸For ^zby grace you have been saved ^athrough faith. And this is ^bnot your own doing; ^cit is the gift of God, ⁹^dnot a result of works, ^eso that no one may boast. ¹⁰For ^fwe are his workmanship, ⁹^ecreated in Christ Jesus ^ffor good works, ⁱwhich God prepared beforehand, ^hthat we should walk in them.

ONE IN CHRIST

¹¹Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by what is called ^kthe circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands—¹²remember

¹Greek flesh ²Greek like the rest ³Or And

⁶See ch. 1:20 ⁷ver. 4 ⁸Titus 3:4 ⁹ver. 5 ¹1 Pet. 1:5; [Rom. 4:16] [2 Cor. 3:5] [John 4:10; Heb. 6:4] ⁹²Tim. 1:9; Titus 3:5; See Rom. 3:20, 28 ¹1 Cor. 1:29; [Judg. 7:2] ¹⁰/Deut. 32:6, 15; Ps. 100:3 [ch. 3:9; 4:24; Col. 3:10] ^hch. 4:24 [ch. 1:4] ¹/Col. 1:10 ¹¹/Rom. 2:26, 28; [Col. 2:11, 13]

2:1–3 The natural state of all human beings is spiritual death. This condition is universal: both Gentiles (v. 2) and Jews (v. 3) are “by nature children of wrath” (v. 3; on Paul’s view of “nature,” see Rom. 1). Second, in their natural state, all people are in active rebellion against God; note the use of “walked” in regard to Gentiles in v. 2 and “lived” in reference to Jews in v. 3. Third, they are subject to the evil rule of Satan (called in v. 2 “the prince of the power of the air”; cf. Gal. 4:3; Col. 1:13). Fourth, they are totally unable to cease their rebellion against God (John 3:3). Fifth, they are exposed to the just anger of God (v. 3; 5:6; Rom. 1:18–20).

2:1 you were dead. See theological note “Rebirth” on p. 187.

2:4 But God. Paul paints this bleak portrait of the human situation to throw into relief God’s gracious and merciful response to it.

because of the great love. God loves His people of His own will. Paul excludes any consideration of merit, effort, or ability on the part of those who come to life (cf. Deut. 7:7, 8). The hopeless condition of sinners apart from Christ that Paul has described in vv. 1–3 is the context for understanding his teaching on God’s election in 1:4–6 and on His gift of life here in vv. 4–10. Note the summary in Rom. 8:29, 30.

2:5, 6 made us alive . . . raised us up . . . seated us. These are historical events in the life of Christ: His resurrection from the dead and enthronement at the right hand of God. But Paul also applies them to believers. Paul teaches a union between Christ and those who come to trust in Him (1:3; Col. 3:1–4), so that what is said of the Redeemer can also be said of the redeemed. What once happened to Jesus will one day happen to believers as well (2 Cor. 4:16): they will be resurrected to glory at His return (Rom. 8:11; 1 Cor. 15). For

the present, there is a new mind (4:23, 24; Rom. 12:1, 2), a new identity as God’s children (Rom. 8:14–17), and a new ability to live free from the control of Satan (Rom. 8:1–4; 2 Cor. 5:17). These realities are all part of what it means that the believer is united to Jesus Christ in His resurrection.

2:7 The ground of our salvation is God’s love and mercy, and its goal is the promotion of His grace and kindness (3:6 note).

2:8 you have been saved. Salvation is a completed action that has a present effect. In his earlier letters, Paul speaks of salvation either as a future event (Rom. 5:9, 10) or as a present process (1 Cor. 1:18; 2 Cor. 2:15). One exception is Rom. 8:24, where Paul puts salvation in the past, but qualifies it as needing completion at Christ’s return: “in this hope we were saved.” Because salvation ultimately encompasses several realities—including predestination, regeneration, justification, adoption, sanctification, and glorification—the apostle can speak of it as a past event (predestination, regeneration, justification, adoption), present process (sanctification), and a future reality (glorification). No matter the emphasis in any one passage, all who truly experience one of the aspects of salvation will certainly experience all of them (Rom. 8:28–30). Salvation is a completed action with a present effect because it is accomplished by God and sure to be consummated in all of its fullness. All who have true faith, having been justified, will certainly be glorified.

And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God. This parenthesis most likely refers to the whole complex of salvation by grace through faith as a gift of God. Others, however, take “this” as referring specifically to “faith.” In either case, since faith is included in the whole complex of salvation, faith itself must be understood as a gift of

God and not as a human achievement. Sinners are dependent on Christ’s gracious gift for their believing response to God from the moment of conversion. Paul makes explicit here what is implicit elsewhere in the New Testament about the ultimate source of saving faith (Acts 13:48; Phil. 1:29).

2:9 not a result of works. The spiritual death, dominion by the devil and defiling desires, and liability to divine wrath that characterize both Gentile and Jew apart from the loving and gracious initiative of God in Christ show that salvation is wholly God’s work, received through faith alone, and in no way contingent on the intentions or actions of those whom God saves. The Christian’s utter dependence on divine grace and kindness (v. 7) silences all human boasting (Rom. 3:19–27; 1 Cor. 1:26–31).

2:10 for good works. Only faith, not works, can bring acceptance with God (vv. 8, 9). But good works are the vital and indispensable consequence and evidence of life with God (Titus 2:14; 3:8, 14; James 2:14–26). God chose His elect to make them holy sons and daughters (1:4, 5), and He has now fashioned them to be new bearers of His image (4:24), designed for the kind of life that conforms to God’s character (4:1–6:20). Our good works are the fruit of salvation, not its cause, and those who do not have good works show that they do not have saving faith (cf. Rom. 6; James 2:12–26). Also see theological note “Antinomianism” on p. 227.

that we should walk in them. See 4:1; 5:2, 8, 15; note the ironic contrast to 2:2; 4:17.

2:11 made in the flesh by hands. The opposite of this circumcision is the spiritual circumcision of the heart (Deut. 10:16; Jer. 4:4), applied to Gentiles as well as Jews (Rom. 2:28, 29; Phil. 3:3; Col. 2:11–13).

'that you were at that time separated from Christ,^a alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to^b the covenants of promise,^c having no hope and without God in the world.¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were^d far off have been brought near^e by the blood of Christ.¹⁴ For^f he himself is our peace,^g who has made us both one and has broken down^h in his flesh the dividing wall of hostilityⁱ by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in^j ordinances, that he might create in himself one^k new man in place of the two, so making peace,¹⁶ and might^l reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.¹⁷ And he came and^m preached peace to you who wereⁿ far off and peace to those who were^o near.¹⁸ For^p through him we both have^q access in^r one Spirit to the Father.¹⁹ So then you are no longer^s strangers and aliens,^t but you are^u fellow citizens with

^a Or sojourners

¹⁷ ^v Isa. 57:19 ^v Jer. 13 ^d Deut. 4:7; Ps. 148:14 ¹⁸ ^d [John 14:6] ^b ch. 3:12; [John 10:7, 9]; See Rom. 5:2 ^c ch. 4:4; 1 Cor. 12:13; [John 4:23] ¹⁹ ^d ver. 12; [Heb. 11:13; 13:14] ^h Phil. 3:20; [Heb. 12:22, 23]

¹² ⁱ 1 Cor. 12:2; [ch. 5:8; Col. 3:7] ^m ch. 4:18; Col. 1:21; [Ezek. 14:5; Gal. 2:15; 4:8] ⁿ See Rom. 9:4 ^o 1 Thess. 4:13; See ch. 1:18 ¹³ ^p ver. 17; Acts 2:39 ^q [Col. 1:20]; See Rom. 3:25 ¹⁴ ^r Ps. 72:7; Mic. 5:5; Zech. 9:10; [Col. 3:15]; See Luke 2:14 ^s See Gal. 3:28 ^t Col. 1:21, 22; [Rom. 7:4] ¹⁵ ^u [Col. 2:14, 20] ^v See Rom. 6:4 ¹⁶ ^w [Col. 1:20-22; 1 Cor. 12:13]

THE CHURCH

The church refers to all the people who belong to the Lord, those who have been purchased by the blood of Christ. Various other images and expressions are also used to define or describe the church. The church is called the body of Christ, the family of God, the people of God, the elect, the bride of Christ, the company of the redeemed, the communion of saints, the new Israel, among others.

The New Testament word for church, *ekklesia*, means "those called out." The church is viewed as an assembly or gathering of the elect, those whom God calls out of the world, away from sin and into a state of grace.

Because the church on earth is always what St. Augustine called "a mixed body," it is necessary to distinguish between the visible church and the invisible church. In the visible church (consisting of those who make a profession of faith, are baptized, and enrolled in membership of the institutional church), Jesus indicated there would be tares growing along with the wheat. Though the church is "holy," it always, in this age, has an unholy mixture within it. Not all of those who honor Christ with their lips honor Him with their heart as well. Since God alone can read the human heart, the true elect are visible to Him, but in some measure invisible to us. The invisible church is transparent but completely visible to God. It is the task of the elect to make the invisible church visible.

The church is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. The church is one. Though fragmented by denominations, the elect are united by one Lord, one faith, and one baptism. The church is holy because it is sanctified by God and indwelt by the Holy Spirit. The church is catholic (the word *catholic* means "universal") in that its membership extends across the earth including people from all nations. The church is apostolic in that the teaching of the apostles as contained in sacred Scripture is the foundation of the church and the authority by which the church is governed.

It is the duty and privilege of every Christian to be united to the church of Christ. It is our solemn responsibility not to neglect the gathering together of the saints in corporate worship, to be under the nurture and discipline of the church, and to be actively involved as witnesses in the mission of the church.

The church is not so much an organization as it is an organism. It is made up of living parts. It is called the body of Christ. Just as a human body is organized to function in unity by the co-working and codependence of many parts, so the church as a body displays unity and diversity. Though ruled by one "head"—Christ—the body has many members, each gifted and endowed by God to contribute to the work of the whole body.

2:12 at that time. Contrast with "But now" in v. 13; see also 5:8. In Rom. 9:3–5, Paul lists the privileges of Jews. Here he lists five disadvantages of Gentiles.

alienated . . . strangers to the covenants of promise. They were not citizens of the nation with whom God was in covenant relation. Though God's relationship with Israel included a promise to bless the nations (Gen. 12:3), Gentiles had no awareness of that hope.

without God in the world. God has revealed Himself to all humanity in nature and in the conscience. Yet this general or natural revelation is insufficient to save, and apart from the Lord's act of regeneration, all people suppress the truth that this revelation gives them (4:17, 18; Acts 17:22–31; Rom. 1:18–2:16). The Gentiles whom Paul addresses in Ephesians were particularly bad off before Christ because they had no access to the Lord's special revelation to Israel, which reveals the plan of salvation, and so

they turned to idolatry. It remains true today that all those who are strangers to the covenants of promise and have no access to special revelation (the Bible) are without hope and without God in the world. They have no way of knowing His plan of redemption.

2:13 in Christ Jesus . . . by the blood of Christ. There are two dimensions to Gentiles' being brought near to God. The first is their experience of spiritual union with Christ (vv. 4–10); the second is the historical basis of that experience in Christ's sacrificial death (vv. 14–16; 1:7).

far off . . . near. See v. 17.

2:14–16 See 4:22–24; Col. 3:9–12 and notes.

2:14 the dividing wall of hostility. This refers to the courts of the temple in Jerusalem. A wall separated Gentiles and Jews, and signs were posted excluding Gentiles from the inner courts where sacrifices for sin were performed. Paul interprets it

as emblematic of the law's function of keeping Israel separate from the surrounding pagan peoples.

2:15 abolishing the law of commandments. Christ offered in His own body the final sacrifice to which the temple's sacrifices merely pointed. The ceremonial laws of the Old Testament that separated Jews and Gentiles are no longer appropriate for God's people after their fulfillment in Christ.

create in himself one new man. Paul repeats the "creation" theme of v. 10, implying now that the age-old division between Jew and Gentile has been overcome in the reconciling death of Christ on the cross (v. 16). As the last Adam (1 Cor. 15:45; cf. Rom. 5:12–21), Christ is the head of a new human race, which is distinguished not only by unprecedented unity but also by His "true righteousness and holiness" (4:24).

2:17, 18 Isaiah prophesied a day when God's peace would be proclaimed to Jews "far" and "near" (Is. 57:19). Through the gospel of Christ, the Spirit

19/See Gal. 6:10
 20^a[Jer. 12:16];
 See 1 Cor. 3:9
^bMatt. 16:18;
 Rev. 21:34 [1 Cor.
 3:11]/Ps. 118:22;
 Isa. 28:16
 21^c ch. 4:15, 16 /
 See 1 Cor. 3:16, 17
 22^m 1 Pet. 2:5
ⁿ[ch. 3:17; 2 Cor.
 6:16, 1 Tim. 3:15]

Chapter 3

1^c ch. 4:1; Acts
 23:18; Phil. 1:7;
 [ch. 6:20] ^aver.
 13; Col. 1:24
 2^d ch. 1:10; Col.
 1:25; 1 Tim. 1:4
^ever. 7; ch. 4:7;
 See Acts 11:23;
 Rom. 1:5
 3^f Acts 22:17, 21;
 26:16–18 [Dan.
 2:29]; See Rom.
 16:25; 2 Cor. 12:1
^g[ch. 1:9, 10]
 4^h[2 Cor. 11:6]
ⁱCol. 4:3
 6^j See Gal. 3:29
^kch. 2:16 ^lch. 5:7
 7^l Col. 1:23, 25
^mSee 2 Cor.
 3:6 ⁿSee ver. 2
^o[ver. 20]; See
 ch. 1:19
 8^p See 1 Cor. 15:9

the saints and ^lmembers of the household of God,^{20g} built on the foundation of the ^hapostles and prophets, ⁱChrist Jesus himself being ^jthe cornerstone, ^{21h} in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into ^a a holy temple in the Lord. ²² In him ^m you also are being built together ⁿ into a dwelling place for God by ^l the Spirit.

THE MYSTERY OF THE GOSPEL REVEALED

3 For this reason I, Paul, ^o a prisoner of Christ Jesus ^p on behalf of you Gentiles—² assuming that you have heard of ^q the stewardship of ^r God's grace that was given to me for you, ³ how the mystery was made known to me ^u by revelation, ⁴ as I have written briefly. ⁴ When you read this, you can perceive my insight into ^w the mystery of Christ, ⁵ which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. ⁶ This mystery is ^z that the Gentiles are ^x fellow heirs, ⁷ members of the same body, and ^z partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

^{7a} Of this gospel I was made ^b a minister according to the gift of ^c God's grace, which was given me ^d by the working of his power. ⁸ To me, ^e though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, ^f to preach to the Gentiles the ^g unsearchable ^h riches of Christ, ⁹ and ⁱ to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery ^j hidden for ages in ^k God, ^l who created all things, ¹⁰ so that through the church the manifold ^m wisdom of God ⁿ might now be made known to ^o the rulers and authorities ^p in the heavenly places. ¹¹ This was ^q according to

¹ Or in ² The words *This mystery is* are inferred from verse 4 ³ Or by

/See Acts 9:15 [Job 5:9; Rom. 11:33] ^h See ch. 1:18; Rom. 2:4 ⁹ See ver. 2, 3 [Col. 1:26 ^h Rev. 4:11; [ch. 2:10] ¹⁰ Rom. 11:33 ^m [1 Pet. 1:12] ⁿ ch. 1:21; [ch. 6:12] ^o See ch. 13 ¹¹ See ch. 1:11

brings Gentiles ("you who were far off") and Jews ("those who were near") together as true Israel before the Father, in fulfillment of Isaiah's promise.

he came and preached peace. Christ proclaimed His peacemaking achievement in the cross, though He did not travel to Asia in the flesh either before or after His resurrection. Instead, He traveled through heralds such as Paul, whose feet carried the gospel of peace (6:15; cf. Is. 52:7).

2:19–22 These verses describe the reversal of the Gentile disadvantages outlined in vv. 11, 12 (cf. 3:6). The building of a new spiritual temple replaces the outmoded one in Jerusalem.

2:19 no longer strangers. The kingdom of God is now international. See theological note "The Church" on p. 2094.

2:20 The foundation of God's house was laid once for all by the New Testament apostles and prophets (cf. Rev. 21:14). The cornerstone is Christ (1 Cor. 3:10, 11). In 3:4–6, Paul will show that the foundational role of the apostles and prophets lies in their reception of the revelation of the previously undisclosed mystery of Christ, and the Gentiles' inclusion among His people. The fact that the apostles and prophets make up the foundation of the church is an indicator that these offices have passed away. Since the foundation has been laid, there is no longer any need for apostles or prophets in the church. Until Christ returns, the church will build on this foundation, not by adding new revelation but by coming to an ever fuller understanding of what the apostles have given us and an ever more faithful application of their teaching to believers.

2:21, 22 grows . . . being built. God's house grows through the continued addition and integration of people as "living stones" (1 Pet. 2:5). The house is also a temple because God Himself lives in this new building.

2:22 you also are being built. Paul again addresses Gentile believers specifically (1:13; 2:1, 2, 11, 12) to emphasize the radical reversal that God's grace has effected. Not only are they no longer excluded from God's people and God's sanctuary (vv. 12–15) and granted access to the Father (2:18), but they are actually being used (with Jewish believers) to build the very "dwelling place for God by the Spirit." The apostle Peter concurs: under the new covenant, God's "spiritual house" is composed of "living stones," people whom God's Spirit has made alive (1 Pet. 2:4, 5). This is none other than the beginning fulfillment in the church of the end-time temple.

3:1 Paul begins a prayer that his Gentile readers will be filled with the presence of Christ and be able to grasp the truth about their Redeemer's love and power (vv. 14–21). Yet Paul's mention of his special call to serve the Gentiles leads him to interrupt himself to explain the nature of his own ministry and insight into the union of Jew and Gentile in Christ (vv. 2–13).

prisoner. Paul is under house arrest in Rome as he writes this epistle (Acts 28:16, 30).

3:3 as I have written briefly. See 1:9, 10.

3:5 as it has now been revealed. The silence of the OT about Paul's mystery—the union of Jews and Gentiles on equal terms in the church (v. 6)—is relative, not absolute. Many OT prophecies speak of the bringing together of Jews and Gentiles into one people of God, a fact that Paul recognized in his teaching (Is. 19:25; 56:3–7; 66:18; Acts 26:22, 23; Rom. 4; 15:8–12). The membership of Jews and Gentiles in the church on fully equal terms, however, was not explicitly articulated in the OT Scripture; nor was it fully implemented in history until Christ's death and exaltation inaugurated the new covenant. That is, the precise mystery that was not fully revealed is that Gentiles can become part of true Israel by identification with Christ. They do

not need to travel to geographical Israel and become Jews, obeying the kosher laws, being circumcised, and so forth. Christ is now the only identifier for a true Israelite.

now revealed to his holy apostles and prophets. These two offices are "foundational" for the new temple of God that the Spirit is building (2:20, 21) because through Christ's apostles and prophets of the NT church (cf. 1 Cor. 12:28), God's formerly hidden mystery is now disclosed.

3:6 Gentiles are fellow heirs. Although the Old Testament gives occasional glimpses of a unified redeemed people, only in the light of Christ's sacrifice does God's plan become clear: in one magnificent act, He removed the enmity between Himself and humanity and also took away the divisions that fracture humanity (2:14–18). Paul reflects elsewhere on the unusual way that God has included Gentiles among His people: contrary to the rules of agriculture, the Gentiles are a wild branch grafted into a cultivated tree (Rom. 11:11–24).

3:8 Compare the progression of Paul's self-description from 1 Cor. 15:9 to Eph. 3:8 to 1 Tim. 1:15, 16. In each text, Paul stresses his own unworthiness and God's excessive grace, but the contrast between these two truths grows more stark from the earliest of these self-descriptions to the latest.

3:10 the rulers . . . in the heavenly places. Paul has already mentioned "the prince of the power of the air" (2:2) and will return to the Christians' battle against their spiritual enemies in the universe (6:10–17). It is helpful here to recall Paul's recent controversy (recent in terms of the time at which he wrote Ephesians) with the false teachers in Colossae. He argues in his letter to that church that Jesus is Lord of all things, including the spirit world, and further that it is only in Jesus that heaven and earth are reconciled (Col. 1:15–20; 2:8–23). Accordingly, the establishment of

the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord,¹² in whom we have ^qboldness and ^raccess with ^sconfidence through our ^tfaith in him.¹³ So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering ^ufor you, ^vwhich is your glory.

PRAYER FOR SPIRITUAL STRENGTH

¹⁴For this reason I bow my knees before the Father,¹⁵ from whom ^wevery family¹ in heaven and on earth is named,¹⁶ that according to ^xthe riches of his glory² he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit ^zin your inner being,¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being ^brooted and ^cgrounded in love,¹⁸ may have strength to ^dcomprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and ^eheight and depth,¹⁹ and to know the love of Christ ^fthat surpasses knowledge, that ^gyou may be filled with all ^hthe fullness of God.

²⁰Now to ⁱhim who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think,²¹ according to the power at work within us,²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

UNITY IN THE BODY OF CHRIST

4 I therefore, ^ma prisoner for the Lord, urge you to ⁿwalk in a manner worthy of ^othe calling to which you have been called,² with all ^phumility and ^qgentleness, with ^rpatience, ^sbearing with one another in love,³ eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in ^tthe bond of peace.⁴ There is ^uone body and ^vone Spirit—just as you were called to the one ^whope that belongs to your call—^xone Lord,⁵ ^yone faith,⁶ ^zone baptism,⁶ ^aone God and Father of all,⁷ who is over all and through all and in all. ^bBut ^cgrace was given ^dto each one of us ^eaccording to the measure of Christ's gift.⁸ Therefore it says,

¹Or from whom all fatherhood, the Greek word *patria* in verse 15 is closely related to the word for father in verse 14

⁴Ch. 2:16 ²See ch. 2:18 ³ch. 1:18 ⁵2Zech. 14:9; See 1 Cor. 1:13; 8:6 ⁶[ver. 13; Jude 3] ⁷See Gal. 3:27, 28 ⁶1 Cor. 12:5, 6 ⁸Rom. 9:5 ⁷See ch. 3:2 ⁴[Matt. 25:15; 1 Cor. 12:7] ⁶Rom. 12:3; [ver. 16]

¹²Heb. 4:16; 10:19 ¹³See ch. 2:18 ²Cor. 3:4 ⁴Mark 11:22; Phil. 3:9

¹³¹ver. 1 ¹¹[2 Cor. 1:6]

¹⁵¹⁰See ch. 1:10, 21

¹⁶²See ver. 8 ³1 Cor. 16:13; [ch. 6:10; Phil. 4:13; Col. 1:11] ²See Rom. 7:22

¹⁷[ch. 2:22] ¹⁸Col. 2:7 ²Col. 1:23

¹⁸[John 1:5] ⁶Rom. 8:39; [Job 11:8, 9]

¹⁹[Phil. 4:7] ⁹Col. 2:10 ⁸ch. 1:23

²⁰Rom. 16:25; Jude 24 ²[2 Cor. 9:8] ⁴[ver. 7]

²¹See Rom. 11:36

Chapter 4

¹¹⁰See ch. 3:1 ¹Col. 1:10; 2:6; 1 Thess. 2:12; [Phil. 1:27] ¹See Rom. 8:28

²Acts 20:19; Phil. 2:3; Col. 3:12; 1 Pet. 3:8; 5:5; [Col. 2:18, 23] ⁶Gal. 5:23 ¹Col. 1:11 ⁸Col. 3:13

³Col. 3:14; [Acts 8:23]

peace between Jews and Gentiles in the church is a signal to all powers in the universe. For Paul, there is no more basic division in the human race than that between Jew and Gentile. That they can be united with each other in Christ displays the profound wisdom of God (Is. 55:8, 9; 1 Cor. 2:6–10), and it proves even to supernatural powers that Jesus is Lord of the universe (1:20–23). See note on 1:21.

3:14 bow my knees. Jews normally prayed standing (Matt. 6:5; Luke 18:11, 13). Kneeling in prayer appears to have been an expression of humility and urgency (Ezra 9:5; Luke 22:41; Acts 7:59, 60). This verse resumes the prayer that Paul began introducing in v. 1 (note).

3:15 every family in heaven. Jewish intertestamental and rabbinic literature refers to families of angels.

3:16 strengthened with power. Paul returns to the motifs of power and knowledge (v. 19, 20) that were the subject of his prayer for illumination of believers' minds (1:19–22).

in your inner being. This is some of Paul's most pointed language about the work of the Holy Spirit within individuals (2 Cor. 5:17). Much of the letter to the Ephesians addresses believers' corporate identity (e.g., 4:3–6, 12–16). Yet Christ also dwells in individual hearts. Elsewhere, Paul speaks of the ongoing renewal of believers' "inner self" (2 Cor. 4:16) and of God's working in them both the desire and the power to do what pleases Him (Phil. 2:12, 13; cf. 1:6). Christianity is neither a common confession to the exclusion of individual experience nor a private piety without corporate vision.

3:17 grounded in love. The strength and knowl-

edge for which Paul prays for believers are directed not toward their individual achievements but toward their love for each other, in response to the immeasurable love of Christ for them (v. 19; 4:32–52).

3:18 breadth and length and height and depth. These measures of space recall the temple image of 2:21. As the "living stones" (1 Pet. 2:5) are linked in love, God's dwelling grows and is filled with Christ Himself. God uses the love among "all the saints"—Jew and Gentile alike—to build a whole that is greater than any of its individual parts. The spatial language exalts Christ's love for His people—a love that is inclusive, inexhaustible, and self-sacrificing.

3:20 the power at work within us. See 1:19–23; 2:5, 6. This power is the Spirit of the risen Christ. The first half of the letter climaxes as Paul considers the overwhelming power of God, who carries out His gracious (2:7) and all-wise (3:10) plan for the reconciliation of human beings.

3:21 glory. Because of the power that God has given to the church, Paul gives glory to Him. Paul's doctrinal exposition opened in doxology (1:3–14) and now closes in doxology, laying the groundwork for his outworking of the ethical implications of God's gracious calling to His people in Christ (4:1). As in 1:3–14, 3:21 indicates that God's "glory" is the goal and main point of everything expounded in chs. 1–3. Believers should live to give God glory and to reflect God's glory.

in the church and in Christ Jesus. In this letter, Paul uses a variety of images to describe the mutual relationship between the church and Christ: the body and the head (1:22, 23); the reconciled and the reconciler (2:14–18; 4:3); and the bride and her groom (5:22, 33).

4:1 walk. Throughout the second half of this letter, Paul unfolds the "walk," or life of good works, first mentioned in 2:10 and then again in 4:17; 5:2; and 5:15. This figure of speech for moral conduct is common in Scripture.

calling. Paul earlier spoke of a hope to which believers are called (1:18; 4:4); now he focuses on the life to which they are called. He has already provided strong indications of its shape and significance (1:4; 2:10). God's call is both sovereign and gracious (1 Cor. 1:26–31), and in the ethical and relational instructions that follow, Paul will repeatedly ground his exhortations in the gospel truths already expounded in chs. 1–3.

4:3 maintain the unity of the Spirit. God's Spirit has united believers by drawing them to the Father through faith in the Son and indwelling them as a new temple (2:18, 21, 22). Christians have a responsibility to retain and express their unity through the Spirit's fruit, which include humility, patience, and love (v. 2; Gal. 5:22, 23).

4:4–6 one. This word is repeated seven times in vv. 4–6—three times regarding the persons of the Godhead and four times regarding aspects of His salvation. In Phil. 2:1–4, Paul appeals similarly to the involvement of the persons of the Trinity in order to motivate believers toward the humility and love that foster unity. Just as the first half of Ephesians begins with the all-important work of the Trinity (1:3–14), so the second half of the book begins that way.

4:7 But grace was given to each one of us. All Christians share the grace of salvation through faith (2:5, 8). Each Christian is also given some

8^fCited from Ps. 68:18 ^gJudg. 5:12; [Col. 2:15]
 9^bSee John 3:13 ⁱPs. 63:9; Isa. 44:23
 10ⁱSee Mark 16:19 ^hHeb. 4:14; 7:26; 9:24 ^hch. 1:23
 11^m[1 Cor. 12:5, 6] ⁱSee 1 Cor. 12:28 ^hActs 21:8; 2 Tim. 4:5 ^jJer. 3:15; [Acts 20:28]
 12^gSee 2 Cor. 13:9 ^gver. 16; 29 ⁱSee 1 Cor. 12:27
 13ⁱ[ver. 5] ^hHeb. 5:14 ^hch. 1:23
 14^w[Matt. 11:7; Heb. 13:9; James 1:6; Jude 12] ^hch. 6:11
 15^h1 John 3:18; [ver. 25] ^hch. 2:21 ^gSee ch. 1:22
 16^gCol. 2:19 ⁱ[ver. 7]
 17^h1 Thess. 2:12 ^gver. 22; ch. 2:1-3; Col. 3:7; 1 Pet. 4:3/Rom. 12:1; 1 Pet. 1:18; [Col. 2:18; 2 Pet. 2:18]
 18^g[Rom. 11:10] ^hSee ch. 2:12 ⁱSee Mark 3:5
 19ⁱ[Prov. 23:35]; 1 Tim. 4:2

^f“When he ascended on high ^ghe led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men.”ⁱ

⁹(^hIn saying, “He ascended,” what does it mean but that he had also descended into ⁱthe lower regions, the earth?² ¹⁰He who descended is the one who also ^jascended ^kfar above all the heavens, that he might ^lfill all things.) ¹¹And ^mhe gave the ⁿapostles, the prophets, the ^oevangelists, the ^pshepherds³ and teachers,⁴ ¹²^qto equip the saints for the work of ministry, for ^rbuilding up ^sthe body of Christ, ¹³until we all attain to ^tthe unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, ¹⁴to mature manhood,⁵ to the measure of the stature of ^uthe fullness of Christ, ¹⁴so that we may no longer be children, ^wtossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in ^xdeceitful schemes. ¹⁵Rather, ^yspeaking the truth in love, we are to ^zgrow up in every way into him who is ^{aa}the head, into Christ, ¹⁶from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, ^{ab}when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

THE NEW LIFE

¹⁷Now this I say and ^{ac}testify in the Lord, ^{ad}that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, ^{ae}in the futility of their minds. ¹⁸They ^{af}are darkened in their understanding, ^{ag}alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to ^{ah}their hardness of heart. ¹⁹They ^{ai}have become callous and ^{aj}have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. ²⁰But that is not the way you ^{ak}learned Christ!—²¹assuming that ^{al}you have heard about him and ^{am}were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, ²²to ^{an}put off ^{ao}your old

¹The Greek word *anthropoi* can refer to both men and women. ²Or the lower parts of the earth? ³Or pastors. ⁴Or the shepherd-teachers. ⁵Greek to a full-grown man

^h[1 Kgs. 21:25; Rom. 1:24, 26, 28] ²⁰See Matt. 11:29 ²¹ch. 1:13 ²²Col. 2:7 ²²Col. 3:8; Heb. 12:1; James 1:21; 1 Pet. 2:1 ¹⁸Rom. 6:6; Col. 3:9

particular gift of grace to benefit the church (Paul speaks of his own in 3:2, 8). See Rom. 12:3–8; 1 Cor. 12:3–13, 27–30.

4:8 Ps. 68 celebrates God’s triumphant march from Mount Sinai in the wilderness to Mount Zion in Jerusalem and His enthronement there. Paul regards this as prefiguring Christ’s victorious ascent into heaven.

captives. The spiritual forces of darkness were defeated at the cross (Col. 2:15 and note). There is debate over how to interpret Paul’s use of Ps. 68:18. The parallelism in the psalm citation might imply that the “captives” are the “gifts” that the ascended Christ gave to His church. Thus, those whom Christ conquered and made His own by grace (cf. Phil. 3:12) are the ones whom He now commissions to bring His Word to His people (v. 11). While Ps. 68:18 describes the victorious Lord receiving gifts from men, Paul pictures Christ as sharing His tribute with men. Paul may have thought of this psalm in light of Pentecost, the day on which the ascended Christ poured out His Spirit on the church (Acts 2:32, 33).

4:9 Christ came to the exalted position He now enjoys through humiliation. This passage is sometimes thought to teach Christ’s “descent into Hades” between His death and resurrection (1 Pet. 3:19 note), but it probably refers to His incarnation, when He took on a human nature here in “the lower regions, the earth” (cf. 1:20–23; Phil. 2:1–11). This pattern of service is to be imitated by believers.

4:11 apostles. In a restricted sense, those who walked with Jesus during His earthly ministry and witnessed to His resurrection (or received a special revelation of the risen Jesus) and who were commissioned by Jesus to be founders of the church (Acts 1:21, 22; 1 Cor. 15:1–9). The word was also used

in a broader sense of people sent out as delegates of particular churches (2 Cor. 8:23; Phil. 2:25), though these do not appear to be whom Paul has in mind in this passage. See 2:20; 3:5 and notes; note on 2 Cor. 1:11.

prophets. The New Testament prophets conveyed special revelation to the early church. Their functions included prediction, exhortation, encouragement, warning, and explanation (Acts 15:32; 21:9–11; 1 Cor. 14:3). The teaching of the New Testament prophets and apostles laid the foundation of the church (2:20; 3:5), and certain aspects of their work related to that unique task have been discontinued (2:20 note). However, teachers and elders continue to be responsible for exhorting, encouraging, and warning believers through the explanation of God’s Word (2 Tim. 4:1, 2).

evangelists. People especially gifted to proclaim the gospel (Acts 21:8; 2 Tim. 4:5). Evangelism was at the core of Paul’s apostolic calling (1 Cor. 1:17), although his office included greater authority to receive and transmit revelation from the Holy Spirit (3:5) and to lead the church.

shepherds and teachers. The two words may go together to refer to a single set of individuals who both shepherd and instruct God’s flock. On the other hand, two distinct but related offices may be in view: “teachers” and other elders who provide spiritual oversight with less of a focus on teaching (1 Cor. 12:28; 1 Tim. 5:17).

4:12, 13 It is not primarily those mentioned in v. 11 who do the work of the ministry; it is the people they equip. Thus, Paul goes on to describe the growth that results when each member of the body works “properly” to serve others (vv. 15, 16). Effective teachers help believers find their own way to benefit the rest of the church.

the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. Saints’ ministries to each other, which further the building of the body of Christ, will continue until all believers attain maturity or perfection, as defined by the norm of Jesus Christ Himself. This process will last until Christ’s return from heaven. So the mark of increasing maturity is believers’ ongoing pursuit of conformity to Christ and of helping one another in that pursuit as they await the return of Jesus (Phil. 3:12–16, 20, 21).

4:16 body. Paul uses the analogy of the human body. Believers are not given gifts for their own private benefit, and no one can grow to maturity in isolation (1 Cor. 12:7, 12–16). Paul himself strives for a knowledge of the Son of God that comes to maturity only when all believers attain it as well.

4:17–19 This passage closely resembles the critique of Gentile culture in Rom. 1 and contains echoes of the descriptions of the Ephesians’ prior condition in paganism in 2:1–3, 11, 12 (“walk . . . alienated from the life of God . . . sensuality”). While the letter to the Romans shows God as giving Gentiles over to a reckless and wanton life (Rom. 1:24–31), Ephesians presents the same progression from the human side: those who have turned aside “have given themselves up” (v. 19). Similarly, in Exodus, God is said to harden Pharaoh’s heart (Ex. 4:21; 7:3), but Pharaoh also hardens his own heart (Ex. 8:15, 32; 9:34).

4:20 you learned Christ. As Paul elsewhere sums up the gospel as “proclaiming Christ” (1 Cor. 2:2; Phil. 1:18; Col. 1:27), so here he characterizes as “learning Christ” the new pattern of desiring and behaving that flows from gratitude for God’s grace in the gospel.

4:21 heard about him. That is, in the message proclaimed about Him.

self,' which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through ^adeceitful desires, ²³and ^rto be renewed in the spirit of your minds, ²⁴and to put on ^sthe new self, ^rcreated after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

²⁵Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you ^uspeak the truth with his neighbor, for ^vwe are members one of another. ²⁶^wBe angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷and ^xgive no opportunity to the devil. ²⁸Let the thief no longer steal, but rather ^ylet him labor, ^rdoing honest work with his own hands, so ^athat he may have something to share with anyone in need. ²⁹^bLet no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give ^cgrace to those who hear. ³⁰And ^ddo not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, ^eby whom you were sealed for the day of ^fredemption. ³¹^gLet all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. ³²^hBe kind to one another, tenderhearted, ⁱforgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

WALK IN LOVE

5 ^rTherefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. ²And ^kwalk in love, ^las Christ loved us and ^mgave himself up for us, a ⁿfragrant ^ooffering and sacrifice to God.

³But ^psexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness ^qmust not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. ⁴Let there be ^rno filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, ^swhich are out of place, but instead ^tlet there be thanksgiving. ⁵For you may be sure of this, that ^ueveryone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. ⁶^wLet no one ^xdeceive you with empty words, for because of these things ^ythe wrath of God comes upon ^zthe sons of disobedience. ⁷Therefore ^ado not become partners with them; ⁸for ^bat one time you were ^cdarkness, but now you are light in the Lord. ^dWalk as children of light ^e(for ^fthe fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), ¹⁰and ^gtry to discern what is pleasing to the Lord.

¹ Greek man; also verse 24

Rom. 1:18; Col. 3:6²; 2:12; [1 Pet. 1:14] **7**^a ch. 3:6 **8**^b See ch. 2:1, 2^c See Acts 26:18^d Isa. 2:5; See Luke 16:8; John 12:35, 36 **9**^e [Gal. 5:22]; See Rom. 7:4 **10**^f 1 Thess. 2:4; 5:21

22^g [Heb. 3:13]
23^h See Rom. 12:2
24ⁱ See Rom. 6:4
^j See ch. 2:10
25^k Zech. 8:16;
 Col. 3:9; [ver. 15]
^l Rom. 12:5
26^m [Ps. 37:8]
27ⁿ See James 4:7
28^o Acts 20:35;
 Gal. 6:10
^p 1 Thess. 4:11;
 2 Thess. 3:8, 11, 12
^q [Prov. 21:26]
29^r ch. 5:4; Col. 3:8; [Matt. 12:34]
^s Col. 4:6; [Eccles. 10:12]
30^t Isa. 63:10;
 [1 Thess. 5:19]
^u ch. 1:13/See ch. 1:7
31^v Col. 3:8, 19
32^w Col. 3:12, 13;
 1 Pet. 3:8; [2 Cor. 2:7, 10]; See Matt. 6:14

Chapter 5

1^x [ch. 4:32; Matt. 5:7, 48; Luke 6:36]
2^y Rom. 14:15; [Col. 3:14]; See John 13:34
^z See Rom. 8:37
^{aa} See Rom. 4:25
^{ab} See Gen. 8:21
^{ac} Heb. 7:27; 9:14; 10:10, 12
3^{ad} 1 Cor. 6:18; See Gal. 5:19^{ae} [ver. 12; Ps. 16:4]
4^{af} ch. 4:29; [Eccles. 10:13]
^{ag} [Rom. 1:28]
^{ah} ver. 20
5^{ai} See 1 Cor. 6:9
^{aj} Col. 3:5
6^{ak} See Matt. 24:4
^{al} Col. 2:8^{am}

as the truth is in Jesus. God has broken the cycle of death by giving them an understanding of His Son and His work on their behalf (1:13, 15).

4:22–24 put off . . . be renewed . . . put on. Belonging to Christ involves repudiating an old life, the way of living “in Adam” (the “old self,” or “old man”; text note) and embracing a new one, the way of living “in Christ” (the “new self,” or “new man”). In 2:15, 16, Paul speaks of God’s creating “one new man” in Christ and reconciling believing Jews and Gentiles to God through His cross. In Gal. 3:27, Paul describes conversion as “putting on Christ.” The image is that of taking off frayed clothes and putting on new ones. See also Col. 3:9–11, where Paul makes explicit that this change of “clothing” (identity), from Adam to Christ, has already happened for believers.

4:25–5:5 Paul outlines six concrete ways that Christians “put off” their old lives and “put on” life in Christ: they must turn from lying to telling the truth (4:25, 26), from uncontrolled anger to self-control (4:26, 27), from stealing to useful labor (4:28), from harmful to helpful speech (4:29, 30), from bitterness to love (4:31–5:2), and from unrestrained sexual desires to a thankful acknowledgment of God’s good gifts (5:3–5). In each case, Paul offers a reason for the change from old to new.

4:25 members one of another. On the basis (“therefore”) that believers are now a “new man” in the last Adam, they have the responsibility to

speak truth with their neighbor, which is grounded not only in OT scripture (Zech. 8:16) but also in the reality that we belong to one body, which grows in unity as we speak truth in love (4:12, 15, 16). In vv. 25–32, the behavior that Paul’s readers are exhorted to exhibit is that of the “new man” living out the reality of the new creation.

4:26, 27 Because practical unity among believers displays God’s reconciling power (vv. 1–10; 2:14–16), the devil especially prizes its disruption (2:2; 6:11).

4:30 do not grieve. That is, by the destructive use of speech described in v. 29. That the Holy Spirit can be grieved is an indication of His being a person and not an impersonal force. The idea is not new to the New Testament, as is clear from Paul’s quotation of the prophet Isaiah (Is. 63:10). The divisive attitudes and behaviors forbidden in v. 31 disrupt the unity that the Spirit has established in Christ’s church (4:3).

4:32–5:2 as God . . . as Christ. Believers must extend to others—especially to fellow believers—the forgiveness and love that God has extended to them. In the same way, because the Israelites were purchased from slavery in Egypt, they were to have a special regard for aliens, slaves, and the dispossessed in their own midst (Ex. 22:21; 23:9; Lev. 19:33, 34; Deut. 5:15). The same logic is found in Jesus’ new commandment: “as I have loved you, you also are to love one another” (John 13:34).

5:1 as beloved children. See note on Col. 3:12. A

firm knowledge of God’s love and of one’s place in His family (1:5) motivates the self-sacrifice necessary for Christian living (cf. v. 2).

5:3, 4 proper . . . out of place. To trivialize the sexual relationship (“crude joking”) on the one hand or to idolize it on the other is out of step with our identity as “saints.” As those chosen and called (1:4–6) to bear God’s restored image (4:24), we can accept God’s gifts, including sexuality, with thanksgiving, and restore them to their proper use (Prov. 5:18, 19; 1 Tim. 4:1–5; Heb. 13:4).

5:6 Although the day of reckoning may be denied with “empty words” (cf. 2 Pet. 3:3, 4), God’s judgment will make a final separation between “the sons of disobedience” (2:2; cf. 5:5) and God’s beloved children (1:4, 5; 5:1).

5:7 do not become partners with them. Christians must consider the fearful destiny of nonbelievers and refuse to join them in their folly (1 Pet. 4:3–5). Instead, they should remember their status as partakers with the Jews in the promise of God in Christ (3:6).

5:8 one time . . . but now. See 2:11, 13. Paul wants believers to do more than abstain from the things that bring God’s wrath. They should live as “children of light” (Col. 1:13 note). A result of the believers’ union with Christ is that He who is “the light of the world” (John 8:12; 9:5) has made them also “the light of the world” (Matt. 5:14).

11^oSee 1 Cor. 5:9^o; Rom. 6:21^o; Rom. 13:12/Lev. 19:17; 1 Tim. 5:20.
 12^k[ver. 3]
 13^jJohn 3:20, 21; [ver. 9]
 14^m[Isa. 51:17; 52:1; 60:1; Mal. 4:2]; See Rom. 13:11^o; Isa. 26:19^o; Luke 17:8, 9
 15^pCol. 4:5; [Prov. 15:21]
 16^p[See ver. 15 above]^qch. 6:13; Eccles. 12:1; Amos 5:13; Gal. 1:4
 17^rRom. 12:2; 1 Thess. 4:3; 5:18
 18^sProv. 20:1; 23:20, 31; 1 Cor. 5:11^o; Titus 1:6; 1 Pet. 4:4^o [Luke 1:15]
 19^tActs 16:25; 1 Cor. 14:26; Col. 3:16; James 5:13
 20^uCol. 3:17; 1 Thess. 1:2; 2 Thess. 1:3^o; Heb. 13:15; [John 14:13]

11^oTake no part in the ^hunfruitful ⁱworks of darkness, but instead ^jexpose them. 12^kFor ^kit is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. 13^lBut when ^lanything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, 14^mfor anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says,

^m“Awake, O sleeper,
 and ⁿarise from the dead,
 and ^oChrist will shine on you.”

15^pLook carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, 16^qmaking the best use of the time, because ^qthe days are evil. 17^rTherefore do not be foolish, but understand what ^rthe will of the Lord is. 18^sAnd ^sdo not get drunk with wine, for that is ^tdebauchery, but ^ube filled with the Spirit, 19^vaddressing one another in ^vpsalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, 20^wgiving thanks always and for everything to God the Father ^xin the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, 21^ysubmitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

WIVES AND HUSBANDS

22^zWives, ^asubmit to your own husbands, ^bas to the Lord. 23^{aa}For ^{aa}the husband is the head of the wife even as ^{ab}Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is ^{ac}himself its Savior. 24^{ab}Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit ^{ad}in everything to their husbands.

25^{ac}Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and ^{ae}gave himself up for her,

21^y[Phil. 2:3] 22^zFor ch. 22:6-9, see Col. 3:18-4:1^o See Gen. 3:16^h [ch. 6:5] 23^{aa}1 Cor. 11:3^o See ch. 1:22, 23^q [1 Cor. 6:13] 24^{ab}[Col. 3:20, 22; Titus 2:9] 25^{ac}ver. 28, 33; [1 Pet. 3:7] ver. 2

5:13 it becomes visible. Paul assumes that certain sins are so shameful that bringing them to light will shame some nonbelievers into repentance. The Christians' presence alone may expose sins through contrast, or Christians may openly denounce such sins. Paul quotes what may be an early Christian hymn reminiscent of a number of Old Testament passages (e.g., Is. 60:1) and calls upon the spiritually dead to rise up and receive the light of Christ (cf. 2:1-10).

5:14 Therefore it says. Paul's "Awake, O sleeper" is introduced as a quotation, but its source in an OT text, even allowing for apostolic editorial modifications, has not been identified with certainty. The imagery of light (befitting this context) and awakening or rising is found in Is. 60:1, describing the restoration of Israel in the end times; there the Lord shines light on Israel, and here Christ is identified with the God of Is. 60 in shining light on people. However, Paul may be citing a portion of an early Christian hymn well known to the churches, as he seems to do elsewhere (Phil. 2:5-11; Col. 1:15-20; 1 Tim. 3:16). If this is the case, it would be a hymn that has been influenced by Is. 60:1.

5:18 drunk with wine. Christians are not to be under the control of intoxicating beverages, but rather the controlling influences of the Holy Spirit.

be filled with the Spirit. This is better translated "be filled by means of the Spirit." While the sealing of the Spirit (1:13, 14; 4:30) is a once-for-all initiation into the Christian life, the filling of the Spirit applies to all the Christian life. This filling is progressive and is to be sought on an ongoing basis. In the parallel passage in Colossians, Paul tells Christians to let the "peace of Christ" govern their hearts and to allow the "word of Christ" to dwell in them richly (Col. 3:15, 16). The one who is filled with the Spirit is filled with Christ, God, and His Word (Eph. 1:23; 3:19; 4:10; cf. John 14:16, 26; 16:12-15; 17:17).

5:19-21 addressing . . . making melody . . . giving thanks . . . submitting. These words are dependent on the imperative "be filled with the Spirit" and therefore make explicit the actions that result from and exhibit the Spirit's filling in believers' lives.

5:19 one another . . . to the Lord. Worship is offered to God alone. At the same time, there is also a human dimension to corporate worship, since people worship together and address each other for their mutual benefit (1 Cor. 14; Heb. 10:24).

psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. See topical article "Worship" on p. 2383.

5:21 This transitional verse is last in a series of expressions explaining the effects of being filled with the Spirit (vv. 19-21 note). Regardless of their social rank, all Christians should pattern their social behavior on the humility and kindness of Christ (4:32-5:2; cf. Luke 22:24-27; John 13:14-16). This submission "to one another" is further explained by the forms of authority and submission in the specific relationships discussed in 5:22-6:9.

5:22-6:9 At least as far back as Aristotle (fourth century B.C.), Greek ethics had addressed relationships within the household in a familiar pattern: husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and slaves. Consistently, the interest was to help the male head of household learn to govern his family and slaves. In their treatment of such rules, Paul and Peter (1 Pet. 2:18-3:7) transform the question from how husbands, fathers, and masters dominate to how they can imitate the love of Christ in their own lives by nurturing those under their care. Simultaneously, as wives, children, and slaves understand their roles in terms of service to Christ, they turn from being passive objects in a social world that devalues them and become instead active partners with God in expressing Christian love before a world divided by gender, age, and economics.

5:22-32 Jesus gives life to a new community of

love—the church, His own body. His love also defines the marriage relationship for His people. Paul teaches that the genders are complementary and a man and a woman are equal before God. Yet in marriage, God has called the husband to exercise leadership. This leadership is not absolute, for the husband is not to be followed if he calls his wife to sin. Nevertheless, the husband's leadership role gives him the initiative in directing his family in glorifying the Lord, to which the wife responds. Paul's understanding is grounded in the creation order (1 Cor. 11:8, 9; 1 Tim. 2:13), and he takes account of the lingering effects, even among Christians, of the fall (1 Tim. 2:14). Redemption in Christ restores the intimacy men and women were created to enjoy in marriage.

5:22 submit. A Christian wife is called to grateful acceptance of her husband's care and leadership.

as to the Lord. See v. 24.

5:23 head of the wife . . . head of the church. In other passages on Christ's headship in this letter, Paul speaks of the way Christ governs the universe and the church (1:22) and serves as the source of the body's health and growth to maturity (4:14-16).

his body. That is, the church as His body—Christ Himself indwells the church (vv. 28-30) and rules over her.

Savior. It is especially in His role as Savior that Christ serves as the husband's model (vv. 25-27 and notes).

5:24 as the church . . . so also wives. The church's subjection to Christ is a revealed and heavenly order, not a natural order. Christ's disciples were His friends, not just His servants, and He died for them (John 15:12-15; cf. Luke 22:25-27).

5:25 Husbands, love. The emphasis in the passage is not the husband's authority to govern, but his responsibility to love.

²⁶ that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by ⁱthe washing of water ^jwith the word, ²⁷so ^kthat he might present the church to himself in splendor, ^lwithout spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. ²⁸In the same way ^mhusbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, ³⁰because ⁿwe are members of his body. ³¹“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and ^pthe two shall become one flesh.” ³²This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. ³³However, ^qlet each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she ^rrespects her husband.

CHILDREN AND PARENTS

6 ^sChildren, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ²“Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise), ³“that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.” ⁴Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, ^ubut bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

BONDSERVANTS AND MASTERS

⁵Bondservants, ²obey your earthly masters ³with fear and trembling, ^vwith a sincere heart, ^xas you would Christ, ⁶not by the way of eye-service, as ^ypeople-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, ⁷rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man, ⁸knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, ^zwhether he is a bondservant or is free. ⁹Masters, do the same to them, ^aand stop your threatening, knowing that ^bhe who is both their Master ^cand yours is in heaven, and that ^dthere is no partiality with him.

¹Or *holy and blameless*. ²For the contextual rendering of the Greek word *doulos*, see Preface; also verse 6, likewise for *bondservant* in verse 8. ³Or *your masters according to the flesh*
⁴Greek *Lord*

²⁶ ¹Titus 3:5; [Rev. 7:14] (ch. 6:17; Heb. 6:5; See John 15:3
²⁷ ²2 Cor. 11:2; See ch. 14
²⁸ ³1 Pet. 2:3, 33
³⁰ ⁴[Gen. 2:23]; See 1 Cor. 6:15
³¹ ⁵Matt. 19:5; Mark 10:7, 8; Cited from Gen. 2:24 ⁶1 Cor. 6:16
³³ ⁷1 Pet. 3:2, 6

Chapter 6

¹Prov. 18:6; 6:20; 23:22
²Cited from Ex. 20:12
⁴Gen. 18:19; Deut. 4:9; 6:7; 11:19; Ps. 78:4; Prov. 19:18; 22:6; 29:17; [2 Tim. 3:15]
⁵See 1 Pet. 2:18
⁶[2 Cor. 11:3]
^x[ch. 5:22]
⁶See Gal. 1:10
⁸See Ps. 62:12
Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11
⁹Lev. 25:43
John 13:13; [Job 31:13-15] ^dSee Deut. 10:17

as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. Nowhere in the New Testament is Christ's self-sacrificing love applied more directly to a specific relationship as a pattern to be emulated (cf. v. 2). Christ did not give up His kingly authority or become subject to the church when He "gave himself up for her," but His authority was expressed through His sacrifice, especially since this accomplished redemption and victory over Satan.

5:26, 27 Paul outlines in these verses the entire process to which Christ has committed Himself in His relationship with the church: He has washed her from sin and is preparing her for a glorious destiny with Himself (v. 27 text note). Husbands are called in like manner to adapt their lives to their wives' needs and to provide for their spiritual growth and development.

5:28-32 A person's union with his or her own body is intimate and permanent, so protecting and providing for one's body is natural and instinctive. Each husband must understand that marriage creates a similar union with his wife, according to the Creator's original design (Gen. 2:24). Christ has joined the church to Himself through the bonds of the covenant He fulfilled, and this intimate union forms a pattern for Christian marriage (2:6 and note).

5:31, 32 Paul says the quotation from Gen. 2:24 in v. 31 is a "mystery." The idea is that God's pre-fall commission for a man to leave his family and become one with his wife was ultimately intended to foreshadow Christ's relationship with His bride, the church. This was not so clearly seen in the Old Testament but now has been fully revealed in Christ. As a man leaves his family and cleaves to his wife, Christ left His Father's side and came to cleave to

His bride. Having returned to His Father, He brings us with Him to dwell before God forever.

6:1-3 Children in the church have responsibility to live as disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. For Paul, part of what characterizes Gentile culture as standing under God's judgment is that it is marked by children's disobedience to their parents (Rom. 1:30; 2 Tim. 3:2).

6:2 the first commandment with a promise. The law of God has lost its power to condemn those who are in Christ (Col. 2:13, 14), and the observance of the ceremonial law is abrogated after its fulfillment in Christ (2:15; Col. 2:16, 17). However, the "weightier matters of the law" (Matt. 23:23) are revelations of God's character, and provide permanent ethical principles, found in the Decalogue, which Paul quotes here (Ex. 20:12) and which define the Christian's calling to respond to divine grace with love for God and others, thereby fulfilling the law (Rom. 13:8-10; Gal. 5:13, 14). One of these principles is that children must honor their parents.

6:3 live long in the land. The promise supporting the fifth commandment anticipates the covenantal blessings offered to Israel upon their entrance into the Promised Land (Deut. 28:1-14). Israel's residence in that land foreshadowed new covenant believers' eternal life in the "heavenly homeland" in the new creation for which the patriarchs hoped (Heb. 11:10, 13-16; 13:14; Rom. 4:13)—the gift of God's grace received by persevering faith.

6:4 Fathers. Conversely, to parents Paul stresses the responsibility of those in authority.

bring them up. The Greek suggests the idea of nurturing and helping to flourish (cf. 5:29). Parents are entrusted with the minds, feelings, and bodies

of tender bearers of the divine image. Accordingly, children do not exist for parents, but parents for children—to help them come into their own personhood before God.

discipline. The shaping of the will through training and correction.

instruction. The shaping of the mind through teaching and admonition.

6:5-8 Slaves follow the example of Christ through obedient submission (Phil. 2:1-11). All believers are called to share Christ's humiliation and sufferings in this age, in order to be exalted and glorified with Him in the next (Rom. 8:17). Paul is not interested in making anyone's share of suffering greater than it has to be (1 Cor. 7:21). He also does not pretend there is an easy route around it. As slaves serve the exalted Christ, and not merely an earthly master, they do so in the new reality inaugurated by Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). Paul insists elsewhere that being owned by Christ makes all other definitions of our personhood irrelevant: "You were bought with a price; do not become bondservants [or slaves] of men" (1 Cor. 7:23). By rendering ungrudging service to their true heavenly owner, slaves can work not for their value in the marketplace, but in devotion to the One who poured out His own life for them, displaying the gospel's beauty (Titus 2:9, 10).

6:9 do the same. If masters can expect their Christian slaves to serve them willingly, slaves can expect Christian masters to treat them the way Christ treats His own servants.

6:10-17 The Christian duty of unity and purity is complicated by the presence of hostile spiritual powers. Christ's cross was the devil's undoing

THE WHOLE ARMOR OF GOD

¹⁰ Finally, ^cbe strong in the Lord and in ^fthe strength of his might. ^{11g} Put on ^hthe whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against ⁱthe schemes of the devil. ¹² For ^jwe do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against ^kthe rulers, against the authorities, against ^lthe cosmic powers over ^mthis present darkness, against ⁿthe spiritual forces of evil ^oin the heavenly places. ¹³ Therefore ^rtake up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in ^qthe evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. ¹⁴ Stand therefore, ^vhaving fastened on the belt of truth, and ^shaving put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵ and, ^tas shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In all circumstances take up ^uthe shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all ^wthe flaming darts of ^xthe evil one; ¹⁷ and take ^ythe helmet of salvation, and ^zthe sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, ¹⁸ praying ^aat all times ^bin the Spirit, ^cwith all prayer and supplication. To that end, ^dkeep alert with all perseverance, making ^esupplication for all the saints, ¹⁹ and ^falso for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth ^gboldly to proclaim ^hthe mystery of the gospel, ²⁰ for which I ⁱam an ambassador ^jin chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

¹⁷ [See ver. 14 above] ^aHeb. 4:12; [Isa. 49:2; Hos. 6:5; 2 Cor. 6:7] ¹⁸ [See Luke 18:1-2; Jude 20; See Rom. 8:26 ^aCol. 4:2-4 ^bSee Mark 13:33 ^c1 Tim. 2:1] ¹⁹ [See Col. 4:3; 1 Thess. 5:25; 2 Thess. 3:1; [Isa. 50:4] ^dSee Acts 4:29 ^ech. 3] ²⁰ [See 2 Cor. 5:20 ^fSee Acts 28:20]

¹⁰ ^aRom. 4:20 (Gk.); 2 Tim. 2:1; [1 John 2:14]; See ch. 3:16 ^fch. 1:19

¹¹ ^gver. 14; Job 29:14; See Rom. 13:12 ^hver. 13; [2 Cor. 10:4] ⁱch. 4:14

¹² ^jSee 1 Cor. 9:25 ^kch. 1:21 ^lSee ch. 2:2 ^mLuke 22:53; Col. 1:13 ⁿ[ch. 3:10] ^oSee ch. 1:3

¹³ ^p[1 Pet. 4:1] ^qch. 5:16

¹⁴ ^r1 Pet. 1:13; [Isa. 11:5]; See Luke 12:35 ^sIsa. 59:17; 1 Thess. 5:8; [Isa. 61:10; 2 Cor. 6:7]

¹⁵ ^tIsa. 52:7; Rom. 10:15; [Ex. 12:11]

¹⁶ ^u[1 John 5:4] ^v[Ps. 120:4] ^wSee Matt. 13:19

(Col. 2:15 note), and in His resurrection Christ was exalted over every created being, visible and invisible, heavenly and earthly (1:20–22). At Christ's second coming, Satan's defeat will be completed (Rom. 16:20; Rev. 20:7–14). But the peace of the cross is experienced in the meantime in the midst of spiritual struggle. The forces of darkness are defeated, but not yet harmless.

6:10 be strong . . . the strength of his might. Paul uses the phrase "in the strength of his might" also in 1:19 to describe the power that raised Jesus from the dead. We are not encouraged to face the evil hosts of darkness in our own strength, but in the strength of the Holy Spirit who raised Jesus and believers with Him (2:4–6; 3:16–19). This same phrase in Eph. 1:19 and 6:10 is also found in Is. 40:26, where it refers to God's power in maintaining the ongoing existence of the starry heavens.

6:11 Put on the whole armor of God. The new set of clothes (4:22–24 note) now becomes a warrior's battle gear (Col. 3:10, 12 notes). The OT allusions in Paul's description of the various pieces of armor show that believers are now arrayed with the very weapons that the Lord and His Messiah have worn to wage war on behalf of His people. Elsewhere, Paul directs believers to "put on the armor of light" and then explains the metaphor: "put on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 13:12–14).

stand. Repeated three times in vv. 11, 13, 14 (the related term "withstand" in v. 13 has the same meaning). The "walking" image of chs. 4 and 5 (4:1 note) gives way to the picture of a soldier standing firm in battle (cf. Phil. 1:27, 28).

6:12 See 1:21; 2:2; 3:10; 4:26, 27, and notes.

rulers . . . spiritual forces. These terms all refer to powerful spiritual beings that make up the "power of the air" (2:2) ruled by Satan.

darkness. See 5:8–14.

6:13 the whole armor of God. Paul combines the weapons of a Roman foot soldier with a number of Old Testament images of God, or the Messiah, as a warrior (see esp. Is. 11:1–5). Strikingly, what

is said of God and the Messiah in the Old Testament is applied to believers.

6:14 fastened on the belt of truth. The Roman soldier's leather belt supported and protected his lower abdomen, gathered his tunic together, and held his sword. Paul seems to have in mind the confidence that comes from certainty about the truthfulness of God's Word.

breastplate of righteousness. Believers are protected by the righteousness of Christ imputed to them (Rom. 4:6–11; Phil. 3:9), and they can stand up to the accusations of the devil, whose title in Greek means "slanderer" (Rom. 8:31–34). Simultaneously, Paul sees believers taking on the righteous character of Christ (4:25; 5:9) while their growing conformity to His image gives them confidence in resisting temptation. This piece of armor is what God was prophesied to wear in judging and defeating the enemy in the latter-day battle (cf. Is. 59:17). Believers are to identify with this armor of God's righteousness in Christ.

6:15 shoes for your feet. This is a clear allusion to Is. 52:7. Paul has in mind the messenger who takes the gospel to others. The image here is of the Roman soldier's sturdy sandals, which gave him stability and protection in battle, so that Isaiah has been combined with this Roman background. Ironically, the peace that comes from the gospel readies one for war against evil (2:14, 15, 17). Is. 52:7 prophesied that in the end-time restoration of Israel there would be peace, and this restoration has begun in Christ and all who identify with Him.

6:16 shield of faith. The Roman shield was large enough to cover the whole body; it was made of wood, covered with animal hide, and bound with iron at the top and bottom. When dipped in water before a battle, it could extinguish arrows that had been dipped in pitch and set ablaze. In the OT, the Lord is the "shield" of His people (Gen. 15:1; Ps. 144:1, 2).

6:17 helmet of salvation. This part of the armor is what God was predicted to be wearing when He would come to judge and defeat the

opponent in the end-time battle (cf. Is. 59:17). Believers are to identify with this armor in Christ. For Paul, salvation is a present experience (2:8 and note) as well as a future hope (1 Thess. 5:8). The believer's final ground of confidence is the faithfulness of God to complete the salvation He has begun (Phil. 1:6).

word of the Spirit, which is the word of God. The one offensive weapon in the believer's arsenal is compared to the Roman sword, short and designed for hand-to-hand combat. Jesus used the Word of God in His battle against the temptations of Satan in the wilderness (Matt. 4:1–11; Luke 4:1–13). The Lord was prophesied to make the mouth of His messianic Servant like a sharp sword (Is. 49:2; cf. Rev. 1:16; 2:12, 16; 19:15). Christ has begun to fulfill this prophecy at His first coming (Rev. 1:16; 2:12, 16) and the prophecy will be completed at Christ's final coming (Rev. 19:15). Christ's followers also have this offensive weapon when they believe in Christ and come into union with Him.

6:18–20 The battle theme in this passage ends with an urgent call to militant prayer ("keep alert") on behalf of all believers and on behalf of Paul's ministry (Col. 4:2–4). It is possible that, together with "the sword of the Spirit," prayer is one more offensive weapon in the believer's arsenal. See 1:15–23 for Paul's dependence on prayer. The radical change effected by the gospel is shown in the fact that Paul now asks Gentiles, once excluded from God's communion and community (2:11–12), to intercede on his behalf, since they now have access to the Father through the Son in the Spirit (2:18).

6:20 ambassador in chains. Paul's situation is full of irony. He is an authorized delegate of the Lord who is exalted above every creature in heaven and earth and whose title excels every other name (1:20, 21). Yet the rulers of this age have chained Paul as a prisoner, showing their ignorant blindness to the Lord of glory (1 Cor. 2:8). His ambassadorial office demands that he speak on behalf of His Sovereign, while his chains tempt him to timidity, prompting him to plead for prayers for his boldness.

FINAL GREETINGS

²¹So that you also may know how I am and what I am doing, ^jTychicus the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord will tell you everything. ²²I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may ^kencourage your hearts.

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

^lOr *brothers and sisters*

21^jCol. 4:7-9
/Acts 20:4;
2 Tim. 4:12; Titus
3:12 **22**^kCol.
3:12 **23**^lGal.
6:16; 2 Thess.
3:16; 1 Pet. 5:14
^m[Gal. 5:6;
1 Thess. 5:8]
24ⁿ[1 Cor.
16:22]

6:21–24 Tychicus. See note on Col. 4:7, 8. The absence of personal greetings in this letter may be an indication that it was intended for circulation to more than one church. See Introduction: Date and Occasion.

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