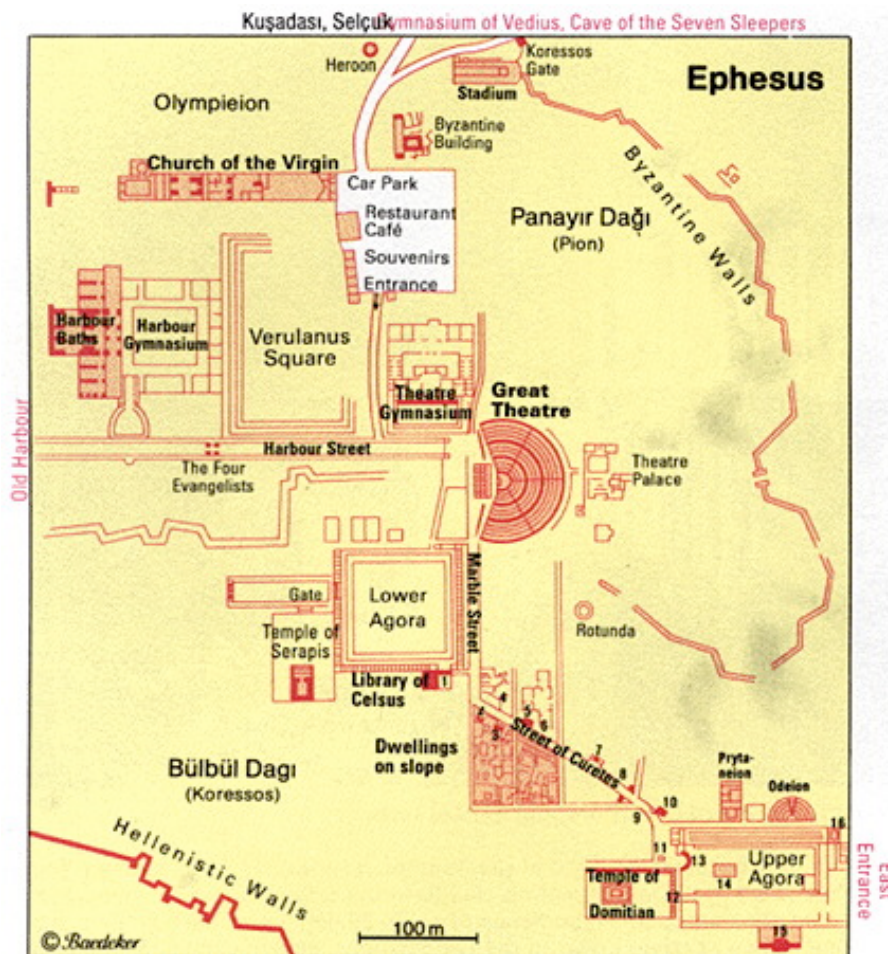


THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE EPHESIANS

Comments and questions by Joe Neil Clayton

(The text used in this material is the American Standard Version of 1901, with antiquated language forms revised to modern usage. Words in parentheses indicate those which were inserted by translators for clarity, except where Paul uses them for his own purposes.)



(City of Ephesus)

Last Revised by Joe Neil Clayton
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The Epistle of Paul to Christians in Ephesus

Ephesians 1

- 1 *Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God, to the saints (that are at Ephesus), and the faithful in Christ Jesus:*
- 2 *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

COMMENTS:

The phrase “that are at Ephesus” is not found in the earliest and most important manuscripts. Scholars say that this indicates the intention of Paul to make a general application of this letter to all the churches. The insertion of the phrase in some manuscripts suggests that those copies were distributed at Ephesus, or from Ephesus to other locations.

The Apostle Paul was very familiar with the work at Ephesus, having spent some years in that region (Acts 19:10), but he includes statements in this letter that suggest it was meant to be read in places where he had not worked (Ephesians 1:15-16, 3:2, and compare Colossians 2:1, 4:16).

Ephesians 1

- 3 *Blessed (be, or is) the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly (places) in Christ:*
- 4 *even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blemish before him in love:*
- 5 *having foreordained us unto adoption as sons through Jesus Christ unto himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,*
- 6 *to the praise of the glory of his grace, which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved:*
- 7 *in whom we have our redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace,*
- 8 *which he made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence,*
- 9 *making known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he purposed in him*
- 10 *unto a dispensation of the fulness of the times, to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens, and the things upon the earth; in him, (I say,)*
- 11 *in whom also we were made a heritage, having been foreordained according to the purpose of him who works all things after the counsel of his will;*
- 12 *to the end that we should be unto the praise of his glory, we who had before hoped in Christ:*
- 13 *in whom you also, having heard the word of the truth, the gospel of your salvation,-- in whom, having also believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise,*

14 *which is an earnest of our inheritance, unto the redemption of (God's) own possession, unto the praise of his glory.*

COMMENTS:

Verses 3 through 14 are one long sentence in the Greek, and comprise related thoughts to be pondered by the readers. They form a summation of the benefits of being a Christian, from the manner in which they became children of God to the purpose for their existence in the plan of God.

Verse 3 has a verb missing at the beginning. It could be one or the other of infinitive verbs, "be" or "is". If "be" is chosen to fill in, the thought of the verse is that God "ought to be praised or blessed." If "is" is chosen, the thought is "that the blessedness is an intrinsic part of God's character"–(Net Bible notes). Either choice is good. The primary thought of this verse is that God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Christ. This means simply that there are no spiritual blessings from God to those not "in Christ." Only those who have entered Christ by obeying the gospel in baptism can receive the blessings (see Romans 6:3-4, and Galatians 3:26-27).

(NOTE: Throughout this letter, Paul refers to the "heavenly," without selecting a word that this adjective supports [See also 1:20, 2:6, 3:10, 6:12]. The ASV translators supply the word "places," while others choose "realm," or "realms." We may conclude that this isolated adjective, apart from the supplied nouns, was a peculiar rhapsodic way for Paul to express things spiritual, since this pattern does not appear in any of his other letters.)

Verses 4-6 have language that seems to comfort "predestinarians," those who believe that we are totally passive in our salvation, and are chosen by the arbitrary whim of God to be His elect children on the basis of "limited atonement." This definition of predestination cannot be upheld in the face of such passages as 2 Peter 3:9, 1 Timothy 2:3-4, and Revelation 22:17. To agree with these verses, predestination must be defined as general, applying to those who have exercised their free will to obey. See verse 11.

Verses 7-8 show the benefits we receive in Christ: redemption and forgiveness based on the favor of God, and the offering of Christ's blood. See Romans 3:24-26.

Verses 9-12 emphasize the fact the God's grace revealed the "mystery" of salvation through Christ. Compare Titus 2:11-14.

Verses 13-14 present the process by which we are redeemed in Christ. The hearing that leads to believing the Word of God is the essential element that provokes obedience in salvation. See Acts 2:37-41 and Acts 18:8.

NOTE: God's purpose for our redemption is stated in three places of this long sentence, in verses 6, 12, and 14. Our divine mandate is the praise of the glory of the one true God. Christians, by their very existence, extol the glory of God, but they can add to this by offering vocal praise from the heart.

Ephesians 1

- 15 *For this cause I also, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which is among you, and the love which (you show) toward all the saints,*
16 *do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention (of you) in my prayers;*
17 *that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him;*
18 *having the eyes of your heart enlightened, that you all may know what is the hope of his calling, what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,*
19 *and what (is) the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to that working of the strength of his might*
20 *which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and made him to sit at his right hand in the heavenly (places),*
21 *far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:*
22 *and he put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church,*
23 *which is his body, the fulness of him that fills all in all.*

COMMENTS:

Verses 15-16 show the reason Paul was motivated to pray for his readers. He has received reports regarding their faith, and their love toward the saints, but he sees a need to pray for various improvements in their lives.

Verse 17 contains the first petition for them—that God the Father give them certain results from their knowledge of Him—namely, a spirit of wisdom and revelation. Having already demonstrated a faith that gratifies Paul, he wants growth in them.

Verses 18-21 include a prayer that they will be further “enlightened” regarding the hope they have in Christ, the richness of their role as the inheritance of God, and the power God uses in behalf of his saints—first demonstrated in the resurrection and exaltation of Christ, “far above” all other dominions and authoritative names.

Verses 22-23 reinforce the authority of Christ over all matters in the church, and define the church as the body of Christ (Compare 1 Corinthians 12:13-27). There is no place for a hierarchy of rulers, or even synods, if Christ has authority over all church matters (Matthew 28:18). It is the obligation of the members of the Body to discern what Christ has commanded, and to do it without reservation.

QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER ONE

1. What fact suggests that Paul may have intended for this letter to have general

distribution among the churches?

2. How does a person get “into Christ,” in order to have “every spiritual blessing?”
3. How do we know that our “foreordination” by God does not deprive us of our free will in choosing to obey Him?
4. In which verses of this first chapter do we find the repeated purpose of God for us (the praise of His glory)?
5. What expression in Verse 10 shows that God intended to make Christ the center of his plan to save the world?
6. To fulfill his purpose, what does God follow in working all things (Vs. 11)?
7. According to Verses 12-13, what are we to do, in order to be “sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise?”
8. What is this “sealing” called in Verse 14?
9. What two things prompted Paul to pray for his readers, according to Verses 15-16?
10. What things did Paul say he would mention in his prayers, according to Verses 17-19?
11. In what ways was Christ exalted, after his resurrection, according to Verses 20-21?
12. Is the authority of Christ over the church limited in any way (Vss. 22-23)?

Ephesians 2

1 *And you (did he make alive,) when all of you were dead through your trespasses and sins,*
2 *wherein you all once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the powers of the air, of the spirit that now works in the sons of disobedience;*
3 *among whom we also all once lived in the lust of our flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest:--*
4 *but God, being rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,*
5 *even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have all been saved),*
6 *and raised us up with him, and made us to sit with him in the heavenly (places), in Christ Jesus:*

7 *that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus:*

8 *for by grace have you all been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, (it is) the gift of God;*

9 *not of works, that no man should glory.*

10 *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared before that we should walk in them.*

COMMENTS:

Verse 1 has, in parentheses, “did he make alive,” which is not in the Greek. It is found later in this long sentence in verse 5. Without this transfer of phrase, verse 1 should read, “And although you were dead in your trespasses and sins.” Romans 6:23 says, “The wages of sin is death,” and this truth is confirmed in other places, such as James 1:13-15 (and in the Old Testament in Ezekiel 18:20). This principle would apply to Jews and Gentiles alike.

There is apparently little distinction between a trespass and a sin (Compare Leviticus 16:16 ASV). In either case, the deed brings spiritual death.

Verse 2 shows that sinfulness is the common denominator, whether we are talking about the “course of this world,” the “prince of the powers of the air,” or the “spirit that now works in the sons of disobedience.” In combination, the environment of worldliness, the influence of Satan (compare 2 Corinthians 4:3-4), and sinful inclinations of people lead to spiritual death. Worldliness can have many forms, many of which offend God (see 1 John 2:15-17). Morally, the world is corrupt (see 1 Corinthians 5:9-10), so the wisdom of the world, if believed, can lead us into sin (see 1 Corinthians 3:18-20). The sinful inclinations of people are not inherited, as Calvinists assert, but are acquired (see Ecclesiastes 7:29).

Verse 3 confirms Romans 3:23 in the revelation that all have sinned. After the first sin, we may have a tendency to continue in sin (see 2 Timothy 3:13, Isaiah 30:1, and Jeremiah 9:3-5). This leads ultimately to becoming “by nature children of wrath.” The sense of “nature” here is not by inheritance or descent, but is “a mode of feeling and acting which by long habit has become nature” (Thayer’s Greek Lexicon). When sin becomes our custom, or habit, we have a “natural” tendency to live in a way that invites the wrath of God.

Verses 4-7 declare that God was revealing the extent of His love for us (compare 1 John 4:9-10), and his matchless favor in making us alive with Christ (compare Colossians 2:8-13). This gives two significant meanings to the resurrection of Christ: first, that we share in it for our resurrection from spiritual death, the forgiveness of sin (see Romans 6:3-5); and second, that we have in Christ’s resurrection the surety of our own in the Day of Judgment (see Romans 8:11). In this way, God is able to show the rich extent of his grace toward us.

Verses 8-10 contain a theme common to many of Paul’s letters. We are saved by

Grace, through faith. There is no liberty to boast of our human invention or works in the scheme of redemption. It is God's conditional gift, based on works which He has specified (see John 6:28-29, Titus 2:3-5, and James 2:14-24)

Ephesians 2

11 *Wherefore remember, that once you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called Circumcision, in the flesh, made by hands;*

12 *that you were all at that time separate from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world.*

13 *But now in Christ Jesus, you that once were far off are made nigh in the blood of Christ.*

14 *For he is our peace, who made both one, and broke down the middle wall of partition,*

15 *having abolished in the flesh the enmity, (even) the law of commandments (contained) in ordinances; that he might create in himself of the two one new man, (so) making peace;*

16 *and might reconcile them both in one body unto God through the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:*

17 *and he came and preached peace to you that were far off, and peace to them that were nigh:*

18 *for through him we both have our access in one Spirit unto the Father.*

19 *So then you are no more strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God,*

20 *being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner stone;*

21 *in whom each several building, fitly framed together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord;*

22 *in whom you also are built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit.*

COMMENTS:

These verses all deal with a subject important to all the churches under the care of Paul—the full citizenship of Gentiles in the Kingdom. While assuring the Gentiles, Paul also disarms any attempt on the part of the Jewish Christians to consign the Gentiles to a subservient position.

Verses 11-12 review the hopeless condition of the Gentiles, here called the Uncircumcision, before they were converted to Christ. Their alienation from the mainstream of God's plan was the result of sin (compare Colossians 1:18-22). Later, in our study of Ephesians, we see that Paul warns against following Gentile ways (see Ephesians 4:17-24). If the Gentiles had been faithful to the original law of the Patriarchs, they would not have been so far from God, but Paul shows their descent into depravity in Romans 1:18-32.

Verses 13-18 establish the equity of the Gentiles with converts from Judaism. The blood of Christ shed on the cross (verses 13 and 16), has brought them both into closeness with God, but this work of peaceful restoration has also eliminated the

cause for their antagonism to each other (“the law of commandments” that erected the wall. See Deuteronomy 7:1-8). With the Old Covenant no longer in force, there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile (Galatians 3:26-29). Their peace, and their joining together in “one body,” gives them equal access to the Father. Jew and Greek are as “one new man.”

Verses 19-22 figuratively describe the erection of the “household of God” (compare 1 Timothy 3:14-15), called also a “holy temple” (compare 1 Corinthians 3:16-17), and a “habitation of God in the Spirit” (compare 1 John 4:12-13), using Christians as the building blocks. The foundation laid by the Apostles and Prophets undergirds this “building” (compare 1 Corinthians 3:10-11).

QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 2

1. In verses 1-2, what three sources of influence caused death “through your trespasses and sins?”
2. According to verse 3, what do people do to make them “by nature children of wrath?”
3. What three qualities of God combine to cause him to “make us alive together with Christ,” according to verses 4-5?
4. What is the result of our resurrection from spiritual death, according to verse 6?
5. What was God’s reason for showing the “exceeding riches of His grace” toward the early Christians, according to verse 7?
6. What combination of things saves us, according to Verse 8?
7. What sort of works have no part in our salvation? (Verse 9)
8. What did God create us to do, according to verse 10?
9. What words are used in verse 11 to describe the Jews and the Gentiles?
10. What were the disadvantages of the Gentiles before their conversion, according to verse 12?
11. What advantages did the Gentiles gain by their conversion, according to verses 13 through 19?

12. How did God “slay the enmity” between Jew and Gentile, according to Verse 15?
13. In what three figurative ways is the church of Christ described in verses 19-22?

Ephesians 3

- 1 *For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus in behalf of you Gentiles,--*
- 2 *if so be that you have heard of the dispensation of that grace of God which was given me toward you;*
- 3 *how that by revelation was made known unto me the mystery, as I wrote before in few words,*
- 4 *whereby, when you read, you can perceive my understanding in the mystery of Christ;*
- 5 *which in other generations was not made known unto the sons of men, as it has now been revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit;*
- 6 *that the Gentiles are fellow-heirs, and fellow-members of the body, and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel,*
- 7 *whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of that grace of God which was given me according to the working of his power.*
- 8 *Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, was this grace given, to preach unto the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;*
- 9 *and to make all men see what is the dispensation of the mystery which for ages has been hid in God who created all things;*
- 10 *to the intent that now unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly (places) might be made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God,*
- 11 *according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:*
- 12 *in whom we have boldness and access in confidence through our faith in him.*

COMMENTS:

Although **verses 1-12** were written by Paul to build more confidence in the Gentiles regarding their status in the church, **verses 1-4** carry a principle that cannot be ignored in discerning God’s reason for revealing His New Covenant in the writings of the Apostles and Prophets (compare 2 Peter 3:1-2, and 1 Corinthians 14:37). Paul commands his readers to understand the will of the Lord (Ephesians 5:17), but here he gives the process—read and understand. The readers need to be assured, however, that the written words are God’s, and not that of men (Compare 1 Corinthians 2:6-13).

Paul is gratified that he was chosen to be the “Apostle to the Gentiles” (verse 8, and compare Galatians 2:6-9), but he believes he has a larger mandate to “make all men see” the full revelation of God, to the end that all “principalities and powers” may discern God’s wisdom in the integrating of all people, of whatever background, in the church (compare Romans 3:29-30, 10:12-13).

Ephesians 3

13 *Wherefore I ask that you may not faint at my tribulations for you, which are your glory.*

14 *For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father,*

15 *from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named,*

16 *that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, that you may all be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inward man;*

17 *that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; to the end that you, being rooted and grounded in love,*

18 *may be strong to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth,*

19 *and to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge, that you may be filled unto all the fulness of God.*

20 *Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us,*

21 *unto him (be) the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever. Amen.*

COMMENTS:

Verse 13 is Paul's appeal to his readers to share his view of his tribulations—they contribute to the cause, and are for their "glory" (compare 2 Corinthians 1:6, Philippians 1:12-14, and Colossians 1:24).

The prayer promised in **Verses 14-15** would have several goals—all mentioned in **verses 16-19**. His prayer for all the saints would be that they "apprehend....what is the breadth and length and height and depth" of their experience as Christians. This should be the goal of every Christian ("filled unto all the fulness of God"), though it requires diligent study of all aspects of Christian life.

Verse 17 carries a formula for the indwelling of Christ. It is "through faith." It can be presumed from this that the "indwelling of the Holy Spirit," coveted by Pentecostals today, is not a special gift, but is acquired in the same way—by faith instilled through the word (Romans 10:17).

Verses 20-21 is a hymn of praise to God for his generosity in bestowing so many blessings on us (Compare 1 Corinthians 2:7-9, and 1 Timothy 1:13-14).

QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 3

1. In verse 1, do you think that Paul speaks of himself as a prisoner in jail, or as a prisoner of his mission?
2. Do we know anything about Paul's former writing that is mentioned in verse 3?

3. What were the readers to perceive, according to verse 4?
4. Though Paul says in verse 5-6 that the “mystery” of the elevation of the Gentiles was not made known to former generations, do you think he is he forgetting such prophecies as Isaiah 42:1-6, 49:6?
5. Were any of the other Apostles of Christ made ministers to the Gentiles with Paul?
6. What did Paul preach to the Gentiles, according to verse 8?
7. What did Paul want to make all men see, according to verses 9-11?
8. What does our faith in Christ give us, according to verse 12?
9. What did the tribulations of Paul accomplish, according to verse 13?
10. What posture of prayer is mentioned in verse 14?
11. Who do you think are the families in heaven, mentioned in verse 15?
12. What things did Paul pray for, according to verses 16-19?
13. Could we use the words of Paul in verses 20-21 in our own hymns of praise to God?

Ephesians 4

- 1 *I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beseech you to walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called,*
- 2 *with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;*
- 3 *giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*
- 4 *(There is) one body, and one Spirit, even as also you were called in one hope of your calling;*
- 5 *one Lord, one faith, one baptism,*
- 6 *one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all.*

COMMENTS:

Verses 1-2 call on Christians to “walk the walk” that is “worthy of the calling.” What makes the calling great is that it is from the Lord (see Romans 8:29-30). The calling was through the gospel (see 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14). The Christian virtues of our “walk” are stated in verse 2, but the following verses will reveal another important virtue. (**NOTE:** The word “meekness” in Verse 2 is based on a Greek word that was commonly used to show “the merciful execution of justice on behalf

of those who have no voice, by those who are in a position of authority" [Net Bible notes]. The one who is meek by this definition becomes a surrogate petitioner for the lowly.)

Verses 3-6 explain how we can diligently "keep the unity of the Spirit, in the bond of peace" among ourselves. There is to be no controversy among us regarding the singularity of the body (the church—see chapter 1:22-23), the Spirit (compare 1 Corinthians 12:11), the hope (see 1 Peter 1:3-4), the Lord (see 1 Timothy 2:5), the faith ("once for all delivered to the saints" -- Jude 3), the baptism (the one in water, in the name of Jesus Christ – Acts 10:47-48, 1 Peter 3:20-21), and the God and Father (see 1 Corinthians 8:6). If unity is held on all these, peace will prevail. Let any one of them be heretically misconstrued, then holding to the unity of the rest will not matter.

Ephesians 4

7 But unto each one of us was the grace given according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

8 Wherefore he says, When he ascended on high, he led captivity captive, And gave gifts unto men.

9 (Now this, He ascended, what is it but that he also descended into the lower parts of the earth?

10 He that descended is the same also that ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.)

11 And he gave some (to be) apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

12 for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ:

13 till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a fullgrown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

14 that we may be no longer children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, in craftiness, after the wiles of error;

15 but speaking truth in love, we may grow up in all things into him, who is the head, (even) Christ;

16 from whom all the body fitly framed and knit together through that which every joint supplies, according to the working in (due) measure of each several part, makes the increase of the body unto the building up of itself in love.

COMMENTS:

Verse 7 introduces the concept that certain ones in the church have gifts from the Lord. These may be inspired gifts, or natural gifts. In either case, it is required that the recipients of gifts use them to the glory of God and Christ (see Romans 12:6-8).

Verses 8-10 contain a device occasionally used by the Apostle Paul. He quotes language from the sacred text that is familiar to his readers, but applies it to matters that were not considered in their original use. For example, see the context of his quotation from Exodus 16:18 in 2 Corinthians 8:15. Here, Paul loosely quotes Psalm 68:18, where the psalmist speaks of “receiving gifts among men,” rather than giving gifts to men. The King James Reading is “received gifts for men.” Whatever the theme of the Psalm, Paul takes the words and applies them to the descending and ascending of Jesus, and His victory over His opponents. In verse 9, the phrase “lower parts of the earth” has been interpreted in several ways. The traditional application is to the underworld (hell). This interpretation gives support to the doubtful contention that Jesus went into hell, after His crucifixion, in order to “preach to the spirits in prison,” that is, the sinners of the era before the flood (see 1 Peter 3:18-21). This interpretation is in error, because it has Jesus showing partiality to the sinners of one era, to the neglect of others. Peter’s statement merely shows that Jesus had a spiritual existence, before he descended to take the form of flesh and blood, and that in this spiritual form he did His pre-flood preaching (Compare 1 Corinthians 10:1-4). Some language scholars say that Paul’s phrase can be constructed, “to the lower parts, the earth,” referring simply to the incarnation of deity in Christ. In an attempt to guide his readers to a proper application of his quotation from Psalms, Paul puts verses 9 and 10 in the form of a parenthetical statement.

Verses 11-16 reveal the nature of the gifts of Christ to men. It was in his power to elect certain men to be inspired by the Holy Spirit, Apostles and Prophets. Others, however, could function without the gift of prophecy. Evangelists could rise from the ranks of the uninspired, such as Apollos (see Acts 18:24-28). Though “eloquent,” and “mighty in the Scriptures,” Apollos was mistaken about the doctrine of baptism. When corrected, he became a powerful exhorter, “watering” churches “planted” by Paul (1 Corinthians 3:6). As to Pastors (elders, overseers), divine inspiration was not required—only “holding to the faithful word which is according to the teaching, that he may be able to exhort in the sound doctrine, and to convict the gainsayers” (Titus 1:9). Teachers may receive their instruction from inspired men (2 Timothy 2:2), but did not need to be inspired by the Holy Spirit.

The work of these men led to the building up of the “body of Christ.” Their goals were (1) to unify all believers in the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, and (2) that maturity, measured by the fulness of Christ, be gained, so that we would not be unsettled by “every wind of doctrine,” taught by crafty and deceitful people. The key to this growth was “speaking the truth in love,” following Christ in all things, and contributing to the growth of the church by functioning as loving members of the Body. Growth and maturity not only protects us from error, but increases our ability to “make our calling and election sure” (see 2 Peter 1:2-11).

Ephesians 4

17 *This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you no longer walk as the Gentiles also walk, in the vanity of their mind,*

18 *being darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardening of their heart;*

19 *who being past feeling gave themselves up to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.*

20 *But you did not so learn Christ;*

21 *if so be that you heard him, and were taught in him, even as truth is in Jesus:*

22 *that you put away, as concerning your former manner of life, the old man, that waxes corrupt after the lusts of deceit;*

23 *and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind,*

24 *and put on the new man, that after God has been created in righteousness and holiness of truth.*

25 *Wherefore, putting away falsehood, speak truth each one with his neighbor: for we are members one of another.*

26 *Be angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath:*

27 *neither give place to the devil.*

28 *Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing that is good, that he may have whereof to give to him that has need.*

29 *Let no corrupt speech proceed out of your mouth, but such as is good for edifying as the need may be, that it may give grace to them that hear.*

30 *And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you were sealed unto the day of redemption.*

31 *Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and railing, be put away from you, with all malice:*

32 *and be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you.*

COMMENTS:

This section of Ephesians is typical of Paul. As in other letters, he comes to some practical and pointed instructions on Christian living. The pattern here is: "Put off" and "Put on." He first tells the converted Gentiles not to act like unconverted Gentiles. The "Old Man" is to be discarded in favor of the new (compare Romans 6:5-7, and Colossians 3:5-10).

Verse 23 urges them to be "renewed in the spirit of your mind" (compare Romans 8:6-9).

Verses 25-26 are quotations from the Old Testament (Zechariah 8:16 and Psalm 4:4). In verse 27, the notes of the Net Bible suggest that the common application of this verse (*do not continue to be angry, and do not sin while angry*) is not the best usage. They suggest that the grammar and syntax of the verse tells the Christian to be

righteously indignant over the sins of others, and to take immediate steps to correct and discipline the sinner (Compare 1 Corinthians 5:1-5).

Verse 27 has an admonition that should be compared to James 4:7.

Verse 29 has been applied by some interpreters to mean that we should not be given to cursing and filthy speech. However, we should probably see this as an instruction to avoid teaching false doctrine, since it is said in opposition to the phrase, "but such as is good for edifying as the need may be." A better admonition against filthy speech is found in Colossians 3:8.

Verse 30 warns against "grieving the Holy Spirit of God," because the Spirit's work is in the revelation of God's will for us. Failing to comply with that will would certainly grieve God's Spirit, "in whom you were sealed unto the day of redemption." (Compare Ephesians 1:13.)

Verses 31-32 return to the list of things to put off and put on, as Christians.

QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER FOUR

1. What traits of character does Paul tell Christians to have, when "walking worthily of the calling?" (See verses 1-2)
2. Do verses 3-6 set forth all the things on which Christians need to have unity?
3. When Christ ascended on high, his gifts to men were of what kind, according to verses 7-11?
4. Which of the 5 offices mentioned in verse 11 could be held without the help of divine inspiration?
5. According to verses 12-13, what were the goals of the work of these ministers?
6. What benefit will come from being mature as Christians, according to verses 14-15?
7. According to verse 16, what helps the body (church) to increase?
8. What were the characteristics of unconverted Gentiles, according to verses 17-19?
9. What do we learn in Christ to "put away," according to verses 20-22?
10. When we are "renewed in the spirit of our mind," what should we "put on," according to verses 23-24?
11. List the things in verses 25-32 that Christians are to "put off" and "put on."

Ephesians 5

- 1 *Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children;*
- 2 *and walk in love, even as Christ also loved you, and gave himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for an odor of a sweet smell.*
- 3 *But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is becoming to saints;*
- 4 *nor filthiness, nor foolish talking, or jesting, which are not befitting: but rather giving of thanks.*
- 5 *For you know this of a surety, that no fornicator, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.*
- 6 *Let no man deceive you with empty words: for because of these things comes the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience.*
- 7 *Therefore, do not be partakers with them;*
- 8 *For you were once darkness, but are now light in the Lord: walk as children of light*
- 9 *(for the fruit of the light is in all goodness and righteousness and truth),*
- 10 *proving what is well-pleasing unto the Lord;*
- 11 *and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather even reprove them;*
- 12 *for the things which are done by them in secret it is a shame even to speak of.*

COMMENTS:

Verse 1 sets a formidable task for the Christian, when Paul says, “be imitators of God.” A short list of characteristics we need to imitate would contain His kindness (Matthew 5:44-45), His willingness to forgive (Ephesians 4:32), His holiness (1 Peter 1:15-16), His mercifulness (Luke 6:36), His perfectness (Matthew 5:48), His abhorrence of sin (Psalm 5:4-6), and His love (1 John 4:16). From this beginning, many references that speak of the character of God could be listed. Our motive for imitating God comes from being His “beloved children.”

Verse 2 calls for the imitation of Christ in the kind of love he showed: love that moved him to offer himself as a sacrifice for us (compare Hebrews 10:11-14, and 1 Corinthians 5:7-8). Some make the argument that the death of Christ is not sacrificial, but these verses make it very plain that it is.

Verses 3-6 contain very specific commands regarding moral issues. The list is not as complete as in other letters (see 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 and Galatians 5:19-21), but when tied to the admonitions covering ethical behavior in chapter 4, they set forth a moral and spiritual agenda for the children of God. Verse 5 reminds them that they have been warned against this type of behavior before, and verse 6 tells them that they must not let themselves be duped by the “empty” words of those who try to “turn the grace of our God into lasciviousness” (Jude 4).

- 13 *But all things when they are reproved are made manifest by the light: for everything that is made manifest is light.*
- 14 *Wherefore (he) says, Awake, you that sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall shine upon you.*
- 15 *Look therefore carefully how you walk, not as unwise, but as wise;*
- 16 *redeeming the time, because the days are evil.*
- 17 *Wherefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.*
- 18 *And do not be drunken with wine, wherein is riot, but be filled with the Spirit;*
- 19 *speaking one to another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord;*
- 20 *giving thanks always for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father;*
- 21 *subjecting yourselves one to another in the fear of Christ.*

COMMENTS:

Verse 13 proclaims that reproof of immoral and unethical behavior is based on “the light” of truth.

The previous verses are mostly negative. A different set of admonitions are found in **verses 14-21**. There are fewer negative commands. The pattern is positive—Awake! Arise! Look carefully! Redeem the time! Understand what the will of the Lord is! Be filled with the Spirit! Singing and making melody! Give thanks! Subject yourselves!

Verse 21 leads directly into the thoughts presented in verses 22-30.

Ephesians 5

- 22 *Wives, (be in subjection) unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.*
- 23 *For the husband is the head of the wife, and Christ also is the head of the church, (being) himself the savior of the body.*
- 24 *But as the church is subject to Christ, so (let) the wives also (be) to their husbands in everything.*
- 25 *Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for it;*
- 26 *that he might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water with the word,*
- 27 *that he might present the church to himself a glorious (church), not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.*
- 28 *Even so ought husbands also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He that loves his own wife loves himself:*
- 29 *for no man ever hated his own flesh; but nourishes and cherishes it, even as Christ also the church;*
- 30 *because we are members of his body.*
- 31 *For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the*

two shall become one flesh.

32 This mystery is great: but I speak in regard of Christ and of the church.

33 Nevertheless each one of you must also love his own wife even as himself; and (let) the wife (see) that she fear her husband.

COMMENTS:

It would be tempting to use these verses to put emphasis solely on the husband-wife relationship. Yet, Paul is using them to speak “in regard of Christ and of the church.” The motivation for a wife to submit to her husband is found in the ideal submission of the church to Christ (see Colossians 1:18). If the church is not in full subjection to Christ, then the wives do not have an ideal example of subjection to their husbands.

The love to be shown by the husband for the wife takes its precedent from the sacrificial love of Christ for the church. Thus, faithful and submissive marriage partners can behave in a way that will depict the exemplary relationship of the church to the headship of Christ (compare 1 Corinthians 11:3). Only by complete submission to the will of God and Christ can the church maintain its identity as the chaste virgin worthy to be married the great our High Priest – Jesus (Compare Hebrews 4:14 and Leviticus 21:10-14).

QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 5

1. Though we can imitate God in many moral characteristics, as verse 1 commands, in what ways are we unable to imitate God?
2. What motivated Christ to offer himself as a sacrifice, according to verse 2?
3. What sins are listed by Paul in verses 3-5? (Do other lists include more?)
4. Is there a danger that Christians could be deceived regarding the perilous nature of sin, according to verse 6?
5. For what reason should we not be “partakers” with sinners, according to verses 7-10?
6. Instead of having “fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness,” what are we to do, according to verse 11?
7. What advice is found in verse 12 regarding our speech?
8. What helps in the reproof of sins, according to verse 13?

9. What sort of “death,” do you think, does Paul refer to in verse 14?
10. If we walk in wisdom, what does this help us to do, according to verses 15-16?
11. What does verse 17 say that we can do with the “will of the Lord?”
12. Instead of drunkenness, what sort of exhilaration are we to seek, according to verses 18-19?
13. According to verse 20, what command does Paul give regarding the giving of thanks?
14. Does verse 21 serve as an introduction to the rest of this chapter?
15. What degree of subjection should wives follow in their relationship to their husbands, according to verse 22?
16. What example of subjection should wives follow in their relationship to their husbands, according to verses 23-24?
17. What example do husbands have regarding their love for their wives, according to verses 25-30?
18. According to verses 28-29, what should be their guideline to the way husbands treat their wives?
19. Where in the Old Testament do we find the quotation in verse 31?
20. What was Paul’s main point for writing to the Ephesians (and others) in this section, according to verse 32?
21. What word does Paul use in verse 33 regarding the attitude of the wife to her husband? (How do you define this word?)

Ephesians 6

- 1 *Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.*
- 2 *Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with promise),*
- 3 *that it may be well with you, and you may live long on the earth.*
- 4 *And, you fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath: but nurture them in the chastening and admonition of the Lord.*

COMMENTS:

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first deals with family relationships. The second, the relationship between masters and servants (or, slaves). The third section is a colorful description of the spiritual equipment of the Christian soldier.

Verses 1-4 place responsibilities on children and fathers. The children are to obey their parents. The phrase “in the Lord” could mean “within the Christian family,” or “in things that are compatible with the Lord’s will.” In either sense, there is support for the view in the Scripture. This command of Paul is a reinforcement (or, replacement) of one of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:12). Paul rightly calls it the “first commandment with promise,” because God promised long life to the one who honored father and mother. As children grow to maturity, and leave their childhood home, there are those who teach that they no longer have the duty to “obey” their parents. Yet, Paul takes his precedent from a command that says “honor your father and mother,” and it is inconceivable that a time would ever come when grown and independent children could cease to honor their parents, or to discontinue heeding their advice (in the Lord).

Paul lays stress on the role of fathers in verse 4, saying first that they must not “provoke their children to wrath” (compare Colossians 3:21). Instead, they are to “nurture them in the chastening and admonition of the Lord” (Compare Hebrews 12:4-11). The nurturing here could be compared to that to be practiced by the evangelist, Timothy (1 Timothy 4:6).

Ephesians 6

5 *Servants, be obedient unto them that according to the flesh are your masters, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ;*

6 *not in the way of eye service, as men-pleasers; but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart;*

7 *with good will doing service, as unto the Lord, and not unto men:*

8 *knowing that whatsoever good thing each one does, he shall receive the same again from the Lord, whether (he be) bond or free.*

9 *And, you masters, do the same things unto them, and forbear threatening: knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no respect of persons with him.*

COMMENTS:

Verses 5-8 deal with servants, who receive instruction similar to that of wives, in verse 5 (see 5:22, and compare Colossians 3:22). Obedience to earthly masters, coupled with respect, and straightforward devotion, are traits which all Christians should show in serving Christ. Eye-service is forbidden, since it is hypocritical.

Sincere willing service from the heart will gain appreciation from the master. Even if the master does not appreciate this kind of servant, the Lord does, and He will reward him.

Verse 9 turns to the masters, who are to have the same benevolent attitude toward the servant, without threats of punishment. This verse presents the idea that both master and servant are servants of the Master in heaven, who shows no partiality. In the Roman world, this situation might be common among Christians, with the bound and the free as brothers in Christ. Paul does not advocate any social change in the matter of slavery—only proper behavior on the part of both bond and free (Compare 1 Corinthians 7:20-24, and Philemon 10-16).

Ephesians 6

10 *Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of his might.*

11 *Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*

12 *For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual (hosts) of wickedness in the heavenly (places).*

13 *Wherefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand.*

14 *Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness,*

15 *and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace;*

16 *with it all, taking up the shield of faith, with which you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the evil (one).*

17 *And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:*

18 *with all prayer and supplication praying at all seasons in the Spirit, and watching there in all perseverance and supplication for all the saints,*

19 *And on my behalf, that utterance may be given unto me in opening my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel,*

20 *for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.*

COMMENTS:

This masculine illustration is to apply to both genders of Christians, The strength of the Lord is in wearing all the protective components of truth (belt), righteousness (breastplate), the gospel of peace (shoes), faith (shield), and salvation (helmet). Well armed with these things, the Christian can stand against the “wiles of the devil.” The only offensive weapon he needs is “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”

Prayer and pleading at all seasons will reinforce the effectiveness of this armor, and Paul asks for their prayers for him, as well, so that he, as a captive ambassador for Christ, might be bold in the proclamation of truth (Compare 2 Corinthians 5:20).

Ephesians 6

21 *But that you also may know my affairs, how I do, Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, shall make known to you all things:*

22 *whom I have sent unto you for this very purpose, that you may know our state, and that he may comfort your hearts.*

23 *Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

24 *Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ with (a love) incorruptible.*

COMMENTS:

Apparently, Tychicus was Paul's courier to carry this letter to the brethren for their reading (see Colossians 4:7, and 1 Timothy 4:12). He would supplement the message with personal reports on the well-being of Paul. The peace and love of God and Christ are sent to them, and his last wish is that grace may accompany all who have incorruptible love for Christ.

QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 6

1. What reason does Paul give for obedience to parents, in verse 1?
2. What was the promise connected with honoring parents, according to verses 2-3?
3. What is the negative command to fathers in verse 4? What is the positive command?
4. Under what conditions is the obedience of servants to be performed, according to verses 5-7?
5. Is the servant to look for his reward from his earthly master, according to verse 8?
6. Why should masters do good things to their servants, and "forbear threatening," according to verse 9?
7. In whom are Christians to be strong, according to verse 10?
8. What are the reasons given by Paul for putting on the "whole armor of God," in verses 11-13?
9. What do the various pieces of armor represent, according to verses 14-17?
10. What actions should accompany the wearing of the armor, according to verses

18-20?

11. What informal titles does Paul give to Tychicus, in verse 21.
12. Why did Paul send Tychicus to report to the readers, according to verses 21-22?
13. What did Paul hope would come to his readers from “God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ,” according to verse 23?
14. What did he hope would be with “all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ with (a love) incorruptible,” according to verse 23?
15. What important lessons did you get from this study of Ephesians?