THE HIGH CALLING OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST

A Devotional Commentary on the Book of Ephesians

by Paul G. Apple, Aug. 2001, rev. Sept. 2023

SINCE GOD DESIGNED THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST FOR HIS GLORY AND BLESSED IT WITH THE RICHES OF HIS GLORY, LET US WALK WORTHY OF OUR HIGH CALLING

For each section:

- Thesis statement … to focus on the big idea
- Analytical outline … to guide the understanding
- Devotional questions … to encourage life application
- Representative quotations … to stimulate deeper insight

Ephesians 3:21 "*to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus*"
Ephesians 4:1 "*walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called*"

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BACKGROUND OF THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS

Malick: His Big Idea for the book -- "IN VIEW OF THE SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS WITH WHICH GOD HAS ENRICHED BELIEVERS, AND THE DELIVERANCE WHICH HE HAS PROVIDED FOR INDIVIDUALS AND THE GENTILES FROM THEIR GODLESS POSITION TO ONE OF UNITY WITH HIM AND ONE ANOTHER, PAUL EXHORTS THE EPHESIANS TO MAINTAIN THEIR UNIFIED POSITION BY LOVING ONE ANOTHER, AND BY RESISTING DEMONIC ATTACKS IN ACCORDANCE WITH GOD'S PROVISIONS FOR THEM"

Pounds:
"Ephesians: Queen of the Epistles -- The Mystical Body of Christ

Ephesians tarries largely among the heavenlies. It is characterized by dignity and serenity which is in harmony with the elevation of its thoughts. There is scarcely even an echo of the great controversies which ring so loudly in the Epistles to the Romans and Galatians.

It is 'the divinest composition of man,' wrote Coleridge. It has been called 'the crown of St. Paul's writings,' 'the Queen of the Epistles,' and the 'greatest and most relevant of his works.' W. O. Carver said, 'Ephesians is the greatest piece of writing in all of history.' It may well be the 'most influential document ever written.'

'Paul has written nothing more profound than chapters 1 to 3 of Ephesians,' writes A. T. Robertson. Stalker termed them the profoundest thing ever written. He sounds the depths of truth and reaches the heights. It is a letter written in the atmosphere of prayer. Most Christians have never prayed for some of the things which Paul prayed for in these two prayers.

Expositors observes: 'It is the grandest of all the Pauline letters. There is a peculiar and sustained loftiness in its teaching which has deeply impressed the greatest minds and has earned for it the title of the Epistle of the Ascension.'"

MacArthur: "In this book the word *riches* is used five times; *grace* twelve times; *glory* eight times; *fulness, filled up*, or *fills* six times; and the key phrase *in Christ* (or *in Him*) fifteen times. Christ is the source, the sphere, and the guarantee of every spiritual blessing and of all spiritual riches, and those who are *in Him* have access to all that He is and has…

Paul's message throughout this epistle is that believers might understand and experience more fully all of the blessings granted by their heavenly Father and His Son and their Savior, Jesus Christ."

Hendriksen: Theme: The Church Glorious

I. Adoration for its
   - ch. 1 Eternal Foundation *'in Christ'*
   - ch. 2 Universal Scope (embracing both Jew and Gentile)
   - ch. 3 Lofty Goal

II. Exhortation describing and urging:
   - ch. 4:1-16 Organic Unity (amid Diversity) and Growth into Christ
   - ch. 4:17-6:9 Glorious Renewal
   - ch. 6:10-24 Effective Armor"

Stott: "The letter focuses on what God did through the historical work of Jesus Christ and does through his Spirit today, in order to build his new society in the midst of the old…

1. The new life which God has given us in Christ (1:3 - 2:10)
2. The new society which God has created through Christ (2:11 - 3:21)
3. The new standards which God expects of his new society, especially unity and purity (4:1 - 5:21)
4. The new relationships into which God has brought us -- harmony in the home and hostility to the devil (5:21 - 6:24)"

Guthrie: "Throughout the letter, Paul insists that God is working out His great purpose for mankind by calling men to Christ and forming in Christ a new, redeemed society. This redeemed society, which constitutes God's new people, is referred to in various ways in the letter; for example, as God's people (1:2, TCNT), God's heritage (1:11, TCNT), God's building (2:19-22), Christ's body (1:22-23), Christ's bride (5:22-31), the church (1:22; 3:10; 21, et al.), and one new man (2:14,15). The suggestion in all these figures is that God now has a people in the world who belong uniquely to Him. In them His purpose of grace is being worked out, and through them He plans to effect His intention for the whole universe. Thus, the most comprehensive statement of the theme of Ephesians is this: the eternal purpose of God and the place of Christ and His people in that purpose. This concept is explained in the first three chapters of Ephesians; the last three chapters show its practical consequences for the Christian life."

Malick: Background Notes --

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS

I. AUTHOR: The Apostle Paul
   A. External Evidence: All tradition takes the epistle as being Pauline until it was first disputed by Erasmus (fifteenth century) and by later eighteenth-twentieth century critics. This tradition is unassailable in its unanimity
      1. Marcion included it in his canon, although under the title of Laodiceans (c. AD 140)2
      2. It was in the Muratorian Canon under the Epistles of Paul (c. AD 180)
      3. It is under the Epistles of Paul in the earliest evidence from the Latin and Syriac versions
      4. It probably preceded the Epistle of Clement of Rome to the Corinthians (AD 95) because of its development of thought3
   B. Internal Evidence: Although later critics, such as Erasmus (fifteenth century) and eighteenth-twentieth century scholars, questioned Pauline authenticity over internal evidence4, these arguments have reasonable answers,5 and do not override the external evidence
      1. Self-Claims: The author of Ephesians claims to be the apostle Paul with personal knowledge of his readers:
         a. The author claims to be Paul in the opening address much like Galatians, 2 Corinthians, and Colossians 1:1
         b. The author claims to be Paul in the body of the letter in 3:1 just as in 2 Corinthians 10:1; Galatians 5:2, Colossians 1:23, 1 Thessalonians 2:18; Philemon 9.
         c. The letter abounds with statements in the first person
         d. The author describes himself as one who has personally heard of the readers (1:15), who thanks the Lord for them (1:16), who is a prisoner of Christ Jesus (3:1; 6:1), received a mystery from God (3:3ff), was divinely appointed to ministry (3:7), presently suffers (3:13), intercedes for the readers (3:14ff), affirms the readers' need for a new way of thinking and living against a Gentile background (14:17ff), interprets the mystery (5:32), appeals for prayer on his behalf (16:19-20), and concludes with a personal salutation (6:21-22)
      2. Pauline Structure: The letter has distinct affinities with Paul's other epistles:
         a. Pauline sequence: opening greeting, thanksgiving, doctrinal exposition, ethical exhortations, concluding salutations, and benediction

b. The basing of moral appeals upon previous theological arguments is an integral part of the apostle's approach to problems

3. Pauline Language and Literary Affinities: Similarity of words, vocabulary, and style support Pauline authorship
   a. Many words are common with this letter and other Pauline letters which are also not found in the NT
   b. The vocabulary is close to earlier Pauline letters
   c. Ephesians has Pauline characteristics such as paradoxical antitheses (6:15,20), free citations of the OT (1:22; 2:13,17; 4:25; 5:2; 6:1-3; cf. 1 Cor. 3:9)
   d. Striking similarities exist between Ephesians and Colossians (which few modern scholars doubt), therefore, Ephesians seems to be Pauline too
4. Theological Affinities: This letter has been called the crown of Paulinism due to its rich Pauline theology:
   a. Although the "Church" is a new emphases in the letter, there is a clear background of Pauline theology
   b. God is glorious (1:17), powerful (1:19ff), and merciful (2:4ff)
   c. The Believer is "in Christ" (1:3,10,11, etc.)
   d. The cross has a reconciliatory value (2:13ff)
   e. The Holy Spirit has a similar ministry (2:18; 3:5; 4:1ff, 30; 5:18)
   f. God's counsel is predestining (1:5ff)
5. Historical Data: The evidence here is negative rather than positive:
   a. There is no mention of the fall of Jerusalem even though the dividing wall between Jews and Gentiles is destroyed
   b. There is no mention of the persecution of believers
   c. There is no mention of ecclesiastical organization

II. DESTINATION: Most probably Ephesus, but a circular letter is also possible to the churches of Asia minor with Ephesus as the primary church addressed
   A. Tradition has handed down the letter as one sent to the Ephesian church
      1. All known manuscripts except for five6 have ejn jEqevsw/ (1:1)
      2. The expression "to the saints who ..." is always followed by a place name in parallel Pauline passages (cf. Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 1:1; Phil. 1:1)
      3. Paul seems to have a particular group of people in mind (1:15ff; 6:22)
      4. Perhaps the words ejn jEqevsw/ were deleted early in some manuscripts in order to adapt the epistle for use in other churches. Apparently this

happened to the book of Romans since Codex G (ninth century), 1908 (eleventh century), and 1739 all delete "in Rome" at Romans 1:7

5. If Paul meant this letter to be sent to the churches of several cities, why did he not say so as in Galatians 1:2?
6. The title of the letter, PROS EFESIOUS ("To the Ephesians"), is attached to all of the Greek manuscripts even though 1:1 is not agreed upon

B. Modern criticism has strongly disputed Ephesus as the destination:
   1. The words ejn jEqevsw/ are not in the best Alexandrian manuscripts (P46, [AD 200], a [AD 400], B [AD 400]),
   2. The letter has an impersonal tone which does not reflect Paul's writing to the Ephesians whom he knew so well (1:15; 3:2; 4:21)Even the benediction is impersonal since it is not addressed to "you" but to the "brethren" and to "all those" (6:23,24)To not mention any of the individuals of the church is unusual in view of the fact that Paul ministered among the Ephesians for three years (Acts 19:1--20:5), and developed a close relationship with the elders (Acts 20:17-38)
   3. The words ejn jEqevsw/ seem to have been omitted from Marcion's text since he considered it to have been addressed to the Laodiceans, not the EphesiansBut Marcion may only have had parts of the letter without the introduction, therefore the ascription may have only been a guess from Colossians 4:16.

C. Possible Explanations:
   1. Blank Space: It is possible that Paul left a blank space in the original manuscripts to be filled in by each church as they read it. This would make the five manuscripts with "in Ephesus" copies of the originalHowever, there are no parallels of this in ancient literatureHowever, this does not explain why all the rest of the manuscripts which survived have "in Ephesus" rather than some other place notedThe blank might be more plausible if the e¤ was not also missing
   2. Circular Letter: Paul wrote the letter as a circular letter to all of the churches of Asia, but it came to be generally known as the letter to the Ephesians early on because Ephesus was the major city of Asia. Therefore, early scribes inserted "in Ephesus" into the text7However, Paul does not include a greeting of a general kind as in ColossiansHowever, if separate copies were made for each church, why did the scribe not fill in the church name?
   3. To Ephesus: The letter was written to the Ephesians and addressed to them even though Paul wrote it in a form which would make it suitable for other churches. It was intended to be circulated, and as it was a few scribes deleted

the words "in Ephesus" as some also did with RomansThe encyclical nature of this epistle may account for why Paul urged the Colossians to "read the letter from Laodicea" (Col. 4:16)Therefore, it is possible that the three Alexandrian Greek manuscripts do not contain the best reading for the following reasons:

a. All of the versions include the words without exception
b. The geographical distribution of the majority of Greek manuscripts which do include "in Ephesus" is wide
c. No manuscripts of this letter mention any other city in place of Ephesus
d. No manuscripts have only the word "in" followed by a space to insert the cities name
e. "To the Ephesians" appears on all manuscripts of this epistle
f. All of the letters Paul wrote to churches include their destinations
g. The early church fathers Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian all understood the letter to be to the Ephesians8
h. The absence of names:
    1) Perhaps Paul did not wish to single out certain persons in this short letter since he knew so many
    2) If the letter was also circular, Paul would have left specific Ephesian names out for the sake of relevance to the readers from Laodicea and Colosse

III. DATE and PLACE: AD 60-62 during Paul's first Roman imprisonment

A. Since Clement of Rome cites Ephesians, it must be dated earlier than AD 95
B. Paul identifies himself as a prisoner at the time of his writing Ephesians (3:1; 4:1; 6:20)
C. It is possible that Paul could have written the letter when he was imprisoned at Caesarea9 (Acts 24:27, AD 57-59), or in Rome (Acts 28:30, AD 60-62)
D. Early in Paul's first Roman imprisonment seems to be the most likely time when he wrote Ephesians:
    1. It is thought that Paul wrote a group of epistles called the "Prison Epistles" at the time of his imprisonment in Rome:10
        a. Ephesians
        b. Philippians (1:7)
        c. Colossians (4:10)
        d. Philemon (9)
    2. Ephesians is placed in this time period because of its close association to Colossians-Philemon and the probability that Tychicus delivered both letters (Eph. 6:21-22; Col. 4:7-9)
    3. Ephesians gives no hint of Paul's release from prison as do Philippians (1:19-26) and Philemon (22); therefore, it may well have been written in the early part of his stay, or around AD 60.

E. Following Paul's release from Rome:
1. He traveled
2. He wrote 1 Timothy and Titus
3. Paul was arrested again in Rome
4. Paul wrote 2 Timothy
5. Paul was martyred in Rome

IV. A DESCRIPTION OF EPHESUS:
A. A leading center in the Roman Empire
B. Paul visited Ephesus twice:
1. Paul visited Ephesus a short time on his way back to Antioch from his second missionary journey (Acts 18:19-22)
2. Paul stayed in Ephesus on his third missionary journey for three years (Acts 20:31)
C. While Paul was in Ephesus on his third missionary journey several remarkable things occurred:
1. Paul baptized about twelve of John the Baptist's followers (Acts 19:1-7)
2. Paul had discussions in the hall of Tyrannus (Acts 19:8-10)
3. Paul performed unusual miracles (Acts 19:11-12)
4. Paul performed exorcisms (Acts 19:13-16)
5. Sorcerers were Converted (Acts 19:17-20)
6. Paul was part of a city riot by threatened temple workers (Acts 19:23-41)
7. Paul gave the Ephesian leaders a farewell address in the town of Miletus (Acts 20:13-34)

V. PURPOSES OF THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS
A. No particular problem is raised in the book unlike many of Paul's other letters
B. Some suggest that Paul's time in imprisonment enabled him to develop an "exalted Christology and a high appraisal of the privileges of believers in Christ"11
C. Hoehner understands "love" to be the issue that needs to be stressed with the saints in Ephesus because even though the church succeeded in keeping out false teachers (cf. Acts 20:29-30 with Revelation 2:2), they were loosing the "vibrancy of their first love for Christ" (Rev. 2:4) and other saints (cf. also 1 Tim. 1:5)12
1. The theology of chapters 1--3 focuses upon the need for the Ephesians to increase in their awareness of God's love so that they will imitate it to God's glory
2. The application of chapters 4--6 are specific expressions of love for one another in view of God's love
D. Paul is encouraging the church to maintain their position of unity:13
1. The Ephesian theology is centered on God's provision which leads to unity in the church
2. Paul writes to encourage the Ephesians to continue in their unity through obedience, love, and spiritual warfare

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1 Much of what follows is adapted from Donald Guthrie, New Testament Introduction, pp. 479-521, T. K. Abbott, A Critical and

Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and to the Colossians, ICC, pp. i-xxiii, Harold W. Hoehner, "Ephesians," in BKC, pp. 612-614, Brevard S. Childs, The New Testament as Canon: An Introduction, pp. 311-328.

2 This makes Pauline origin undisputed at this time since Marcion acknowledge only Paul as having authority.

3 See Abbott for a more in-depth discussion of the church fathers (Ephesians, pp. ix-xiii).

4 Guthrie, NTI, pp. 482-490; Abbott, Ephesians, pp. xiii-xxix.

5 Guthrie, NTI, pp. 490-507.

6 The five are P46, c*, B* 424c, 1739 as well as manuscripts mentioned by Basil and the text used by Origen (see Bruce M. Metzger, A Textual Commentary on the New Testament, p. 601; T. K. Abbott, Ephesians, pp. iff).

7 See Abbott for a full discussion of this hypothesis (Ephesians, pp. i-ix).

8 Adv. Haer. 5.2.36; Stom. 6.65; Adv. Marc. 5.11.17.

9 For a discussion of the Caesarean origin see Abbott, Ephesians, pp. xxix-xxxi.

10 This imprisonment was actually a time when Paul was kept under guard in rented quarters (Acts 28:30). Therefore, these letters could also be called the "House Arrest Epistles".

11 Guthrie, NTI, p. 515. See also A. Skevington Wood, "Ephesians" in The Expositor's Bible Commentary, p. 17.

12 Harold W. Hoehner, "Ephesians" in BKC, p. 164.

13 In his own way Childs affirms the same type of focus, but emphasizes that Paul has the new generation of Christians in view. As he writes, "Paul is desirous that the new generation of Christians understand the nature of God's present exercise of power in their lives according to the divine purpose which he accomplished in Christ and which encompasses the entire universe" (The New Testament as Canon, p. 325).

This emphasis upon the "new" generation of believers might explain why Paul uses a second-hand reference to the Ephesians in 1:15 et cetera (Ibid, p. 326). But it is also true that five years have passed since he was last with the Ephesians, therefore, it would be natural to hear of things which he had not recently experienced.

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Deffinbaugh: Overview

Ephesians seeks to change our orientation from one which is man-centered to one which is God-centered. We smile to ourselves when we think of the ancient view that the world is flat, or that the earth is the center of the universe. And yet, we see man as the central focus, rather than God. Ephesians unapologetically challenges this view, and calls us to a God-centered focus.

I have recently been reading a very excellent book by John Piper, entitled, *The Pleasures of God*. In this book, he speaks of this need to change our perspective from one which is man-centered to one which is God-centered:

> We begin with the most fundamental truth, namely, that from all eternity God has been supremely happy in the fellowship of the Trinity. From this inexhaustible fountain of self-replenishing joy flows the freedom of God in all his sovereign work, creating the universe, spreading his fame, choosing a people, and bruising his Son.
>
> … We need to see first and foremost that God is God—that he is perfect and complete in himself, that he is overflowingly happy in the eternal fellowship of the Trinity, and that he does not need us to complete his fulness and is not deficient without us. Rather *we* are deficient without *him*; the all-sufficient glory of God, freely given in fellowship through his sacrificed Son, is the stream of living water that we have thirsted for all our lives.
>
> Unless we begin with God in this way, when the gospel comes to us, we will inevitably put ourselves at the center of it. We will feel that *our* value rather than *God's* value is the driving force in the gospel. We will trace the gospel back to God's need for *us* instead of tracing it back to the sovereign grace that rescues sinners who need *God*.
>
> But the gospel is the good news that God is the all-satisfying end of all our longings, and that even though he does not need us, and is in fact estranged from us because of our God-belittling sins, he has, in the great love with which he loved us, made a way for sinners to drink at the river of his delights through Jesus Christ. And we will not be enthralled by this good news unless we feel that he was not obliged to do this. He was not coerced or constrained by our value. *He* is the center of the gospel. The exaltation of *his* glory is the driving force of the gospel. The gospel is a gospel of *grace*! And grace is the pleasure of God to magnify the worth of God by giving sinners the right and power to delight in God without obscuring the glory of God.[8]

(10) To sum up the essence of the contribution of Ephesians, this epistle draws our attention to the glory of God. The glory of God is not only the motivation, but the goal of God's sovereign work among men. There is no more majestic theme, no more noble pursuit than the glory of God. Moses' highest ambition and most noble request was to see the glory of God (Exodus 33:17–18:8). The first coming of Christ was a display of the glory of God (John 1:14; see also Matthew 16:27–17:8). The Apostle Paul was encouraged and sustained by his awareness of God's glory (see 2 Corinthians 3:7-18; 4:3-6, 16-18). The apostle Peter found the revelation of the "Majestic Glory" of our Lord a witness to the truthfulness of the prophetic word revealed through the apostles (2 Peter 1:16-19). Our Lord's second coming will be a revelation of His glory, and the cause for the saints' rejoicing (1 Peter 4:12-13). Every supreme goal of our

every action is the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31). The Epistle to the Ephesians is all about the glory of God.

Overview of Ephesians

I was fascinated to read in Piper's introduction how he had organized the material in his book. The first six chapters speak of the pleasure of God in His own person, and in the outworking of His plans and purposes, especially in the sending of the Son to provide salvation for lost sinners. The final chapters focus on the pleasure of God in the responses of His people.[9]

The parallel of Piper's structure and that found in Ephesians is strikingly similar. Ephesians 1-3 concentrate on the glory of God as brought about by the gospel—the glory of God in His church. Ephesians 4-6 focus on the glory of God in man's obedience to the gospel—the glory of God through His church. Consider, then, this very simplistic outline of the content of Ephesians, remembering that this epistle is the "Waterloo of commentators":

Chapters 1-3	The Glory of God in the Church
Chapter 1	The glory of God of God in Redemption
Chapter 2	The glory of God in reconciliation
Chapter 3	The glory of God in the revelation of the mystery of the church
Chapters 4-6	The Glory and Pleasure of God through the Church
Chapter 4	The glory of God in the unity and growth of the church
Chapter 5	The glory of God in the imitation of Christ by the saints
Chapter 6	The glory of God in victory of Christ

Chapters 1-3 of the Epistle to the Ephesians urge us to be more heavenly minded so that, in obedience to the instruction laid down in chapters 4-6, we may be of more earthly good, to the glory of God.

May God grant us an appetite for the "meat" of this great epistle, and may He also grant us the ability to grasp the breadth and length and height and depth of God's glory, as seen in Christ and in His church.

OVERVIEW OF BOOK OF EPHESIANS --
WALK WORTHY OF YOUR HIGH CALLING IN CHRIST JESUS

INTRODUCTION:

Wil Pounds: — "**Ephesians: Queen of the Epistles — The Mystical Body of Christ**"
Ephesians tarries largely among the heavenlies. It is characterized by dignity and serenity which is in harmony with the elevation of its thoughts. There is scarcely even an echo of the great controversies which ring so loudly in the Epistles to the Romans and Galatians.

It is 'the divinest composition of man,' wrote Coleridge. It has been called 'the crown of St. Paul's writings,' 'the Queen of the Epistles,' and the 'greatest and most relevant of his works.' W. O. Carver said, 'Ephesians is the greatest piece of writing in all of history.' It may well be the 'most influential document ever written.'

Expositors observes: 'It is the grandest of all the Pauline letters. There is a peculiar and sustained loftiness in its teaching which has deeply impressed the greatest minds and has earned for it the title of the **Epistle of the Ascension**.'"

Authorship: Not disputed – Paul references himself in **1:1**

Intended Audience: Some debate here since the phrase "*to the Ephesians*" in **1:2** is not included in some of the older manuscripts. Many argue for more of a circular letter theory on that basis – [same churches addressed in **Rev. 2-3 –** proponents of this view point to a number of supporting arguments:

- no particular problems addressed as might be expected in a specific church context;
- no terms of endearment expressed – remarkable because Paul spent 3 years there; Acts 20:31; knew them very well -- seems like a more general epistle
- no personal greetings – but the only letters with personal greetings are Romans and Colossians – two churches that Paul had not visited before writing to them – so not a strong argument]

Debate not really of much consequence:

- Either the letter was addressed specifically to the church at Ephesus and intended for relevance on a wider scope
- Or the phrase was added later because it ended up being primarily associated with that church which was the most prominent in Asia

Date and Setting:
It seems to have been written in Rome as one of the four prison epistles (the others were Colossians and Philemon written around the same time – 60-61 AD – and then Philippians written last right before his release from his first house arrest in Rome – about 62 AD). Paul sees himself as a Prisoner of the Lord for the cause of the gospel rather than as a prisoner of Rome.

Occasion for Writing:

- Epaphras has just arrived from Asia with some good news – **Col. 4:12** – things going well in Asia; but there are some serious dangers on the horizon = group of false teachers

= Gnostics (distinguished from Judaizers dealt with in Galatians) – Paul taking a proactive approach – Incipient form – Paul anticipating the dangers these false teachers would bring as this error became more pronounced later on

The core claim of Gnosticism was:
Salvation comes through secret spiritual knowledge available only to the enlightened.
Radical Dualism: Matter Is Evil, Spirit Is Good
Less direct of an emphasis in Ephesians, but Paul's teaching on the revealed "mystery" of the church and Christ's supremacy may have been intended to counter elitist hidden-knowledge systems.

BIG IDEA

SINCE GOD DESIGNED THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST FOR HIS GLORY AND BLESSED IT WITH THE RICHES OF HIS GLORY, LET US WALK WORTHY OF OUR HIGH CALLING

Ephesians 3:21 "*to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus*"

Ephesians 4:1 "*walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called*"

OVERVIEW

God has revealed His glory in the church of Jesus Christ which unites both believing Jews and Gentiles into one body by His grace. The understanding of the riches of the blessings which all saints enjoy should motivate us to live a transformed life that conforms to our high calling. By the power of the Holy Spirit we can now walk in unity, in love, in wisdom, in holiness and in the light. But we need the full armor of God to protect us from the attacks of Satan.

STRUCTURE

Very easy to follow and very easy to remember.

Chaps. 1-3	Chaps. 4-6
Doctrine (always comes first as basis for conduct)	Practical Application
○ **2:10** Our Position = created for good works	Our Practice – performing good works
○ **1:13** Sealed with God's ownership	**4:30** Practical implications
(study emphasis on the Holy Spirit in book of Ephesians – mentioned 12 times)	
High Calling of the Church of Jesus Christ	Conduct in light of that High Calling
Wealth of Spiritual Riches in Christ	Walk Worthy of that High Calling
Privileges of the Christian	Responsibilities of the Christian

Emphasizes the doctrine of the **Universal Church**

- Remember the distinction between the local church and the Universal Church – you are either in or out; only 2 sets of people from God's perspective; no emphasis on denominations – even if these have come to have some practical value in today's world; helps to keep us focused on the Priority of the Gospel Message and the Cross of Christ
- Look at images used to describe the Universal Church

- The **body** of Christ – **1:22-23** – Head vs. Body – completing Christ and doing His will
- A **building** – **2:19-22** – growing; a temple in which Christ resides
- A **bride** – **Chap. 5** – loves the church and died for her

Some implications of this emphasis on the Universal Church:

- Our vision should not be limited to how God can grow just our local church
- We support so many missionaries and organizations that I feel we have diluted our sense of connectivity with specific missionaries where we sense our true partnership in ministry
- We should want to see leaders developed within our local church that could be part of a church planting team either here in the States or on the foreign mission field

Summary: Because believers belong to Christ's universal body, we should live with a kingdom-sized vision, pursue unity, serve sacrificially, and let our local churches visibly display the reality of God's overall redeemed people.

Significance of the Mystery Aspect of this Church

- **Definition**: Mystery not in the sense of something that was difficult to perceive; but something that was impossible to perceive apart from progressive revelation – hidden in the OT but now revealed as the Church only started on the Day of Pentecost
  In Paul's usage, it means:A divine truth previously hidden in God's plan but now revealed through Christ and His apostles.
- **Substance** of the mystery: not just that God's redemptive plan included the Gentiles – that had been clearly prophecied; but that Jews and Gentiles would become **one equal body in Christ**, without ethnic distinction, equal spiritual standing, and direct access to God.
- **Purpose:** Displays God's wisdom, grace, and glory to the universe.
  3:10 "*the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places*."

What is God's Sovereign Purpose for the Universal Church?

First, must understand what is meant by God's sovereign purpose and will -- the decree of God – what God has decided to do; His plan of action;

6 Key Features: (Bill McRae**)**

- That purpose is eternal – **3:11** – completed before time ever began
- Founded on God's wisdom – not arbitrary; not something He just happened on; **1:11** – works all things after the **counsel** (implies deliberation) of His own **will** – deliberated on a number of different options that were available to Him
  His Will – implies His decision; His volition
  - Designed *For His glory* – **1:12** –
  - Nothing will thwart it – **Is. 46:10**
  - It will not change – **Is. 46:10**
  - It is all-inclusive **– 1:11**

What is God's Sovereign Purpose for the Universal Church?

- Magnifies the Grace of God – addresses a major issue of our culture today = spirit of **entitlement** – aren't we entitled to favor with God – He created us – certainly He is responsible for us and for our destiny –
    - **1:2** and **6:24** – Opens and closes with reference to Grace

- Unites Jews and Gentiles on an equal basis in the united body of Christ
    - there can be no sense of elitism;
    - no attitude of being only a second class citizen of the kingdom of God

- Reveals to all the magnificence of the glory of God
    1:12 "*that we would be to the praise of His glory*"
    (3:20-21) DOXOLOGY — "*to Him be the glory in the Church*"
    The book of Ephesians is all about the **glory of God**

Piper organizes the book:

I. (1-3) The Glory of God in the Church
- A. (**1**) in Redemption
- B. (**2**) in Reconciliation
- C. (**3**) in the Revelation of the mystery of the church

II. (4-6) The Glory and Pleasure of God through the Church
- A. (**4**) in the Unity and Growth of the Church
- B. (**5**) in the imitation of Christ by the saints
- C. (**6**) in the victory of Christ

(1:1-2) AUTHOR / RECIPIENTS / GREETING

I. (CHAPS 1-3) THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH —
OUR WEALTH IN CHRIST – OUR POSITION

II. (CHAPS 4-6) THE DUTY OF THE CHURCH —
OUR WALK IN CHRIST – OUR PRACTICE

(6:21-24) CLOSING REMARKS AND BENEDICTION

(1:1-2) AUTHOR / RECIPIENTS / GREETING – OUR MANDATE IN LIFE
THE AUTHORITATIVE WORD FROM GOD DEFINES THE HIGH CALLING OF BELIEVERS WHO ENJOY HIS GRACE AND PEACE

> *Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus:* [2] *Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.*

I. (CHAPS 1-3) THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH — OUR WEALTH —

OUR SPIRITUAL POSITION IN CHRIST — FOCUS ON OUR SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS

(**1:3**) "*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ"*

(**3:21**) "*to Him be the glory in the Church*"

A. (1:3-14) THE FOUNDATION OF THE CHURCH — CHOSEN / PREDESTINED / REDEEMED – THANKSGIVING FOR OUR SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS

(:3) Introduction: God Deserves Our Blessing Because He Totally Blessed Us

Long run-on sentence in the Greek – difficult to diagram this one; you need a large piece of paper – we will break it up to consider the individual blessings mentioned

1. (:4) First Spiritual Blessing = **Election** —

God Is Sovereign in Both the Process and Goal of Election – Which Is Holiness

just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him.

Look at the **timing** of this election = *before the foundation of the world* – so obviously election is not dependent on man's works or even man's will – while not negating the necessity of man to repent and believe in Jesus Christ

What a blessing to have been chosen by God! What Security!

Our response needs to be a commitment to **Holiness** = the expressed purpose here of our election

2. (:5-6) Second Spiritual Blessing = Predestined to **Adoption as Sons** —

To Magnify His Grace, God Determined Those He Chose Would Be Authentic Sons with Full Rights and Privileges

Our relationship to God is pictured in several ways in the NT:

- We are servants = subjects of the kingdom of God in service of the King of Kings; quite a privilege
- We are friends – **John 15:15** – quite the special status – true companionship; God shares intimate knowledge with us
- But here the relationship is elevated to a wholly different level – we have been *adopted as sons* – a very special form of adoption because we partake of Christ's nature and share in His inheritance as we shall see

Van Parunak: Application. -- We need to recognize our status as sons and daughters of God, (**2 Cor 6:18**), and act in keeping with it. We are not just his little children, whose immature behavior may be excused by our age. We are **adult** sons and daughters, full heirs to the household and representatives of our divine Parent, and we should conduct ourselves in the sense of this status.

3. (:7) Third Spiritual Blessing = Liberated by **Redemption** —

Redemption Frees Us from the Bondage of Captivity to Joyfully Serve Christ

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace,

R.C. Sproul: The means of redemption is **the blood of Christ**. Nothing could speak louder about how seriously God views the problem of the alienation that exists between us and him because of our rebellion through our sin. An atonement was made, a blood sacrifice was offered, and that becomes the basis of the forgiveness of sin. So redemption is accomplished through the atonement of Christ.

We don't want to take for granted or in any way minimize the significance of this blessing of forgiveness of sins. So desperate was our condition, this could only be accomplished by the *riches of His grace*. Everywhere in Ephesians the language abounds with the magnificence, the overflowing **abundance** of God's blessings towards us.

Like a spiritual Christmas – unwrapping one precious present at a time

4. (:8-10) Fourth Spiritual Blessing = Insight into the Mystery of God's Will —
God Has Blessed Us with Insight into the Mystery of His Will = that Christ Should Have the Preeminence

This mystery involves God's control of human history to end evil and ultimately unify the redeemed cosmos under the preeminence of Jesus Christ. These verses have application to the end times – to the fulfillment of God's redemptive program.

John MacArthur: At the end of this world's history, God will gather believers together in the millennial kingdom, called here "*an administration suitable to the fullness of the times*," meaning the completion of history (**Rev 20:1-6**). After that, God will gather everything to Himself in eternity future, and the new heaven and the new earth will be created (**Rev 21:1ff**). The new universe will be totally unified under Christ (cf. **1Co 15:27-28; Php 2:10-11**).

5. (:11-12) Fifth Spiritual Blessing = **Inheritance** —
Our Sovereign God Predestined Us to an Inheritance that Magnifies His Glory
This is an inheritance that comes to all believers on the basis of God's Grace –

> *also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will*

Illustration: I was in a church in Baltimore (different context than what I shared last week) where the preacher got off track after reading a book by Joseph Dillow from Dallas Seminary – he started teaching that only the elite level of believers will receive the inheritance – only those believers who rise up to the status of true disciples … so he taught a two-part stratified view of the community of believers.
I had to immediately write a position paper of refutation and go present it to the elders to shut down that heretical teaching. By God's grace this interaction ended up with a good outcome as the truth of God's Word shows clearly that Inheritance is a blessing possessed by all believers.

Thus God's purpose is realized that all is done *to the praise of His glory* (**vs. 12**) – we have no grounds for boasting in any of these spiritual blessings that come to us by His grace and sovereign purpose

6. (:13-14) Sixth Spiritual Blessing = **Sealed with the Holy Spirit** —
The Holy Spirit Secures the Saints' Future – Secures It for Us and for God

"*you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise*"

- Seals us by protecting us from the future outpouring of God's wrath on the wicked
- Seals us as the divine downpayment guaranteeing our ultimate full redemption and glorification

Again all accomplished *to the praise of His glory*

Trinity at Work in Salvation:

- **1:3-6** work of God the Father in salvation
- **1:7-12** work of Christ in salvation
- **1:13-14** work of Holy Spirit in salvation

You can see the strong Trinitarian character to this passage – the Father is the main planner and initiator of redemption; Christ is the central figure of the execution of the Father's plan; the Spirit becomes the divine agent in this present church age that bestows the blessings on the people God has redeemed.

B. **(1:15-23) THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH — WHICH IS HIS BODY**

1. (:15-19a) Thanksgiving and Prayer for **Spiritual Enlightenment** —
We Need the Enlightening Work of the Holy Spirit to Fully Understand and Relate to God

Importance of **Prayer** in this epistle – another major prayer in **Chap. 3**

Vs. 17 *that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him.*

His request is that God the Father would permit these believers to have deep knowledge and insight of Him.

2. (:19b-22a) God's Power Working for Us —
The Guarantee for Success Is God's Power Working for Us – the Same Power that Resurrected and Exalted Christ to His Position as Head Over All (Both in the Universe and in the Church Which Is His Body)

3. (:22b-23) The Gift of Christ to the Church as Head Over His Body –
The Living and Reigning Christ Rules Over All as Head of His Church

C. (2:1-10) THE SALVATION OF THE CHURCH — BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH – GOD'S POWER HAS CHANGED OUR POSITION AND OUR PRACTICE:

- **GOD'S POWER HAS CHANGED OUR OLD POSITION (DEATH)**

TO OUR NEW POSITION (LIFE);

- **GOD'S POWER HAS CHANGED OUR OLD PRACTICE (SIN) TO OUR NEW PRACTICE (HOLINESS: GOOD WORKS)**

In the previous prayer at the end of **Chap. 1** Paul had reflected on *the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe* – Now he explains very specifically in the context of God's redemptive work, how God has exerted that power for our benefit. He has rescued us from death and made us alive.

1. (:1-3) God's Power Dealt with Our **Old Position** = Death

Death means **separation**. In this case, spiritual death is total, absolute, complete and full separation from God. We were absolutely powerless, helpless, unable, incapable to think, feel, or will anything to do with God or for God because we were dead in trespasses and sins.

Paul strives to clarify the fact that being fully dead, we were unable to come to God unless He provided everything -- including faith. We were capable in our old position to provide nothing toward God. We could not will to accept Christ because our natural will was inoperative. We were lost, undone, depraved, and unable to come to God.

John Piper: The reason we need a Savior is not just that we are in the dog house with God and need to be forgiven for offending his glory. We need a Savior because we are in the morgue. In the dog house you might whimper. You might say you are sorry. You might make some good resolutions. You might decide to cast yourself on the mercy of God. But what can you do if you are in the morgue?

(:4) **Transition** – Mercy Instead of Wrath – "*BUT GOD"*
"*But God, being rich in mercy,*
because of His great love with which He loved us,"
Remember: everything is by **God's initiation** – We love Him because He first loved us

2. (:5-7) God's Power Provides a **New Position** = Life
made us alive together with Christ

3. God's Power Has Changed Our **Old Practice** =Sinful Behavior
The Old Practice Characterized by the Ungodly Principles of:
A. Bondage of Sin and Death:
1. Trespasses: active rebellion, sins of commission.
2. Sins: Missing the mark; passive sins, sins of omission.
B. Friendship with the World:
Materialism, sensuality, independence, greed, lust, etc.
C. Deceitfulness of the Devil:
hate, fear, lying, evil acts
D. Lusts of the Flesh:
Abuse of eating, drinking, sex, etc.
E. Pride of the Mind:

Selfish Ambition, arrogance, independence, etc.

4. (:8-10) God's Power and Grace Have Given Us New Life Leading to **New Practice** = Good Works

> *For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works, that no one should boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*

Homer Kent: Paul's thought is that the Christian is completely without grounds for boasting even in the good works which follow regeneration, for they too are God's handiwork. It was God who long ago planned the good works He wanted us to perform. Our responsibility is to follow His blueprint for our lives, responding to the impulses of His Spirit as He prompts us to perform His will.

D. (2:11-22) THE COMPOSITION OF THE CHURCH — ITS UNIVERSAL SCOPE – GENTILES ARE NOW UNITED WITH JEWS IN THE HOUSEHOLD OF GOD ON THE BASIS OF THE RECONCILING WORK OF CHRIST

1. (:11-13) The Inclusion of the Gentiles Is a Big Deal
   a. Remember the **Pain of Exclusion**
      1) Excluded by Derisive Designation
         - Gentiles in the flesh
         - Who are called Uncircumcision
      2) Excluded by lack of theological Privilege – 5 theological disadvantages of the Gentiles
         - Separate from Christ
         - Excluded from the commonwealth of Israel
         - Strangers to the covenants of promise
         - Having no hope
         - Without God in the world
   b. Remember the **Price of Inclusion = the blood of Christ**
      Our heart's desire should be to draw nearer and nearer to Christ

2. (:14-18) The Reconciling Work of Christ Made It Happen
   - Horizontal – between Jew and Gentile
   - Vertical – between man and God

Essence of Reconciliation is Peace

3. (:19-22) The Church (Believing Gentiles United with Believing Jews) Continues to be Built Together and Indwelt by the Holy Spirit

   a. (:19) New Position of Privilege and Inclusion for the Gentiles
      1) Old Position
         "*you are no longer*"
         "*strangers*"
         "*aliens*"

2) New Position
"*fellow citizens with the saints*"
"*of God's household*"

b. (:20) New Structure for the Church -- different than the OT patriarchs
1) *Cornerstone = Christ Jesus*
2) *Foundation = apostles and prophets*

c. (:21-22) Mutual Growth -- Jew and Gentile need one another
1) "*in whom the whole building, being fitted together is growing*"
2) "*in whom you also are being built together*"

d. (:21-22) Ultimate Goal
the church = God's holy dwelling place, indwelt by the Holy Spirit
1) "*into a holy temple in the Lord*"
2) "*into a dwelling of God in the Spirit*"

E. (3:1-13) THE REVELATION OF THE CHURCH – GRANTING THE GENTILES EQUAL ACCESS AND PRIVILEGES IN THE BODY OF CHRIST MANIFESTS THE MANIFOLD WISDOM AND ETERNAL PURPOSE OF GOD

Clinton Arnold: God has revealed a new and definitive stage in his eternal plan that involves creating a people for himself consisting of Jews and Gentiles united to Christ and joined to one another. All who have faith in Jesus Christ become a part of this new community and have direct and immediate access to the Father. This new plan, which Paul calls a "*mystery*," reflects the infinite wisdom of God and is a message of defeat to the evil supernatural realm. Paul explains that God has given him the ministry of proclaiming and explaining this marvelous plan.

1. (:1-5) The Revelation of the Church (a Precious Treasure) Has Been Entrusted to Faithful Stewards (the Example of Paul – Stewardship of the Grace of God)

2. (:6) The Content of the Revelation Emphasizes the Equal Access and Privileges Afforded to the Gentiles in the Body of Christ

"*Gentiles are*":

- "*fellow-heirs*" – Future Inheritance

Van Parunak: It is a remarkable claim, when we consider how important inheritance rights were to Israel. Even within Israel, one family could not take over the inheritance of another in perpetuity (e.g., the restoration of land to the original family in the year of Jubilee, **Lev 25**). But now we Gentiles are made fellow-heirs with Israel.

- "*fellow-members of the body*" – Present Fellowship / Total Inclusion
no second class citizens

- "*fellow-partakers of the promises*" – All Guaranteed by a Faithful God

3. (:7-11) The Purpose of the Revelation Is to Make Known the Riches of Christ – Unfolding the Wisdom and Purpose of God's Plan for the Church
(with Special Emphasis on the Role of the Gentiles)

(:12-13) Conclusion: Two Applications
- Be Bold towards God – in light of our confident access
- Be Encouraged regarding the circumstances of Paul – his imprisonment in his role as apostle to the Gentiles

F. (3:14-19) THE ENABLEMENT OF THE CHURCH —
THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT CAN CONNECT US TO THE LOVE OF CHRIST SO THAT WE CAN EXPERIENCE ALL THAT GOD HAS FOR US

(:14-15) Prelude – The Desire for Spiritual Growth Should Motivate Us to Pray to Our Spiritual Father

1. (:16) The Request: Holy Spirit Power

Remember the earlier prayer in **Chap. 1** for spiritual enlightenment regarding God's great power – Now he appeals to God to actually apply that power via the Holy Spirit in the inner life of believers to strengthen them – recognizing that one of the blessings of the new covenant is the empowering by the Spirit to a much greater measure

2. (:17-19a) The Reason: Connection to the Love of Christ

Paul has already prayed that their hearts might become enlightened (**1:18**). Now he prays that Christ will dwell in their hearts in a fuller measure.

"*so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith*"

"*may be able to comprehend with all the saints*
what is the breadth and length and height and depth,
and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge"

Deepened comprehension of Christ's love for us

3. (:19b) The Result: Experiencing All that God Has for You

(3:20-21) DOXOLOGY

1. (:20) Reason for Hope and Optimism –
Praising the God who exceeds all of our expectations

"*Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us*"

2. (:21) Ultimate Goal –
Praising the God who deserves eternal glory

"*to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen*."

II. (CHAPS 4-6) THE DUTY OF THE CHURCH — HOW WE SHOULD WALK IN CHRIST– YOUR LIFE SHOULD MATCH YOUR CALLING

A. (4:1-16) WALK IN UNITY, DIVERSITY AND MATURITY — IN HUMILITY AND LOVE, PROMOTE UNITY IN A CONTEXT OF DIVERSITY WITH THE GOAL OF MATURITY

(:1) **Major Transition** – Theme Verse of Chaps 4-6 – The Duty of the Church – How We Should Walk in Christ

"*walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called*"

Grant Osborne: Now Paul turns to the **ethical exhortation** of his letter. This section comprises **chapters 4–6** and includes a series of **challenges** for his readers to live the Christian life God's way. This opening section is brilliantly conceived, stressing first that the unity of the church reflects the **unity** of the Godhead (**4:1–6**) and then that this unity must be lived out in **diversity**, with every member of the body taking their place and working together to enable the church to grow (**vv. 7–16**). As stated in **Ephesians 2:11–18**, the conflict among cultures in the church is insufficient to fracture it, for as each believer is united with Christ they are also united with each other. Christ's reconciliation via the cross has broken down racial and ethnic divisions, and all the diverse peoples form a new humanity in Christ.

1. (:2-6) **Unity** – Promote and Preserve the Unity of the One Body of Christ

2. (:7-12) **Diversity** – Promote and Appreciate the Diversity of the Varying Spiritual Gifts for the Equipping of the Body

   Vs. 7 "*But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift*"

   Vs. 12 "*for the equipping of the saints for the work of service*"
   The vision is Not for the leaders to do the bulk of the ministry

3. (:13-16) **Maturity** – Keep Focused on the Goal of the Maturity of the Entire Body (Which Requires Mutual Love in Word and Deed Throughout the Entire Process)

   a. (:13) <u>3 Marks of Maturity</u> -- "*to a mature man*"
      1) Unity
         "*until we all attain to the unity of the faith*"
      2) Knowing Christ
         "*and of the knowledge of the Son of God*"
      3) Christ-likeness
         "*to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ*"

   b. (:14) Resulting Doctrinal Stability

c. (:15-16) Mutual Love Centered In Christ Makes for a Healthy, Growing Body

but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ, [16] from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

B. (4:17-24) WALK DIFFERENTLY —
THE CHRISTIAN WALK MUST BE RADICALLY DIFFERENT:
– THAN THE UNSAVED
– THAN OUR OLD SELF

"*walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk*"

"*But you did not learn Christ in this way, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus*" – good definition of Discipleship – learning Christ – learning to walk and live as He did – following Christ

C. (4:25 – 5:2) WALK IN LOVE AS A NEW PERSON IN CHRIST —
– THE CHRISTIAN MUST REJECT HARMFUL BEHAVIOR (WHICH DESTROYS COMMUNITY)
– AND IMITATE THE LOVE OF GOD (WHICH BUILDS COMMUNITY)

1. (4:25-27) REJECT LYING AND SINFUL ANGER

2. (4:28-32) REJECT STEALING AND HARMING OTHERS

3. (5:1-2) IMITATE GOD'S LOVE

D. (5:3-14) WALK AS CHILDREN OF LIGHT – ABSTAINING FROM IMPURITY — KEEP YOURSELF PURE AS YOU WALK IN THE LIGHT AND EXPOSE DEEDS OF DARKNESS
(ESPECIALLY SEXUAL IMPURITY, GREED AND SHAMEFUL SPEECH)

Once again the argument moves from Position to Practice – Walk Worthy of your High Calling

for you were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light

E. (5:15 – 6:9) WALK WISELY

1. (5:15-21) Boundaries for Walking Wisely Defined:
   – In the Will of the Lord
   – Under the Control of the Holy Spirit

2. (5:22 – 6:9) Behavior for Walking Wisely Defined –

Walking Wisely Involves Fulfilling Your Role in Relationships of Submission and Consideration

a. (5:22-23) Wives to Husbands
b. (6:1-4) Children to Parents
c. (6:5-9) Servants to Masters (Application: Employees to Employers)

F. (6:10-20) WALK STRONG IN THE ARMOR OF GOD

1. (:10-17) Spiritual Warfare
   a. (:10-13) Spiritual Warfare Requires God's Strength and God's Armor
   b. (:14-17) Put on the Whole Armor of God and Stand Firm

2. (:18-20) Supporting Prayer = the Foundation and Essence of Spiritual Warfare

(6:21-24) CLOSING REMARKS AND BENEDICTION

A. (6:21-22) CLOSING REMARKS — MISSIONARY REPORTS FROM THE FIELD ENCOURAGE THOSE WHO ARE PARTNERS IN THE GOSPEL

B. (6:23-24) BENEDICTION — GOD'S BEST FOR THOSE WHO LOVE THE LORD

Frank Thielman: Paul concludes the letter with a double prayer-wish that succinctly reminds his readers of four important themes within the letter. He prays that all believers (not simply the letter's readers) might experience both peace and love, and he connects love with faith. He then offers a separate prayer-wish that those who love the Lord Jesus Christ "*incorruptibly*" might experience God's grace.

OUTLINE OF EPHESIANS

THE HIGH CALLING OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST

SINCE GOD DESIGNED THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST FOR HIS GLORY AND BLESSED IT WITH THE RICHES OF HIS GLORY, LET US WALK WORTHY OF OUR HIGH CALLING

(1:1-2) AUTHOR / RECIPIENTS / GREETING – OUR MANDATE IN LIFE
THE AUTHORITATIVE WORD FROM GOD DEFINES THE HIGH CALLING OF BELIEVERS WHO ENJOY HIS GRACE AND PEACE

I. (CHAPS 1-3) THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH -- OUR WEALTH -- OUR SPIRITUAL POSITION IN CHRIST -- FOCUS ON OUR SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS
(3:21) Theme Verse: "*to Him be the glory in the Church*"

A. (1:3-14) THE FOUNDATION OF THE CHURCH -- CHOSEN / PREDESTINED / REDEEMED – THANKSGIVING FOR OUR SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS

(:3) Introduction: God Deserves Our Blessing Because He Totally Blessed Us

1. (:4) First Spiritual Blessing = Election --
God Is Sovereign in Both the Process and Goal of Election – Which Is Holiness Expressed in Love

2. (:5-6) Second Spiritual Blessing = Predestined to Adoption as Sons --
To Magnify His Grace, God Determined Those He Chose Would Be Authentic Sons with Full Rights and Privileges
   a. (:5a) God's Accomplishment in Predestining Us to Adoption as Sons – What Did God Do?
   b. (:5b) God's Attitude in Predestining Us to Adoption as Sons – Why Did God Do It?
   c. (:6) God's Ultimate Purpose in Predestining Us to Adoption as Sons – How Did God Achieve His Goal?

3. (:7) Third Spiritual Blessing = Liberated by Redemption --
Redemption Frees Us from the Bondage of Captivity to Joyfully Serve Christ
   a. Theology of Redemption
   b. Redemption Accomplished Through His Blood = the Means of Redemption and the Ransom Price
   c. The Main Result of Redemption = the Forgiveness of Our Trespasses

4. (:8-10) Fourth Spiritual Blessing = Insight into the Mystery of God's Will --
God Has Blessed Us with Insight into the Myster of His Will = that Christ Should Have the Preeminence

5. (:11-12) Fifth Spiritual Blessing = Inheritance --
Our Sovereign God Predestined Us to an Inheritance that Magnifies His Glory
   a. Possession Promise
   b. Process Plan
   c. Praise Purpose

6. (:13-14) Sixth Spiritual Blessing = Sealed with the Holy Spirit --
The Holy Spirit Secures the Saints' Future – Secures It for Us and for God
   a. (:13) The Holy Spirit Secures the Saints' Future as a Seal from God
   b. (:14) The Holy Spirit Secures the Saints' Future as a Downpayment from God

B. (1:15-23) THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH -- WHICH IS HIS BODY

1. (:15-19a) Thanksgiving and Prayer for Spiritual Enlightenment --
We Need the Enlightening Work of the Holy Spirit to Fully Understand and Relate to God
   a. (:15-16) Motivation for the Request – the Reality of Their Spiritual Life
   b. (:17) Main Request = the Gift of the Enlightening Work of the Holy Spirit
   c. (:18-19a) Manifold Request for Heightened Awareness

2. (:19b-22a) God's Power Working for Us --
The Guarantee for Success Is God's Power Working for Us – the Same Power that Resurrected and Exalted Christ to His Position as Head Over All (Both in the Universe and in the Church Which Is His Body)
   a. (:19b) God's Power Is More than Sufficient – By Definition
   b. (:20-22a) God's Power Is More than Sufficient – By Illustration

3. (:22b-23) The Gift of Christ to the Church as Head Over His Body –
The Living and Reigning Christ Rules Over All as Head of His Church
   a. (:22b) The Living and Reigning Christ Is God's Gift to the Church
   b. (:23a) The Living and Reigning Christ Is Head Over His Body

C. (2:1-10) THE SALVATION OF THE CHURCH -- BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH - GOD'S POWER HAS CHANGED OUR POSITION AND OUR PRACTICE

1. (:1-3) God's Power Dealt with Our Old Position = Death

(:4) Transition – Mercy Instead of Wrath

2. (:5-7) God's Power Provides a New Position = Life

3. God's Power Has Changed Our Old Practice =Sinful Behavior

4. (:8-10) God's Power and Grace Have Given Us New Life Leading to New Practice = Good Works

D. (2:11-22) THE COMPOSITION OF THE CHURCH -- ITS UNIVERSAL SCOPE – GENTILES ARE NOW UNITED WITH JEWS IN THE HOUSEHOLD OF GOD ON THE BASIS OF THE RECONCILING WORK OF CHRIST

1. (:11-13) The Inclusion of the Gentiles Is a Big Deal

2. (:14-18) The Reconciling Work of Christ Made It Happen

3. (:19-22) The Church (Believing Gentiles United with Believing Jews) Continues to be Built Together and Indwelt by the Holy Spirit

E. (3:1-13) THE REVELATION OF THE CHURCH – GRANTING THE GENTILES EQUAL ACCESS AND PRIVILEGES IN THE BODY OF CHRIST MANIFESTS THE MANIFOLD WISDOM AND ETERNAL PURPOSE OF GOD

1. (:1-5) The Revelation of the Church (a Precious Treasure) Has Been Entrusted to Faithful Stewards (the Example of Paul – Stewardship of the Grace of God)

2. (:6) The Content of the Revelation Emphasizes the Equal Access and Privileges Afforded to the Gentiles in the Body of Christ

3. (:7-11) The Purpose of the Revelation Is to Make Known the Riches of Christ – Unfolding the Wisdom and Purpose of God's Plan for the Church (with Special Emphasis on the Role of the Gentiles)

(:12-13) Conclusion: Two Applications

F. (3:14-19) THE ENABLEMENT OF THE CHURCH -- THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT CAN CONNECT US TO THE LOVE OF CHRIST SO THAT WE CAN EXPERIENCE ALL THAT GOD HAS FOR US

(:14-15) Prelude – The Desire for Spiritual Growth Should Motivate Us to Pray to Our Spiritual Father

1. (:16) The Request: Holy Spirit Power

2. (:17-19a) The Reason: Connection to the Love of Christ

3. (:19b) The Result: Experiencing All that God Has for You

(3:20-21) DOXOLOGY -- "*to Him be the glory in the Church*"

II. (CHAPS 4-6) THE DUTY OF THE CHURCH -- HOW WE SHOULD WALK IN CHRIST-- YOUR LIFE SHOULD MATCH YOUR CALLING

(4:1) Theme Verse: "*walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called*"

A. (4:1-16) WALK IN UNITY, DIVERSITY AND MATURITY --
IN HUMILITY AND LOVE, PROMOTE UNITY IN A CONTEXT OF DIVERSITY WITH THE GOAL OF MATURITY

(:1) Major Transition – Theme Verse of Chaps 4-5 – The Duty of the Church – How We Should Walk in Christ

1. (:2-6) Unity – Promote and Preserve the Unity of the One Body of Christ

2. (:7-12) Diversity – Promote and Appreciate the Diversity of the Varying Spiritual Gifts for the Equipping of the Body

3. (:13-16) Maturity – Keep Focused on the Goal of the Maturity of the Entire Body (Which Requires Mutual Love in Word and Deed Throughout the Entire Process)

B. (4:17-24) WALK DIFFERENTLY --
THE CHRISTIAN WALK MUST BE RADICALLY DIFFERENT:
- THAN THE UNSAVED
- THAN OUR OLD SELF

C. (4:25 – 5:2) WALK IN LOVE AS A NEW PERSON IN CHRIST --
- THE CHRISTIAN MUST REJECT HARMFUL BEHAVIOR
(WHICH DESTROYS COMMUNITY)
- AND IMITATE THE LOVE OF GOD
(WHICH BUILDS COMMUNITY)

D. (5:3-14) WALK AS CHILDREN OF LIGHT – ABSTAINING FROM IMPURITY --
KEEP YOURSELF PURE AS YOU WALK IN THE LIGHT
AND EXPOSE DEEDS OF DARKNESS
(ESPECIALLY SEXUAL IMPURITY, GREED AND SHAMEFUL SPEECH)

E. (5:15 – 6:9) WALK WISELY

1. (5:15-21) Boundaries for Walking Wisely Defined:
   - In the Will of the Lord
   - Under the Control of the Holy Spirit

2. (5:22 - 6:9) Behavior for Walking Wisely Defined –
Walking Wisely Involves Fulfilling Your Role in Relationships of Submission and Consideration
   a. (5:22-23) Wives to Husbands
   b. (6:1-4) Children to Parents
   c. (6:5-9) Servants to Masters (Application: Employees to Employers)

F. (6:10-20) WALK STRONG IN THE ARMOR OF GOD

1. (:10-17) Spiritual Warfare
    a. (:10-13) Spiritual Warfare Requires God's Strength and God's Armor
    b. (:14-17) Put on the Whole Armor of God and Stand Firm

2. (:18-20) Supporting Prayer = the Foundation and Essence of Spiritual Warfare
    a. (:18) The Protection of the Saints Depends on Intercessory Prayer that is All Encompassing
    b. (:19-20) The Forward Progress of the Gospel Depends on Intercessory Prayer for Boldness of Proclamation

(6:21-24) CLOSING REMARKS AND BENEDICTION

A. (6:21-22) CLOSING REMARKS -- MISSIONARY REPORTS FROM THE FIELD ENCOURAGE THOSE WHO ARE PARTNERS IN THE GOSPEL

B. (6:23-24) BENEDICTION -- GOD'S BEST FOR THOSE WHO LOVE THE LORD

TEXT: EPHESIANS 1:1-2

TITLE: AUTHOR / RECIPIENTS / GREETING -- OUR MANDATE IN LIFE

BIG IDEA:
THE AUTHORITATIVE WORD FROM GOD DEFINES THE HIGH CALLING OF BELIEVERS WHO ENJOY HIS GRACE AND PEACE

Klyne Snodgrass: Letters in the ancient world followed a **set form**. They began by identifying the writer and the readers or addressees. This was usually followed by a greeting and a prayer or wish for health (even in secular letters), then the body of the letter, and finally the closing, which contained any details about the sending of the letter and another greeting. An example of this form appears in **Acts 15:23–29** (without the prayer).

Christian writers adapted this set form to their purposes, "christianizing" it by changing or expanding the traditional elements. The author and recipients are not merely identified; they are also described by their **relation to Christ**. The greeting was also made specifically Christian. Instead of merely "*Paul to the Ephesians, greetings*," Paul described himself as "*an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God*" and his readers as *holy* (NIV, "*saints*") and "*faithful in Christ Jesus*." And instead of using the standard word "*greeting*" [*chairein*], through a play on words Paul changed his greeting to read "*grace* [*charis*] *and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*."

Frank Thielman: Paul's opening salutation emphasizes his authority as an apostle to instruct even Christians whom he has never seen and does not know. At least implicitly, he begins his instruction with the way he formulates the opening of this letter. He writes to those in Ephesus whom God has set apart as his people and who show this by the way they live. They believe the gospel, and their existence is defined by their relationship with Christ. As God's people they are recipients both of God's grace and of the peace that his grace brings, peace with God and peace with others. God the Father has given his people these blessings through the Lord Jesus Christ.

David Thompson: EPHESIANS BEGINS BY EMPHASIZING THE FACT THAT EVERYTHING WE HAVE IN OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD IS BY GOD'S SOVEREIGN GRACE.

Now when you look at these two opening verses it is very clear right at the outset that Paul wants us to realize that everything we have in our salvation, in our sanctification is all by sovereign grace given to us by a sovereign God.

Benjamin Merkle: Paul writes this letter in accordance with the **authority** he received as an apostle of Christ Jesus. His apostleship signifies not only that he belongs to Christ but also that he is fully authorized as Christ's messenger to proclaim the good news of the one who sent him. Paul's calling to reach the Gentiles with the gospel is not something he gave himself but is something to which he was called by the sovereign

plan of God. In fact, prior to his call, Paul was striving to find and arrest Christians proclaiming that Jesus was the Messiah. It was "*by the will of God*" that Paul received his apostleship. This phrase reminds us that it was God's unmerited favor and grace that saved Paul and called him to serve. He received his position not through his own personal accomplishments or good works but through God's gracious plan (cf. **1 Tim. 1:15–16**), and the same is true for us. Thus, although Paul received a unique calling as an apostle, the mercy he received is an example for us as we remember that God chose us not because of something desirable in us but because of his love and grace found in Christ Jesus.

I. (:1) AUTHORITATIVE AUTHOR = *Paul*

Andrew Lincoln: The only unusual feature of the form in comparison with the other Pauline letters is that Paul alone is named as sender. Elsewhere, with the exception of Romans, the letters generally considered to be authentically Pauline all mention co-senders.

A. Authority Reflected in His Calling -- "*an apostle of Christ Jesus*"
He had every right and obligation to address them with authority and provide such instruction and exhortation.

MacArthur: The apostolic duties were to preach the gospel (**1 Cor. 1:17**), teach and pray (**Acts 6:4**), work miracles (**2 Cor. 12:12**), build up other leaders of the church (**Acts 14:23**, and write the Word of God (**Eph. 1:1**; etc.).

Klyne Snodgrass: The term apostle carried several connotations in the early church, all of which were true of Paul. It referred to someone who had seen the risen Christ (1 Cor. 9:1), to those sent out by the church with a missionary task, or more broadly to anyone who functioned as an agent or representative. This self-description emphasizes the **authority** with which Paul wrote. If he was an apostle because of the will of God, what he wrote must be seen as **communication from God**.

Harold Hoehner: An apostle was an official delegate of Jesus Christ commissioned for the specific tasks of proclaiming authoritatively the message in oral and written form and of establishing and the building up of churches.

Frank Thielman: God had set Paul apart as a particular type of apostle. He was called to preach the gospel to non-Jewish peoples (**Rom. 1:5; 11:13; Gal. 1:1, 15–16**). This kind of apostleship often meant traveling with the gospel to distant places (**Rom. 1:5–6, 13–14; 1 Cor. 4:9, 11; 9:5; 1 Thess. 2:1–2, 7**) and frequently entailed the kind of suffering that Paul was experiencing as he wrote Ephesians (**1 Cor. 4:8–15; 1 Thess. 2:1–2, 7, 9; cf. Eph. 3:1, 13; 4:1; 6:20**). It also sometimes meant using letters to exercise oversight of Gentile believers whom he did not personally know (**Rom. 1:5–6; 11:13; 15:15**).

Van Parunak: Application: This was Paul's particular gift (cf. **Eph. 4:11**). Each of us has our own gift (**1 Cor 12:7**). None of us is an apostle of the Father or of the Son; some might be sent by the Spirit through the church on a mission of one sort or another, as Antioch sent out Barnabas and Saul. We should rejoice in the gifts God has given us, and cultivate them, as Paul exhorted Timothy (**2 Tim 1:6**).

B. Authority Reflected in His Submission -- "*by the will of God*"

Guthrie: Paul was deeply conscious that God had overruled his life, from his conversion, and throughout his missionary call… Paul's tone, therefore, is not that of pride but rather of sheer amazement and humble obedience.

Klyne Snodgrass: The **will of God** is an important theme in Ephesians, appearing more frequently here than in any other letter. The concern is not about Christians finding the will of God; rather, the emphasis is on God's purpose with his actions for humanity. The point here is that Paul was an apostle because God wanted him to be.

Harold Hoehner: The picture is not that God was capitulating to the whims and desires of human beings but that his will was being worked out in Paul.

II. (:2A) RARIFIED RECIPIENTS

A. Defined by Their Calling and Distinctiveness -- "*to the saints*"
called to be holy; to be different; to be set apart to be God's people

Hoke: Don't be misled by the mistaken idea that sainthood is something which can only be conferred upon certain dead people by some ecclesiastical body. According to God's Word, all believers are already saints. From God's perspective, we are saints, not because of who men say we are, but because of what Christ did for us. We are not holy because of our own good works or righteousness.

David Jeremiah: We are **set apart for a higher purpose . . .** which is the literal meaning of the word holy. All believers in Christ are saints—adopted children of God who have been given the blessings of God's eternal kingdom.

Andrew Lincoln: The writer will expand on the implications of this term ἅγιοι in **1:4** where he sees holiness as the result of God's election and in **5:26, 27** where he views it as an effect of Christ's death on behalf of the Church.

B. Defined by Their Physical Location -- *"who are at Ephesus*"

R.C. Sproul: The majority of surviving manuscripts contain the words '*in Ephesus'*. That is the reason why, for centuries, the church kept this particular designation and variant in the English version of the New Testament. There are only two or three significant copies that do not have these words. The unfortunate problem is, however, that two of the very finest and most trustworthy of the surviving manuscripts from the

ancient world are the very copies that don't have the words '*in Ephesus'*. For this reason, the evidence is almost equally weighted for and against the inclusion in the text of the term '*in Ephesus'*. So it is possible that the designated destination was never part of the original epistle. . .

The majority viewpoint today is that, in all probability, the epistle to the Ephesians was written originally as a **circular letter**. Rather than the apostle writing a specific message to a particular congregation concerning a definite problem that had arisen, Paul wrote an epistle that he intended would be circulated to all of the churches in Asia Minor.

David Thompson: In a very technical study of this issue by Harold Hoehner, he ends his discussion by saying "In conclusion, both the external and internal evidence favor the inclusion of εν Ευεσω" (in Ephesus) (*Ephesians, An Exegetical Commentary*, pp. 144-148).

Now the Apostle Paul had an **amazing relationship with the Ephesians**.
1) He first visited Ephesus in the fall of A.D. 52 on his second missionary journey. He had been in Corinth and he took Priscilla and Aquila with him to Ephesus and he left them there when he left (**Acts 18:18-21**).

2) After returning back to his home church of Antioch, he took off on his third missionary journey and eventually ended up in Ephesus in the fall of A.D. 53 (**Acts 18:23; 19:1**). Paul taught in the synagogue for three months and then taught for two more years (**Acts 19:8-10**). According to I Cor. 16:8, Paul intended to stay in Ephesus until Pentecost (June 56), but he left a little early and traveled to Macedonia and Achaia (**Acts 19:21; 20:1-2**).

3) Paul spent three winter months in Greece (**Acts 20:3**) and then headed toward Jerusalem desiring to celebrate Pentecost there (**Acts 19:21; 20:16, 22**). On his way he stopped in Miletus and sent for the Ephesian elders (**Acts 20:3-16**) and they came to meet him (**20:17-18a**).

4) Paul went to Jerusalem and caused such a stir that he ended up in jail in Rome in A.D. 60-62 and from there he wrote this letter to the Ephesians.

Stedman: The Epistle to the Ephesians is, in many ways, the crowning glory of the New Testament. But perhaps this letter ought not to be called "Ephesians" for we do not really know to whom it was written. The Christians at Ephesus were certainly among the recipients of this letter, but undoubtedly there were others. In many of the original Greek manuscripts there is a blank where the King James translation has the words *'at Ephesus*;' just a line where the names of other recipients were apparently to be filled in. That is why the Revised Standard Version does not say, *'To the saints at Ephesus*,' but simply *'To the saints who are also faithful in Christ Jesus*...'

Clinton Arnold: When we think of Ephesus, it is important not to think of one church in a building that held 250 people. Paul is addressing all of the Christians in a city of a quarter million people and, as the metropolitan center for Christianity in western Asia Minor, the intended readers probably span a sizeable radius outside to the north, east, and south of the city. In other words, the letter is probably intended for dozens of house churches throughout the city of Ephesus and in many nearby villages and cities. By writing to Ephesus, Paul can address a great number of believers in western Asia Minor.

C. Defined by Their Spiritual Connection -- "*and who are faithful in Christ Jesus*"

Clinton Arnold: He also describes these saints as "*believers in Christ Jesus*" (καὶ πιστοῖς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ), a phrase paralleled only in **Col 1:2**. The adjective is best understood in the active sense of **exercising belief or trust**, especially since the object of that faith is explicitly stated as "*in Christ Jesus*." Although the word could also be taken as "*faithful*," this is doubtful because Paul is not making a distinction in the letter between faithful and unfaithful Christians at Ephesus. The topic of faith in Christ becomes a major theme in this letter (**Eph 1:13, 15, 19; 2:8; 3:12**).

Stott: To be *'in Christ'* is to be personally and vitally united to Christ, as branches are to the vine and members to the body, and thereby also to Christ's people. For it is impossible to be part of the body without being related to both the Head and the members. Much of what the epistle later develops is already here in bud… to be a Christian is in essence to be *'in Christ'*, one with him and with his people.

Frank Thielman: As the people in Ephesus whom God has set apart as his own, and who believe the gospel, they live within the sphere of existence that Christ defines.

Van Parunak: "*in Christ Jesus*" -- Might define the object of their faith, or (more likely, in view of the theme of **ch. 1**) **their position in Christ**, and thus the spiritual environment in which they now live.

Application. -- Notice the change in position implied by these titles. They have been separated out of the world, and placed in the Lord Jesus. This notion of our spiritual position is an important one for Paul. We saw it throughout Colossians, and shall see it again in Ephesians. Do not think that as a believer, you are free to live as the world lives. **You are different now**, and your life should reflect that difference.

David Thompson: Satan has done his very best to keep most of Christianity in total ignorance of what Spirit baptism actually is because he knows if you actually and accurately understand it, your spirituality will soar and your grasp of grace causes you to worship an amazing God. This is vital theology. Spirit baptism is not about tongues or experience; this is a theological doctrine that is critical to grace.

The **baptism of the Holy Spirit** is the work of the Holy Spirit in which He places the believer into the family of God by permanently uniting that believer and identifying that

believer with Jesus Christ and everything He accomplished. The Holy Spirit actually and really **places a believer into Jesus Christ**.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is not a feeling or an experience; it is a theological reality wrought by the sovereignty of God.

III. (:2B) GRACIOUS GREETING – CONVEYING GOD'S BLESSING

A. Substance of the Blessing

"*Grace to you and peace*"

Clinton Arnold: The importance of the term "*grace*" for Paul's thought is seen partly in the fact that it appears 95 times in his letters, occurring multiple times in every letter. Of paramount importance is the fact that God's grace is the source of justification (**Rom 3:24**) and that this is a free gift (**Rom 5:15, 17**) stemming from the grace of Jesus Christ. Grace truly is unmerited favor from God in providing salvation for sinners. But grace is also an ongoing provision from God, enabling his people to live in conformity with the ethical expectations of life under the new covenant and to undertake the ministry and service that God has entrusted to them. Thus, the Lord encourages Paul by telling him, "*My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness*" (**2 Cor 12:9**). This aspect of grace therefore overlaps with the NT understanding of God's enabling power and his provision of the Spirit. . .

Both grace and peace are major themes in this letter, with grace occurring twelve times (**1:2, 6, 7; 2:5, 7, 8; 3:2, 7, 8; 4:7, 29; 6:24**) and peace eight times (**1:2; 2:14, 15, 17 [2x]; 4:3; 6:15, 23**). The source of these new covenant blessings is not only God the Father, but also the Lord Jesus Christ. Because he has risen from the dead and has been invested with power and authority from the Father (**Rom 1:4**), Jesus is now "*Lord*" (κύριος). Paul stresses the lordship of Christ and explains it in new and significant ways in Ephesians, especially as it relates to the unseen spiritual dimension of the principalities, powers, and authorities. Every chapter of this letter contains references to this exalted title of Jesus.

Charles Swindoll: Though Paul thought it important to assert his apostolic authority, his greeting to the Galatian believers centers mostly on the content of the gospel message itself. He wishes his readers "*grace*" and *"peace*" from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ (**1:3**). Typically, letters in the Greek-speaking world began with the word *chairein* [5463], "*greetings*" (**Acts 15:23; Jas. 1:1**). Paul, however, began his letters with a unique greeting that sounded similar but had more profound theological significance: *charis . . . kai eirēnē* [5485, 2532, 1515](*grace . . . and peace*). Salvation comes purely by grace and results in peace with God. That's the cause and effect of the gospel summed up in just two words.

Van Parunak: Paul wishes them "*grace and peace*," as the root and its fruit.

- **Grace**, God's unmerited favor where his wrath is deserved. Ephesians will emphasize for us as few other scriptures that it is God who saves sinners, not

their own works (cr. 2:8-10). Our salvation is undeserved, unearned, resting entirely on this marvelous character of our great God.

- **Peace**, the relation we now enjoy with him, replacing the state of enmity that existed before as the result of our sin (2:15).

These great gifts he traces to the work of the Father and the Son. Meditate on the role of each of them:

	Father	Son
Grace	Chooses us. This is his characteristic—if he were not intrinsically gracious, we could not enjoy grace. 1 Pet 5:10, "the God of all grace"	Provides the redemption that makes God's grace "legal," permitting him to be both "just and the justifier," Rom 3:26
Peace	He is the one from whom we were alienated by our sin, and with whom we now enjoy peace, Rom 5:1.	2:14 "he is our peace," because he has destroyed the enmity.

B. Source of the Blessing

"*from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*."

Stedman: The two great heritages of the Christian are grace and peace. These are two things you can always have, no matter what your circumstances. Grace is all God's power, all his love, all his beauty, available to you. It is a marvelous term which wraps up all that God is and offers to us. It comes from the same Greek word from which we get our English word charm. Grace is charming, lovely, pleasant. It is something which pleases, which imparts charm and loveliness to a life. Peace is freedom from anxiety, fear and worry. These are the two characteristics which ought to mark Christians all the time:

Grace -- God at work in their life; and
Peace -- a sense of security, of trust.

Grant Osborne: Here he is saying in effect, "What you have been hoping for in your very greetings—**divine grace and peace**—is now being offered to you in Christ Jesus." For these believers these sacred promises from God have been realized. They already have God's grace and divine peace in their lives. This is called "inaugurated eschatology," the view of the early church that in Jesus the future has been brought into the present. Here future hope (for God's eternal grace and peace) has become a present reality in Jesus.

The reason such incredible blessings can take place is their **source.** They don't stem from Paul or just from the church but come "*from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*." The fatherhood of God and the lordship of Christ undergird these heavenly gifts and guarantee their reality. The "*Abba*" (intimate Aramaic word for "father") theme stresses the love and care of God, and "*Lord*" stresses the sovereign power of the exalted Christ exercised on the believers' behalf.

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) How do these verses help to convey a sense of purpose for your life? Are you connected to the high calling which God has for you in Christ Jesus? Are you burdened down with a sense of insignificance and a sense of the routine?"

2) To what extent are we completely submitted to "*the will of God*" for our lives? Is this a defining characteristic of our life?

3) What would be the significance of this epistle having been intended as a **circular letter** rather than restricted to the specific church at Ephesus?

4) Are we actively living in a climate of God's **grace and peace**?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Klyne Snodgrass: **Paul's sense of geography**—*in Christ* and *in the world*.
Paul's assumption about "geography"—about living both in a specific place and in Christ—is a profound insight into life with God. The Christian faith is not an attractive set of ideas or a nice avenue to follow. Rather, it is so deep an engagement with Christ, so deep a union with our Lord, that Paul can only describe it as living in Christ. To live in Christ is to be determined by him. He shapes who we are. A person cannot be conscious of being enveloped by Christ and behave in ways totally out of keeping with his character. Later we will see that this theology is the basis of Paul's understanding of salvation, but clearly it drives his ethics and is his most appropriate description of Christians.

This sense of "geography" is important. What is the significance of the fact that Christians live in two places at the same time? Paul's readers lived both in the region of Ephesus and in Christ. What was the significance for this locale that they were in Christ and what was the significance for Christ that they were in this locale? Each Christian must personalize that question in deciding how to live. We can neither avoid the place where we live nor betray the Christ in whom we live. The rest of Ephesians does not focus on the responsibility of the readers to their locale except in the most general way. Most of the attention will be on the significance of being in Christ for salvation and for life in the Christian community. Both are important, but in applying the text we need to extend the theology.

Grant Osborne: The book of Revelation contains messages to seven cities of Asia Minor. Asia Minor was, in Paul's day, the Roman province of Proconsular Asia. The book of Revelation speaks of Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea.These seven cities were arranged around the urban hub of the province, with Ephesus occupying a strategic point. If Ephesians was a letter

intended for all the churches in the area, it may have followed a circular route round these cities.

Ephesus itself was the **gateway to Asia.** It was at the mouth of the important Cayster River and functioned in a way similar to colonial Pittsburgh (Fort Pitt). Pittsburgh was called the 'Gateway to the West' because of the formation of the Ohio River that flows west to the Mississippi. Waterways were crucial links of transportation and commerce before the advent of mechanized travel. A highway to Ephesus also served as a hub for caravan travel (much as Chicago did for rail transportation). In ancient history the Greeks and the Romans both vied for control of Ephesus because of its **strategic military and commercial location.**

Ephesus was famous for its **great temple**, a shrine to the goddess Diana (or Artemis in Greek). The temple of Diana was one of the seven wonders of the world. It was 425 feet in length and 220 feet in breadth. Architecturally it was composed of 127 white marble columns, each 62 feet high. It was opulently decorated with ornate carvings and priceless paintings. Its chief attraction, however, was an image of Diana said to have fallen directly from heaven to earth. The temple was so popular among pagans that Ephesus emerged as the religious center of all Asia.

A stadium was built near the temple during the reign of Nero (ad 54–68), coinciding with Paul's visit between 53–56. The stadium had a seating capacity of about 25,000, at a time when Ephesus had a population of about 250,000 people. This stadium was the scene of the riot against Paul and his friends.

The temple of Diana had close links to local commerce and it was also a tourist center. The temple cult involved worship of Diana as fertility goddess and as goddess of the woods and hunt. Diana's image represented the figure of a crowned woman with multiple breasts to signify fertility. In addition to the Diana cult, Ephesus was also known as a **center of occult arts and practices**.

S. Lewis Johnson: **Paul's Grandest Epistle**
It was John Calvin's favorite letter. Armitage Robinson, who has also written a more technical commentary on Ephesians, has called it the crown of St. Paul's writings. William Barkley said that Samuel Taylor Coleridge called it, "The divinest composition of Man." And then he added, that is, Professor Barkley, "That it is the queen of the epistles." So we're looking into an epistle that has a **great reputation**. That is, the Epistle to the Ephesians.

The **theme** of the Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians, if we were to single out one thing, is the theme of "*in the heavenlies*," "*in Christ*." We noticed, for example, that it begins in **verse 3 of chapter 1**: "*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings, in heavenly places, in Christ*." Notice in **verse 20**, "*which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places*." Then in **chapter 2 and verse 6**, the Apostle writes, "*And hath raised us up together and made us to sit together in heavenly*

places, in Christ Jesus." Then in **chapter 3 and verse 10**, the Apostle writes, "*to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God*." Notice, "*in heavenly places*" again. And then also in **chapter 6 and verse 12**, we have the final reference to "*in the heavenlies*": "*For we wrestle not against flesh and blood but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high [or heavenly] places*." So the theme of "in Christ," "*in the heavenlies*" seems to stand out.

Isn't it a strange thing, really, when you think about it, that the Apostle should write so much about being *in Christ*? What is meant by being "*in Christ*?" Men don't speak of being "in Plato," or "in Moses." But we don't use terminology like that. The Bible says that we are "*in Christ*." So, we don't read "in Plato," "in Moses." It's so strange that one of the great grammarians of the New Testament has spoken of this expression as containing a "**mystical dative**." That is, the preposition "*in*" followed by the dative case, and the thought being of a mystical kind of union, a **spiritual union**, and being so strange that he wanted to give a different grammatical category for it, to speak of the "mystical dative." But while that may not be real justifiable, the thought of union with Christ is the preeminent thought. To be "*in Christ*" is to be in union with him. And that of course means a spiritual union.

We cannot really describe this other than to look at the New Testament references to "*in Christ*," "*in Him*," "*in Whom*." That kind of expression occurs over 130 times in the Apostle's writings, so it looms large in the writings of the Apostle Paul. He speaks about this union that Believers enjoy with the Lord Jesus Christ. I think of all the things that Paul writes it's probably the most important thing. And it reminds us of the fact that he was – the Lord Jesus – was the representative head and the representative head of his people went to the cross, and died there, and in his death we died. And when the representative head came forth from the grave, we came forth from the grave in him. And when the representative head ascended to the right hand of the Father, we have come forth and have ascended to the right hand of the Father, "*in Him*." Now that is specifically stated in the second chapter of the epistle to the Ephesians when we read in the **sixth verse**, "*and hath raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus*." So the thought, then, of union, I think spelled out in the federal union, the representative union, that Christ's people have with Him, is the thought of "*in Christ*."

J. Ligon Duncan: **Revelation and Benediction**
Now what is it again in this book that caused John Mackay's heart to respond so, and so many other Christians through the years? Well, I want to suggest to you that at least one answer is the **grand theme** of Ephesians: and that theme is that what God had planned from before the foundation of the world, He has accomplished in the person and work of His Son, Jesus the Messiah, and He is accomplishing through His Spirit today: that is, **the building of a new society in the midst of a dying one**; a new order in the midst of the old one; an outpost of the age to come in the midst of this passing age. He has created through Jesus Christ a new family, the body of Christ, the people of God, the church, to the praise of His glorious grace. And that grand theme echoes from the

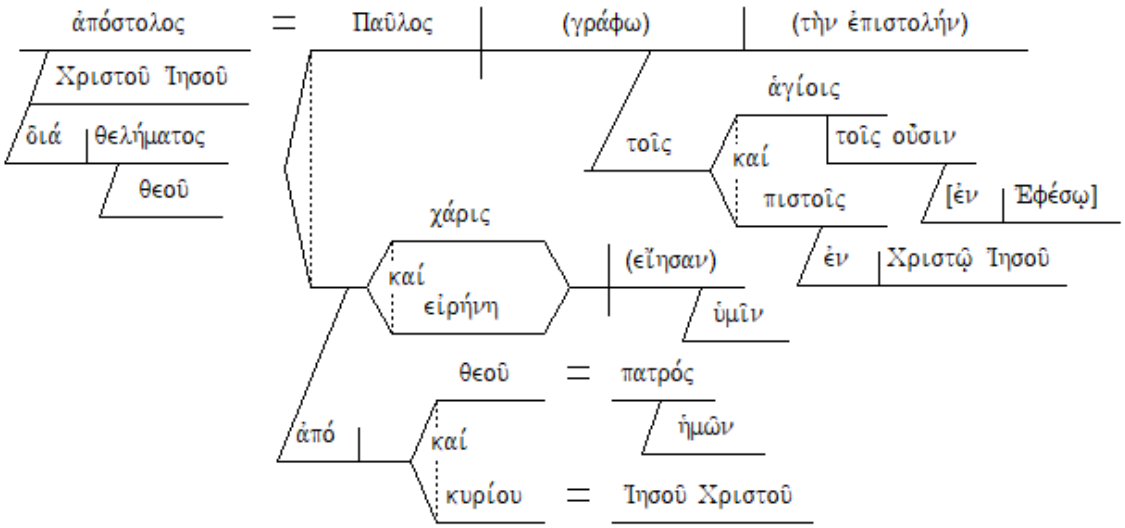
beginning to the end of this book, and it orders the way that we look at our lives and the world, and it instills in us a ground for praise to our God.

I. The author, the message, the words of this book, speak with Christ's authority, by the decree of God.

II. The description of the recipients tells us what Christians are, by the grace of God.

III. The greetings convey two inestimable blessings to all who trust in Christ.

Leedy Greek Diagram:



TEXT: EPHESIANS 1:3

TITLE: GOD DESERVES OUR BLESSING BECAUSE HE TOTALLY BLESSED US

BIG IDEA:
OUR SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS AND PRIVILEGES ARE IDENTICAL TO THOSE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

Our thinking and how we act are based too much on our short-sighted focus on our own personal limitations and our own lack of personal significance or influence. This passage should wake us up to the riches that are ours right now in Christ..

How can our spiritual blessings and privileges be identical to those of our Lord Jesus Christ? Because they have been graciously given to us by a loving heavenly Father who is the omnipotent God of the universe. Our spiritual blessings and privileges depend solely on the work of God -- not on who I am or what I've done in the past or will do this next week. God wants us to view ourselves as He views us -- so totally incorporated into Christ that right now we are seated at the right hand of God in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. That's the place of power and authority and will be the key to spiritual power for us living right now like the saints we are and have been called to be.

Harold Hoehner: God is praised because he has enriched believers with every spiritual benefit in the heavenlies in Christ. To declare God is blessed implies that praise is due. To declare the believer blessed implies that the spiritual benefits have been given. However, though spiritual benefits have been given, believers need to appropriate them.

David Thompson: Paul begins Ephesians by presenting fundamental doctrines pertaining to the Grace Age to show how rich believers actually are. The doctrines he presents are not shallow, but deep. What we learn is significant if you want a church to realize how rich grace is so that it will truly glorify and praise God; you begin by teaching sound doctrine and sound theology.

Andrew Lincoln: The three ἐν phrases in **v 3** combine to sum up in a general way the content of God's blessing of believers for which he is to be blessed and which will be elaborated in the rest of the eulogy. The blessing consists of God's saving activity in Christ and this fullness of divine blessing can be described as "spiritual," not because it belongs to a person's inner, hidden life (pace Caird, 33) but because it is bound up with the Holy Spirit. This sense of "spiritual," as resulting from the presence and work of the Spirit, is to be found in **5:19** (cf. also **Col 1:9; 3:16**), and the last two verses of the eulogy, **vv 13, 14**, indicate that present appropriation of the blessing of the inheritance occurs through participation in the Spirit.

Grant Osborne: The basis for our blessing God is that he "*has blessed us with every spiritual blessing*." This is the theme verse, and the rest of the section enumerates these blessings one by one. The term "*bless*" occurs three times here in Greek: "*Bless the God*

who blesses us with every blessing." There are two qualifications: it is **every** blessing, and each one is **spiritual**. God holds nothing back as he lavishes all his riches (1:7–8) upon us. Everything we need is poured out on us by divine generosity. When we shower God with our praise, it is our natural response to the God who has poured out his blessings on us.

These blessings are spiritual because they come to us on the spiritual plane and because they come through the Holy Spirit in the sense of **Ezekiel 36:26–27** ("*I will put a new spirit in you*" and "*put my Spirit in you*"). The blessings of the eschaton (the end) that has been inaugurated are experienced spiritually by us right now. These spiritual gifts encompass the fruit of the Spirit in **Galatians 5:22–23** and the spiritual gifts of **1 Corinthians 12:4–11, 27–31**, but are not restricted to these. What are intended here are the salvific blessings of this section—indeed, everything God has for us as his people.

We experience these blessings "*in the heavenly realms*," referring not to heaven itself but to the spiritual realm that is now our true home (see also **Eph 1:20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12**). In this world we are "*foreigners and exiles*" (**1 Pet 1:1, 17; 2:11**), and we are now citizens of heaven (**Phil 3:20**) rather than of any earthly nation. We are members of a new family and belong to a new country. In this new spiritual reality we experience all the blessings God has for us.

Moreover, we have all this "*in Christ*," a major Pauline theme that expresses both union with Christ and the resulting membership in his body, the church. Some form of "*in him*" occurs in nearly every verse in this section, and this is a **dominant theme** throughout this letter. Everything we are and have is ours only "*in Christ*."

I. (:3A) GOD DESERVES OUR BLESSING

A. Concept of Blessing

"*speak well of*"

Our English word "eulogize"; only used in the NT of either God or Christ;
Think of how much God gets cursed rather than praised in our culture. Think of our own thought life and how many grumblings and complainings come to our mind.

Think of how you feel as a parent when one of your children sincerely expresses their appreciation. One mark of our maturity is our devotion to God and how we express it. God deserves our blessing. Is He getting it?

Clinton Arnold: Paul begins his letter with an exclamation of praise to God and continues with a threefold refrain of praise throughout this section (**1:6, 12, 14**).

John MacArthur: Nothing is more appropriate for God's people than to bless Him for His great goodness. In all things -- whether pain, struggle, trials, frustration, opposition, or adversity -- we are to praise God, because He is good in the midst of it all. For that we praise and bless Him…

When we bless God we speak good of Him. When God blesses us, He communicates good to us. We bless Him with words; He blesses us with deeds. All we can do is to speak well of Him because in ourselves we have nothing good to give, and in Himself He lacks no goodness. But when He blesses us the situation is reversed. He cannot bless us for our goodness, because we have none. Rather, He blesses us with goodness. Our heavenly Father lavishes us with every goodness, every good gift, every blessing. That is His nature, and that is our need.

B. Designation of God

"*the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*"

Paul points to our unity with Christ as he describes God in terms of relationships that can apply to both Christ and to us

II. (:3B) BECAUSE HE TOTALLY BLESSED US

Study the concept of spiritual riches in Ephesians -- **1:7; 3:8; 3:16;**

Here's our answer to those who hold to a special second blessing -- a baptism of the Holy Spirit that will elevate one to a constant mountaintop Christian experience. We have been blessed already with every spiritual blessing -- not just the second blessing.

A. Source of our Riches -- God Himself

"*who has blessed us*"

His Will	**1:5,9,11**
His Grace	**1:6,7**
His Glory	**1:12,14**
His Good Pleasure	**1:9**
His Purpose	**1:11**

Conclusion: Total security because God guarantees these riches

B. Recipients of these riches -- all the saints

"*us*"

C. Nature of these riches -- spiritual

"*with every spiritual blessing*"

"Spiritual" in the sense that they are the blessings of grace, blessings of a divine order, belonging to the sphere of immediate relations between God and man. It is true that these blessings come from God through the Spirit but the point in view is what they are, not how they reach us.

David Thompson: Dr. Ironside was once asked by some misguided believer if he had received the **second blessing**. Ironside said I am somewhere in the hundreds of

thousands of blessings and have actually obtained every spiritual blessing God has to give a redeemed sinner (*In The Heavenlies*, p. 20).

D. Location of these riches

1) "*in the heavenly places*"

Homer Kent: Believers today have a new existence in that realm of spiritual reality where God is the source of life. Spiritual warfare is being waged in this realm today, but when Christ returns to establish His kingdom He will accomplish His will completely, *"on earth as it is in heaven.*"

Klyne Snodgrass: "heavenly realms" -- Does not refer to a physical location but to a **spiritual reality**—God's world, in which believers have a share and which evil forces still seek to attack. It includes all of the believer's relation to God and the church's experience. It is a way of saying that this world is not the only reality. A larger reality exists where Christ is already exalted as Lord, where believers participate in his victory, and where spiritual forces are opposed. Though believers live physically on this earth, they receive spiritual resources and their identity from a higher plane. The spiritual blessings given to Christians are enjoyed in the present life, for they derive from what God has done in Christ in the heavenlies.

R.C. Sproul: Commentators struggle with understanding what Paul means with *blessed us in the heavenly realms in Christ.* I believe that Paul does not only mean that the blessings received through Christ are spiritual and proceed to believers from the heavenly realms. Rather, he incorporates them as participants in some way in the heavenly realms, because they are blessed in these heavenly places with Christ.

2) "*in Christ*"

Clinton Arnold: "*In Christ*" is the most important phrase of this passage and for the letter as a whole. Some form of it ("*in him*," "*in the beloved*," or "in the Christ") punctuates this passage eleven times. The key for understanding this letter is recognizing that believers have a **new identity in Christ**. A new self-understanding based on a **new reality** permeates every aspect of life and transforms individuals.

Andrew Lincoln: The writer's thought is that believers experience the blessings of the heavenly realms not only through Christ's agency but also because they are incorporated into the exalted Christ as their representative, who is himself in the heavenly realms (cf. also Schlier, 48; Ernst, 270).

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) In what ways have we specifically "*blessed*" God and our Savior this past week? What type of worshippers does the Father seek? How did the Son bless His Heavenly

Father while on earth? What are some Psalms that can help us with this singing of His praise?

2) What do you learn in this passage about the relationships within the Godhead?

3) In what sense do you consider yourself to be "*in Christ*"?

4) Are we too weighed down with the responsibilities and burdens of this physical world that we fail to appreciate all that God has provided for us in the spiritual realm? How can we change our focus?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Benjamin Merkle: **Section Outline**
Praise God for His Blessings in Christ (**1:3–14**)
A. He Chose Us (**1:3–6**)
B. He Redeems Us (**1:7–10**)
C. He Gives Us an Inheritance (**1:11–12**)
D. He Seals Us with His Spirit (**1:13–14**)

Ray Stedman: There are many who take the phrase, *'the heavenly places*,' which appears several times in this letter, as a reference to heaven after we die, but if you do this, you will miss the whole import of Paul's letter. While it does talk about going to heaven some day, it is talking primarily about the life you live right now. The heavenly places are not off in some distant reach of space or on some planet or star; they are simply the realm of invisible reality in which the Christian lives now, in contact with God, and in the conflict with the devil in which we are all daily engaged.

The heavenly places are the seat of Christ's power and glory. In chapter two, verse six we are told,

[God] *raised us up with him, and made us sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus*, {**Eph 2:6** RSV}

But in chapter three we learn that here also are the headquarters of the principalities and powers of evil:

... that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places. {**Eph 3:10** RSV}

The conflict that occurs is set forth in chapter six:

For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts

of wickedness in the heavenly places. {**Eph 6:10-12** RSV}

So you can see that this is not a reference to heaven at all, but to earth. It is to the invisible realm of earth -- not to that which you can see, hear, taste, or feel -- but to that spiritual kingdom which surrounds us on all sides and which constantly influences and affects us, whether for good or evil, depending upon our willful choice and our relationship to these invisible powers. Those are the heavenly places. In this realm, in which everyone of us lives, the apostle declares that God has already blessed us with every spiritual blessing. That is, he has given us all that it takes to live in our present circumstances and relationships. Peter says the same thing in his second letter:

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, {**2 Pet 1:3a** RSV}.

David Hoke: Many of us have trouble believing in the extravagant goodness of God toward us personally. The idea that God would lavish extravagant blessings on us is something we find hard to believe. It seems that we have been conditioned to think of ourselves as unworthy creatures. We are not good enough, or holy enough, or sincere enough to get the really good things from God - that is our thinking. Who are we to presume upon the goodness of God? But the fact remains that all of us have a rich and extravagant inheritance in Christ. In fact, when we are told just how rich is that inheritance, we easily find ourselves saying, 'I can't believe it!' We may not be able to believe it, but it is true.

This is one of the main themes of the book of Ephesians. It reveals to us the extreme magnitude of God's blessings to us in Christ. It tells us who we are and how we can live. And it is powerful.

David Hoke: Re The Sufficiency of God as reflected in **vs. 3** -- Sometimes we can feel that we do not have what it takes to do what God is calling us to do. Throughout the Scriptures we find God calling us upward. There is a high calling for the believer. There is much the Lord commands us to do. But the commands of Christ are not burdensome. It has been said that every command of God is not a demand on you, but a demand upon the God who gave the command. In other words, God will never give you something to do that He hasn't already given you the power to do. In Christ you are already sufficient for everything He calls you to do. Begin to live in that knowledge.

John MacArthur: In the Greek, **verses 3-14** comprise one sentence and encompass the past, present, and future of God's eternal purpose for the church. It is Paul's outline of God's master plan of salvation. In **3-6a** we are shown the past aspect, election; in **6b-11** we are shown the present aspect, redemption; and in **12-14** we are shown the future aspect, inheritance.

John Stott: In the original Greek these twelve verses constitute a single complex sentence. As Paul dictates, his speech pours out of his mouth in a continuous cascade. He neither pauses for breath, nor punctuates his words with full stops. Commentatoras

have searched for metaphors vivid enough to convey the impact of this opening outburst of adoration. 'We enter this epistle through a magnificent gateway', writes Findlay. It is 'a golden chain' of many links, or 'a kaleidoscope of dazzling lights and shifting colours'. William Hendriksen likens it to 'a snowball tumbling down a hill, picking up volume as it descends', and E. K. Simpson -- less felicitously perhaps -- to 'some long-winded racehorse … careering onward at full speed.' More romantic is John Mackay's musical simile: 'This rhapsodic adoration is comparable to the overture of an opera which contains the successive melodies that are to follow'. And Armitage Robinson suggests that it is 'like the preliminary flight of the eagle, rising and wheeling round, as though for a while uncertain what direction in his boundless freedom he shall take.'"

Warren Wiersbe: The fact that Paul is writing about wealth would be significant to his readers, because Ephesus was considered the bank of Asia. One of the seven wonders of the world, the great Temple of Diana, was in Ephesus, and was not only a center for idolatrous worship, but also a depository for wealth. Some of the greatest art treasures of the ancient world were housed in this magnificent building. In this letter, Paul will compare the Church of Jesus Christ to a temple and will explain the great wealth that Christ has in His Church… Paul is saying to us, 'BE RICH!'

Frank Thielman: Paul's benediction in **Eph. 1:3–14** is unusual because of the combination of its length, its sustained benedictory focus, and its complex series of dependent clauses. The benedictions at the beginning of other Hebrew letters are no more than a brief phrase or sentence, but Paul's benediction, although one sentence, comprises 202 words. This makes it longer by far than the New Testament's other epistolary benedictions: **2 Cor. 1:3–4** and **1 Pet. 1:3–5** weigh in at 44 and 53 words respectively. The longer benedictions in roughly contemporary Jewish literature and liturgy, moreover, tend to stray into intercession, confession, or admonition (cf. Caragounis 1977: 39–40, 48). They do this even when they maintain a benedictory character, as in the Eighteen Benedictions, by repeating the phrase, "*Blessed are you, Lord*. . . ." The benediction in Ephesians, however, **sustains its praise of God from beginning to end.** It announces its benedictory focus in the first line (**v. 3**), where the root εὐλογ- is repeated three times, once as an adjective (εὐλογητός, *eulogētos*, blessed), once as a participle (εὐλογήσας, *eulogēsas*, who has blessed), and once as a noun (εὐλογίᾳ, *eulogia, blessing*). Although it never repeats the benedictory formula, it continues with an elaborate series of subordinate clauses that explain the blessings for which God is blessed (cf. Caragounis 1977: 40, 45) and ends with the phrase "*to the praise of his glory*" (**v. 14**; cf. **vv. 6** and **12**).

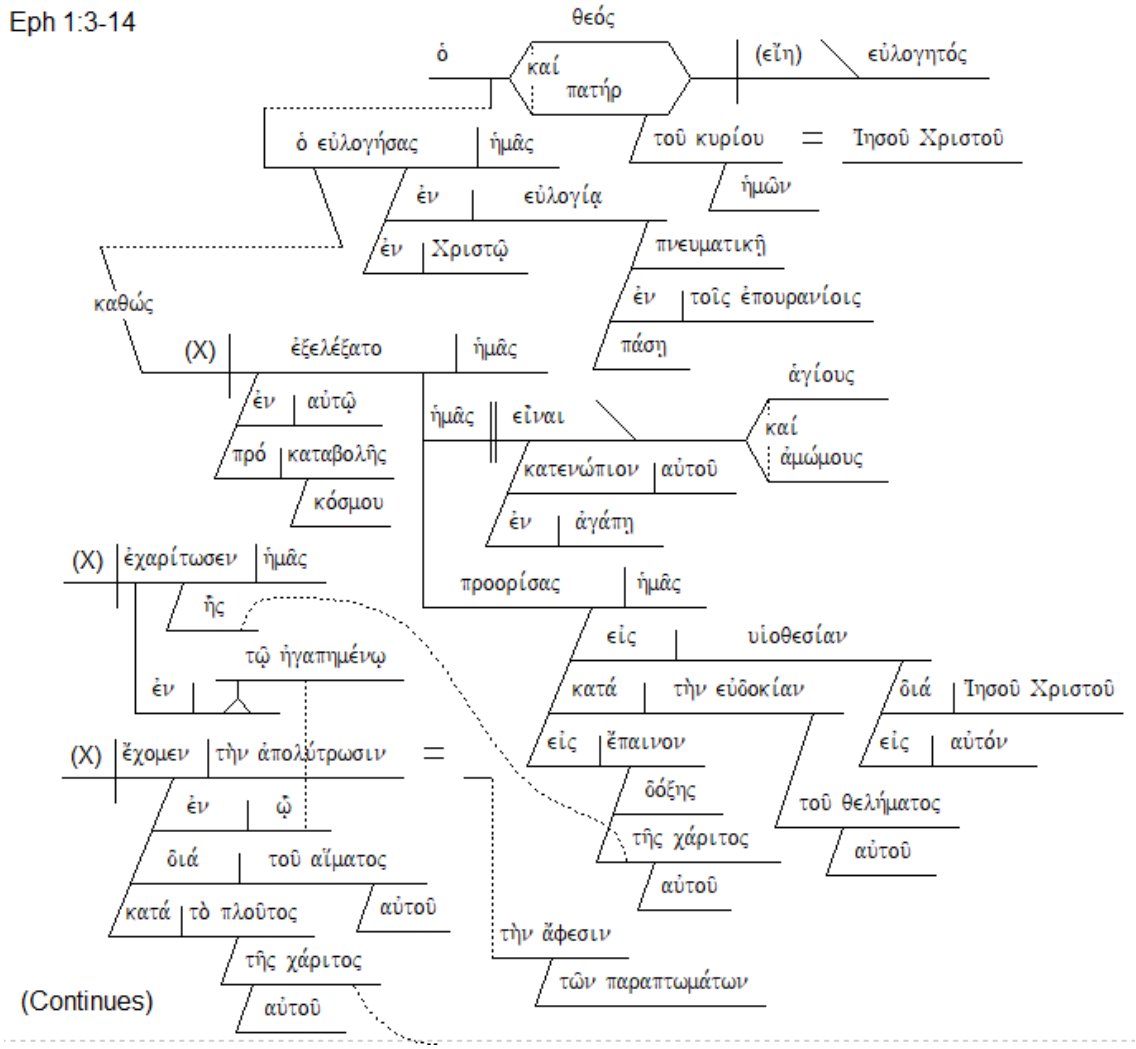
J. Ligon Duncan: **Every Spiritual Blessing**
(:3-14) -- If you look closely, the first half praises God for His manifold spiritual blessings to us in Christ. The second half asks God, by the Spirit, to open your eyes to see, understand, appreciate and experience the very blessings for which God was praised in the first half.
Isn't it interesting? God's blessings lead to praise in the first half, and petition in the second half of the chapter. So, the first half of this chapter is adoration; the second half

is intercession. The first half is doxology; the second half is supplication; but it's all prayer. . .

(:3-4) -- Notice how <u>first</u> Paul **focuses us on God the Father**. It is particularly the reality that God is the divine Father of our Lord Jesus Christ that Paul wants our hearts and minds to fix upon.

<u>Secondly</u>, notice how he **focuses us on the Spirit**. He will speak of "*every spiritual* [capital "S"] *blessing*." In other words, he will focus on the Holy Spirit as the substance and the conduit of all the blessings that the heavenly Father gives to us.
<u>Thirdly</u>, notice how he will **focus us on the Son**. It will be "*in Christ*," in the Son of the heavenly Father, the Lord Jesus Christ–in Christ, all these spiritual blessings are enjoyed.

Leedy Greek Diagram:



TEXT: EPHESIANS 1:4

TITLE: FIRST SPIRITUAL BLESSING = ELECTION

BIG IDEA:
GOD IS SOVEREIGN IN BOTH THE PROCESS AND GOAL OF ELECTION – WHICH IS HOLINESS EXPRESSED IN LOVE

INTRODUCTION:

Piper: The difference between predestination, which is mentioned in **verse 5**, and election (or choosing) which is mentioned in **verse 4**, is that election refers to God's freedom in choosing whom he will predestine. Predestination refers to the goal or destiny for which he chose them. Election is God's choosing whom he will, and predestination is God's determination that they will become his children…

The ultimate goal of God in election and predestination is that God might be praised for his glory. And the highest point of that glory is grace. This is the final goal of our destiny. There is no higher hope, no greater tomorrow, no more meaningful future, no more worthy cause to live for, than to reflect and praise the glory of God's grace for ever and ever.

Van Parunak: We thus see that election focuses on what we are not. It distinguishes us from those who are not chosen, and sets up the expectation of our future conduct in contrast to them. The next verb, "*predestinated*," focuses on what we are: the children of God.

Benjamin Merkle: Paul provides the first of four main reasons believers are to praise God: because he chose us. God's election is a theme throughout the Bible (**Gen. 12:1–3; Deut. 7:6–8; 14:2**). In Christ, God chooses a people for himself. Although a corporate element is present, it would be inaccurate to claim that individuals are not in view.

This election is said to take place "*before the foundation of the world*" (cf. **John 17:24; 1 Pet. 1:20**). That is, God's choice in election occurred before time and creation, emphasizing that this choice was based on God's sovereign purpose, not human merits. Thus the appropriate response is to praise God for such blessing.

God's election, however, is not without an **end goal**. Paul continues by saying that the purpose of those chosen by God is "*that we should be holy and blameless before him*" (cf. **Col. 1:22**). With the privilege of election comes the responsibility of living according to God's Word. God desires not only to forgive our sins but also to conform us to the image of his beloved Son (**Rom. 8:29–30**). "*Before him*" most likely means before Jesus, specifically referring to the day of our Lord Jesus when we will appear before him in judgment.

Klyne Snodgrass: Election means that God chooses people, and this teaching cannot be turned around to the thought that people choose God. Election means that the existence of the people of God can be explained only on the basis of God's character, plan, and action, not on some quality in the people who are chosen. The initiative is always God's based on his "grace"

David Guzik: We dare not diminish what Paul writes here. Believers are chosen by God, and they are chosen before they have done anything or have been anything for God. The great light of this truth casts some shadows; namely, in trying to reconcile human responsibility with divine sovereignty. Yet the purpose of light is not to cast shadows but to guide our steps. The light of God's selection gives us assurance to the permanence of His plan and His love towards us.

I. SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD IN THE PROCESS OF ELECTION

Transition

"*just as*"

Ken Peterman: This "*kathos*" clasue can be translated "in conformity with the fact that . . . He hath chosen us." In other words, all our spiritual blessings are in conformity with the fact that God chose us in Him before the foundation of the world.

Frank Thielman: Paul uses the term καθώς (*kathōs, inasmuch as*) to link his opening blessing of God with an account of the specific ways God has blessed those who bless him. This adverbial conjunction normally introduces a **comparison**. . .

Alternative View:
Clinton Arnold: The conjunction he uses to introduce this (καθώς) is often interpreted as a comparative adverb, its most common function: "*just as he chose us* …" (NASB; NRSV) or "*even as he chose us* …" (ESV). But it makes better contextual sense to take it as a **causal conjunction** (so the TNIV and NIV, which translate with "*for*") and see it as giving the **basis for the praise**. The force of this "*because*" carries throughout **1:4–14** with the rest of the passage providing important reasons why God is so worthy of blessing and praise.

A. Sovereignty Demonstrated by God's Initiation in the Process of Election

"*He chose us*"

Frank Thielman: Conceptually, Paul considers God's free choice of his people to be the clearest indicator of the lavish nature of his grace, as the frequent repetition of the theme of God's gracious initiative in blessing his people shows (cf. **vv. 5, 9, 11**).

God's choice of his people is a traditional Jewish idea, with roots firmly planted in Israel's Scriptures: "*It is you the LORD has chosen out of all the peoples on earth to be his people, his treasured possession*" (**Deut. 14:2** NRSV; cf. **Isa. 43:10**). Nothing in Israel, such as the size of the nation or its righteousness, prompted God to choose them

as his people (**Deut. 7:7; 9:4, 6**), but only his love for them (**Deut. 7:8; Isa. 44:2** LXX; cf. **41:8** LXX). The idea of God's elective love for his people was important to Paul. Elsewhere in his correspondence, he emphasizes that God did not choose his people because of some merit in them (**Rom. 9:11–12; 1 Cor. 1:27–29; 2 Tim. 1:9; Titus 1:1–2**; cf. Cambier 1963: 68), and he links God's choice of his people with his love for them (**Rom. 8:33–39; 1 Thess. 1:4**).

Andrew Lincoln: God's sovereign purpose in choosing out a people for himself is of course a familiar idea in the OT (e.g., **Deut 7:6–8; 14:2**), which witnesses to Israel's consciousness of God's choice of her in the midst of the twists and turns in her historical fortunes. God had chosen Abraham so that in him the nations of the earth would be blessed, and Israel's election was not for her own self-indulgence but for the blessing of the nations: it was a **privilege** but also a **summons to service**. Christian believers also had this consciousness of being chosen to be the people of God.

Stephen Fowl: Thus to claim that God chose us is not to say that God, having considered all the options and possibilities, selected us from among a variety of lesser options. God's choice is gracious and not the result of our superior properties. Further, in choosing us, God is not filling up some lack that God has or feels. God's choice is neither provoked nor coerced by any insufficiency in God. God does not need to elect anyone. Moreover, by claiming that this choosing took place before the foundation of the world, Paul declares that this election is not like our contingent choices, forced on us by opportunity or circumstance.

Harold Hoehner: In the study of the word "**to choose**" several observations can be made.

- **First**, in most instances in the OT and NT, as it is here, God is the subject.
- **Second**, the subject did not choose in a vacuum but in the light of all known options. God chose "us" from the whole human race.
- **Third**, there is no indication of any dislike towards those not chosen. It is not a rejection with disdain. The choice of Levi for the priesthood does not imply anything negative about the other tribes. Furthermore, nowhere is election contrasted with reprobation. It speaks only of those who are chosen and nothing of those not chosen.
- **Fourth**, it is in the middle voice, as is in almost every instance, indicating a personal interest in the one chosen. Hence, God chose with great personal interest rather than a random impersonal choice.
- **Fifth**, the one who is chosen has no legal claim on the one who chooses. In fact, it is clear in Scripture that human beings come short of his glory and do not even seek him (**Ro 3:10–11**). God did not choose anyone because they were holy and thus had a legal claim to be chosen. On the contrary, all people are sinners and deserve rejection. There was no obligation on God's part to choose anyone but He freely chose some and this is evidence of His great grace. The point is that if God had not taken the initiative, no one would have His everlasting presence and life. The real problem is not why He had not chosen some, but why He chose any.

No wonder God is to be praised....This should comfort the believer, for he chose "*us*" from among the whole human race. Yet the chosen individuals are united with one another as a new family unit, the church, the body of Christ (**2:11–3:13; 4:1–16**; cf. **Rom 8:29**)

B. Sovereignty Demonstrated by God's Involvement in the Process of Election
"*in Him*"

Grant Osborne: Some have taken the choice here to be **corporate**—that is, God chooses the church as a corporate entity, and individuals enter it by faith decision. While this makes a certain sense, it is probably incorrect. In truth, **God's elect will is both individual and corporate**. This is in keeping with the "*in him*" that qualifies "*chose us*," for the "*in Christ*" motif has two dimensions—union with Christ (the individual dimension) and membership in his body (the corporate dimension). Each of us has been chosen from eternity past to be part of Christ's messianic community, the people of God's kingdom. The believer is chosen by the preexistent Christ to be God's child, part of his family, and a joint heir with Christ. We are first joined with Christ and then joined with each other as members of the messianic community.

R.C. Sproul: But what we see here is that our election is **in Christ**. Christ is the Beloved and we are chosen by the Father in the Beloved, and for the Beloved. Remember Jesus' prayer in the upper room, when he thanks the Father for those whom the Father has given him, and his exclamation of confidence that all that the Father has given to him will come to him (**John 17**).

Clinton Arnold: When Paul says that God chose us "*in him*" (ἐν αὐτῷ), he is referring to Christ's participation in God's act of choosing. Just as Christ was involved with the Father in the creation of the world ("*by him all things were created*"; **Col 1:16**; see also **John 1:3**), so also Christ participated with the Father in choosing people for himself.

Van Parunak: Caution: some would say that since the Father chose the Son, and since believers are "*in Christ*," the verse means only that God chooses whoever (later) comes to be "*in Christ*." E.g., "God chose Christ, so whoever ends up being in Christ ends up being chosen." But this avoids the simple meaning of the text, that God "*chose us*," and did so long ago. Paul in **Rom 9:12,13** makes this precisely analogous with Jacob and Esau in **Gen 25:22,23** and **Mal 1:2,3**, where the selection is directly of **individual**s, not of corporate relationship with a representative head.

C. Sovereignty Demonstrated by God's Intention in the Process of Election
"*before the foundation of the world,*"

Harrison: How far in the past did He choose us? *'Before the foundation of the world.*' It was no after-thought with God; nor was my relationship to Him. My name was upon His heart prior to any concern for the world. He leads me to believe that but for this preplanned relationship the world would not have been. First the Bride selected for the Son; then the home for her.

II. SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD IN THE GOAL OF ELECTION = HOLINESS EXPRESSED IN LOVE

Ken Peterman: **Transition**: Having seen that God blessed us, now we see that God blessed us to be holy:

Grant Osborne: The Christian life contains both privilege (the gift of salvation) and responsibility (the demand to live life God's way). This reflects the Holiness Code of **Leviticus 17–26**, whose central theme is "*be holy, because I am holy*" (**Lev 11:44; 19:2; 20:7, 26**; see also **1 Pet 1:16**). It is important to realize that believers are chosen not just for salvation but for sanctification as well.

Andrew Lincoln: God's choice of a people in Christ has a goal—that they should exhibit a particular quality of life, described here in terms of **holiness and love**. . .

In **Eph 1:4** holiness, blamelessness, and love are complementary terms. On its negative side, holiness is the absence of moral defect or sin, i.e., blamelessness, while, on its positive side, as moral perfection, it displays itself in love which is the fulfillment of God's will. Moral separation from the sinful world and active love are qualities which, in fact, provide a good summary of the ethical exhortation to follow in the second part of this letter. In this reference a theocentric perspective predominates, for a life of holiness, blamelessness, and love has its source in and is a response to the gracious election of God and is lived "*before him*," that is, conscious that God's presence and God's approval are one's ultimate environment.

A. Holy and Blemishless = the Transformation of the Goal of Holiness

1. Holy

"*that we would be holy*"

Ken Peterman: Election is an incentive to holiness, not an excuse for sin.

- "*holy*" implies a relationship with God which is expressed not primarily through the ritual, but through the fact that believers are led by the Holy Spirit (**Rom. 8:14**)
- "*holy*" behavior is behavior that relates to the Holy Spirit -- **Gal. 5:22**.

2. Blemishless

"*and blameless*"

Bryan Chapell: By virtue of our union with Christ we have our blame removed. What shames us and justly condemns us is not held against us any longer. As Christ is without spot, so also we are "*blemishless*" (the origin of the word "*blameless*") by virtue of his work in our behalf.8 Paul will explain this process later in the chapter, but for now he identifies the results of the Savior's work: our guilt and shame are taken away; we are made blameless.

Ken Peterman: "*without blame*" -- this is not the best translation, it should be "*without blemish*." This was a technical term designating absence of anything amiss in a sacrifice. It is used in **Ex. 29:2; Num. 6:14** and **Ezek. 43:22** in the Greek translation of the Old Testament.

God's Goal: HOLY AND WITHOUT BLEMISH

Application: Is this my goal?
Regarding anything, we should stop and ask: Will it blemish me?

Martin Lloyd Jones: God has not chosen us before the foundation of the world in order to create for us the possibility of holiness; He has chosen us to holiness. It is what He has purposed for us; not possibility but realization. I therefore make this solemn assertion, that those who do not appreciate this truth and show some signs of holiness in their lives are not chosen, are not Christian. Being chosen and being 'holy' are inseparable.

Summers: The end of that choice is a cleansed believer or worshiper. In the New Testament the doctrine of election is not a dry theological bone at which people gnaw. It is, rather, a living, vital doctrine which man sees in operation every day of his experience. The end of that elective choice is an individual cleansed of his sin, remade in the spiritual likeness of God, and, hence, a fit object for God's fellowship.

B. God = the Standard of the Goal of Holiness
"*before Him.*"

C. Love = the Expression of the Goal of Holiness
"*in love*"

Van Parunak: Our Lord's new commandment is that we love one another as he loved us, and a spirit of love toward our brethren must characterize all of our efforts to holiness and blamelessness.

Frank Thielman: How Paul intended his readers to take the next phrase is not entirely clear. Many interpreters believe that ἐν ἀγάπῃ (*en agapē, in love*) does not describe more specifically the holy and blameless behavior that should characterize God's chosen people ("*holy and blameless before him in love*") but is an adverbial qualifier of προορίσας (*proorisas, having predestined*), the participle that begins **verse 5** ("*having predestined us in love*"). A simple pause for breath in the right place would have easily resolved the ambiguity in the original dictation of the letter, but the ambiguity remains in the written text.

Those who take ἐν ἀγάπῃ with προορίσας point out that Paul's focus in the benediction is on God's action of blessing his people, not on human obligation, and that a sudden, brief admonition to live in a holy and blameless way would disrupt this focus (Caragounis 1977: 85). They also argue that the terms "holy" and "*blameless*" are cultic terms describing the consecration and condition of a sacrificial animal placed "*before*"

God. These terms refer not to the conduct of believers, therefore, but to the status believers have in God's sight (Best 1998: 123).

Two considerations, however, weigh against these arguments. First, although it is true that Paul conceived of God as conferring a status of holiness on believers when he chose them to be his people, the biblical passages that form the background to Paul's concept view the gift of holiness as, at the same time, **a call to act in the holy ways that God prescribes.** The two ideas were tied together in Deut. 7:1–6 and **14:1–2**, and they were tied together for Paul. He could tell the Corinthians, for example, that they were "*sanctified* [ἁγιάζω, *hagiazō*] *in Christ Jesus*" and that they "*had been sanctified* [ἁγιάζω, *hagiazō*]," and yet he could call on them to "*bring about*" their "s*anctification* [ἁγιωσύνη, *hagiōsynē*] *in the fear of God*" (**1 Cor. 1:2; 6:11; 2 Cor. 7:1**). It is likely that this understanding of holiness also lies beneath his use of this language in **Eph. 1:4**.

Second, the sentence structure of **verses 3–14** makes it likely that ἐν ἀγάπῃ does not qualify the participle that follows it. Wherever Paul uses a verbal form in the benediction to describe the action of God and then qualifies that verbal form with a prepositional phrase, the qualifying phrase always comes **after the verbal form**, not before it. This makes it unlikely that ἐν ἀγάπῃ would qualify προορίσας, which follows it.

None of this means that God did not predetermine believers "*in love*" for adoptive status as his children. As we have seen, the biblical background of the concept of election is steeped in the notion that God loves those whom he chooses. Paul expresses that idea in this passage, however, through the language of God's "*good pleasure*" (εὐδοκία, *eudokia*) in predetermining the adoptive sonship of his people (**v. 5**) and in planning in advance to sum up all things in Christ (**vv. 9–10**).

The attachment of the phrase ἐν ἀγάπῃ to "*holy*" and "*blameless*" means that in this benediction Paul anticipates the concrete ethical exhortation that he gives later in the letter (**4:1–6:20**). Paul begins that part of the letter by urging his readers to live in a way that is "*worthy of the calling* [κλήσεως, *klēseōs*] with which you were called [ἐκλήθητε, *eklēthēte*]" and then specifies that they should bear with one another "*in love*" (ἐν ἀγάπῃ; **4:1–2; cf. 4:15–16; 5:2, 25, 28, 33; 6:23**). Although the focus of the benediction lies on what God has graciously done for his people, then, here Paul hints at what he will say more fully in the letter's second half: **God's action on his readers' behalf has implications for the way they should live.**

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) What special honors have we been *chosen* for in our life? How did that make us feel? Can we think of instances where we have been overlooked? Do we draw encouragement from the fact that God never overlooks us?

2) How does the fact that we were chosen by God "*before the foundation of the world*" help to deliver us from a works-oriented, legalistic approach to our Christian walk?

3) What type of confidence and freedom and security can we draw from the fact that God's predestined goal for us is that we be "*holy and blameless*" in His eyes?

4) Are we more influenced and motivated by our standing before God (in His eyes and in His presence) or are we dominated by our peers and their evaluation of us?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Hodge: There seem to be two things intended by this reference to the eternity of the divine purpose. The one is, to represent God as doing every thing in time according to a preconceived plan; or as working all things after the counsel of his own will. From eternity the whole scheme of redemption with all its details and in all its results lay matured in the divine mind. Hence every thing is certain. There is no possibility either of failure or of any change of purpose. The eternity of God's purpose is, therefore, a strong ground of confidence and comfort. The other is, to express the sovereignty of the divine purpose. The grace was given to us before we existed, before the world began, and of course before we had done any good or evil. It was, therefore, not for works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us. If the one aspect of the truth that God chose us before the foundation of the world, is adapted to produce confidence; the other aspect is no less adapted to produce humility.

Guthrie:

- Election centers in Christ.
- Election is an expression of God's will.
- Election took place in eternity.
- Election has the highest aim.

J. I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* (quoted by John MacArthur):
All Christians believe in divine sovereignty, but some are not aware that they do, and mistakenly imagine and insist that they reject it. What causes this odd state of affairs? The root cause is the same as in most cases of error in the Church -- the intruding of rationalistic speculations, the passion for systematic consistency, a reluctance to recognize the existence of mystery and to let God be wiser than men, and a consequent subjecting of Scripture to the supposed demands of human logic. People see the Bible teaches man's responsibility for his actions; they do not see (man, indeed, cannot see) how this is consistent with the sovereign Lordship of God over those actions. They are not content to let the two truths live side by side, as they do in the Scriptures, but jump to the conclusion that, in order to uphold the biblical truth of human responsibility, they are bound to reject the equally biblical and equally true doctrine of divine sovereignty,

and to explain away the great number of texts that teach it. The desire to over-simplify the Bible by cutting out the mysteries is natural to our perverse minds, and it is not surprising that even godly men should fall victim to it. Hence this persistent and troublesome dispute. The irony of the situation, however, is that when we ask how the two sides pray, it becomes apparent that those who profess to deny God's sovereignty really believe in it just as strongly as those who affirm it.

Charles Spurgeon: I believe the doctrine of election, because I am quite sure that if God had not chosen me I should never have chosen him; and I am sure he chose me before I was born, or else he never would have chosen me afterwards; and he must have elected me for reasons unknown to me, for I never could find any reason in myself why he should have looked upon me with special love.

Ken Peterman: **GOD CHOSE US.**
Note that this is a statement and not a speculation.

Only two valid views of election:

A. God chose us, then we believed.
B. God saw we would believe, then He chose us.

Two reasons why view "A" is the correct one:

1. The Greek word "*eklegomai*" (*elect*) and its definition.
   a. Definition: "To pick out for oneself; to choose or select"

   b. Note 4 different elements deduced from the texts in which this word is used in the New Testament:
      (1) When this word is used there are always several objects to choose from.
      (2) When this word is used the person making the choice is not tied down by any circumstances which force his hand, but is free to make his own decision.
      (3) When this word is used the person making the choice has the person or thing chosen at his disposal.
      (4) When this word is used the act of choosing involves a judgment by the one choosing -- whether based on subjective or objective criteria.

   Therefore, this word indicates that God chose us out from a group without any input from us, and His choice was based solely on His own criteria.

2. Based on the statement "*before the foundation of the world*"

This statement not only designates time but also indicates that the decision of election was made before anything was made. It originated in the eternal counsels of the Godhead and had nothing whatsoever to do with us other than we were the objects of the election.
Consequently, election promotes humility in the believer and not boasting or arrogance.

TEXT: EPHESIANS 1:5-6

TITLE: SECOND SPIRITUAL BLESSING = PREDESTINED TO ADOPTION AS SONS

BIG IDEA:
TO MAGNIFY HIS GRACE, GOD DETERMINED THOSE HE CHOSE WOULD BE AUTHENTIC SONS WITH FULL RIGHTS AND PRIVILEGES

INTRODUCTION:
Our relationship to God can be pictured in a number of ways: (cf. John MacArthur here)

1) Servants -- subjects of His kingdom
Christ is our Lord, giving us the direction we need and we are His servants carrying out his will. What a privilege to serve the King of Kings.

2) Friends -- **John 15:15** goes beyond the relationship as servants to describe us as friends -- true companionship -- the sharing of intimate knowledge -- insight into the mind of God; so that we don't act out of just blind obedience

3) Our passage goes way beyond this to speak of adoption as sons
cf. **Hebrews 2:11**

Background:
Adoption is a simple concept. The Roman practice of legally adopting a child would be similar to ours. In addition to all of the family privileges and the right of inheritance, there was the new civil status of all the rights of a Roman citizen.

Human parents can adopt children and come to love them every bit as much as they love their natural children. They can give an adopted child complete equality in the family life, resources, and inheritance. But no human parent can impart his own distinct nature to an adopted child. yet that is what God miraculously does to every person whom He has elected. He makes them sons just like His divine Son. Christians not only have all of the Son's riches and blessings but **partake of the Son's nature.**

Bryan Chapell: God loves us because we are in union with the Son that he loves. United to Christ, we are also adopted by the Father, and as such have all the rights, privileges, and affection that the Son of God himself receives from God. Adoption in the Roman world emphasized the **rights and privileges of sonship**, and the analogy to our spiritual lives was one of Paul's favorites (**Rom. 8:15, 23; Gal. 4:5**). In Paul's day the head of a family would adopt a son (often a grown man) in order to pass on the family name and inheritance. Note how the saints' **inheritance** is also important later in the opening chapter of Ephesians (**1:11, 14;** cf. **1:18**). . .

Paul is using the doctrine of predestination not to separate believers, not to instill pride in our being chosen, nor to vaunt any special knowledge of how God works, but simply to assure hard-pressed believers that God has loved them and does love them apart from any merit of their own. In other words, predestination is meant to bless believers' hearts. It is not meant for endless argument; it is not an excuse not to evangelize; it is our basis of comfort when we face the limitations of our actions, will, and choices. We make mistakes at times by making predestination the source of our pride (i.e., we have status others do not, we know something others do not, or we are superior theologians who don't dodge hard truths), rather than the basis for assuring the beleaguered who are wrestling with their sin and the world's trials. To such God says, "I loved you before the world began, so don't doubt me now." Predestination is the heavenly Father's shout of eternal love that echoes in our songs of thankful praise as our strength is renewed by the assurance of his care. When predestination is properly taught, it accomplishes what Paul says is his goal: praise to God for his glorious grace and peace to his people (**vv. 3, 6**).

Benjamin Merkle: God's work of predestination was done "*according to the purpose of his will*" (**v. 5**). It was done in accordance with his "*purpose*," indicating that the choosing of his people was something in which God delighted. And it was done in accordance with his "*will*." God has a definite plan and redemptive purpose for adopting wayward sinners into his family.

God's gracious act of predestination and adoption was done so that his redeemed children might praise his glorious grace (**v. 6**; cf. **vv. 12, 14**). God's grace is glorious as it reflects his character and is therefore worthy of our highest praise. Paul further notes that God has "*blessed*" us with this grace. This verb highlights the abundant kindness of God in freely granting salvation to those who did not deserve it. This grace comes to us "*in the Beloved*," that is, "*in Christ*."

I. (:5a) GOD'S ACCOMPLISHMENT IN PREDESTINING US TO ADOPTION AS SONS – <u>WHAT DID GOD DO?</u>

A. God Predestined Us

"*He predestined us*"

Bruce Hurt: The aorist participle (*proorisas*) may be translated either causally ("because he predestined," "having predestined") or **instrumentally** ("*by predestining*"). A causal nuance would suggest that God's predestination of certain individuals prompted his choice of them. An instrumental nuance would suggest that the means by which God's choice was accomplished was by predestination. The **instrumental view** is somewhat more likely in light of normal Greek syntax (i.e., an aorist participle following an aorist main verb is more likely to be instrumental than causal).

Kenneth Wuest: The genius of the word is that of placing limitations upon someone or something beforehand, these limitations bringing that person or thing **within the sphere of a certain future or destiny.** These meanings are carried over into the New

Testament usage of the word. Thus, the "chosen-out" ones, have had limitations put around them which bring them within the sphere of becoming God's children by adoption (**Eph. 1:5**), and of being conformed to the image of the Lord Jesus.

B. God Adopted Us = Goal of Predestination
"*to adoption as sons*"

Clinton Arnold: Paul also has in mind the concept of adoption that characterized **David's relationship to God**. Through Nathan the prophet, God promised to be a father to David and said, "*He will be my son*" (**2 Sam 7:14**). Second Temple Judaism looked to this passage as a promise that would also be fulfilled in the future at the time of the restoration, but with an extended application to all God's people: "*And I shall be a father to them, and they will be sons to me. And they will all be called 'sons of the living God'* " (Jub 1:24–25; see also 4QFlor 1:10–12). One author accurately notes, "If adoption is about anything it is about belonging, a belonging where God as 'Father' occupies centre stage in his 'family.'"

As the descendant of David who has come and sits on the throne by the Father's side, Jesus Christ has fulfilled this promise and has been "*declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead*" (**Rom 1:4**). "*Through Jesus Christ*" (διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) and based on their close and vital union with him, believers share in this adoption and truly become children of God (see also **Rom 8:15, 23; 9:4; Gal 4:5**).

God has chosen us and has predestined us to adoption "*to himself*" (εἰς αὐτόν). This ties in with love as the basis for his predestinating act and reinforces the idea that he views his people as his own glorious inheritance (**Eph 1:18**). The final purpose of election is then relational. God is bringing together a people whom he can delight in and enjoy.

R.C. Sproul: Again, the goal of predestination is adoption. It was God's good pleasure not only to prepare the kingdom for his Son, but also for those whom he adopted in his Son, the heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. Election is in Christ, leading to adoption into the family of God. . .

There is a reason why the elect have been chosen to salvation, but the reason is to be found in God and not in them. In other words, God did not choose them because they qualified for the choice. Rather, he chose them because he was pleased to extend mercy to them, while the others he passes over. God is not obligated to save anybody, to make any special act of grace, to draw anyone to himself. He could leave the whole world to perish, and such would be a righteous judgment.

Donald Barnhouse: Let us take the Greek word apart. It is *huiothesia.* The first half is *huios*, the common noun for an adult son. The latter half is *thesia*, a placement, an installation, a setting of a person or a thing in its place. So the whole word means not so much adoption as the **placing of a son.**

Charles Spurgeon: The chosen ones are adopted; they become the children of God. The universal Fatherhood of God, except in a very special sense, is a doctrine totally unknown to Scripture. God is the Father of those whom he adopts into his family, who are born again into his family, and no man hath any right to believe God to be his Father except through the new birth, and through adoption. And why God thus elects or adopts is declared here: "*According to the good pleasure of his will*." He does as he pleases. That old word of God is still true: "*I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion*." Men do not like that doctrine; it galls them terribly; but it is the truth of God for all that. He is Master and King, and he will sit on the throne, and none shall drag him thence.

Van Parunak: Application. -- We need to recognize our status as sons and daughters of God, (**2 Cor 6:18**), and act in keeping with it. We are not just his little children, whose immature behavior may be excused by our age. We are adult sons and daughters, full heirs to the household and representatives of our divine Parent, and we should conduct ourselves in the sense of this status.

C. God Worked Through Christ to Accomplish His Goal

1. Agency

"*through Jesus Christ*"

Bruce Hurt: (*dia*) is a preposition of intermediate agency. Christ is the intermediate agent of (the means by which) the Father brings to fruition His purpose of placing believers as His adult sons, doing so through Christ's finished work on the Cross.

2. Goal

"*to Himself,*"

Bruce Hurt: To (*eis*) Himself (846) (auto) refers to the Father Who had previously marked us out with a view to adopting us as sons for Himself for His own satisfaction that He might lavish His love on us.

II. (:5b) GOD'S ATTITUDE IN PREDESTINING US TO ADOPTION AS SONS – WHY DID GOD DO IT?

"*according to the kind intention of His will,*"

Vaughan: Re "*according to the kind intention of his will*" -- Here it directs attention to the fact that God's election is an act of His own pure goodness, of His own benevolent sovereignty. What He did, He did solely because it seemed right and good for Him to do it.

Clinton Arnold: The term "*good pleasure*" (εὐδοκία), however, clarifies that God did not select a people in some austere, dispassionate way. Long ago, John Eadie noted that the term "defines His will as being something more than a mere decree resting on

sovereignty." God took great delight in thinking of his future people and being kindly disposed toward them. . .

The good pleasure of his will, then, is "*the basis of*" (κατά) his election. This preposition is important in this passage, occurring five times (cf. **1:7, 9**, and twice in **1:11**). It typically indicates the norm or standard by which an action is carried out and is often translated "*according to*" (so the NASB; ESV; NRSV). A contemporary equivalent would be, "the boy assembled the model according to the instructions." Here, however, the norm is at the same time the reason for the election. One can also translate, "*because of the good pleasure of his will*."

Grant Osborne: The choice to adopt the believer takes place "*in accordance with his pleasure and will*," which further points to the **depth of his love**. It is not a cold, dispassionate choice but a joyous one. The term for "*pleasure*" (eudokia) connotes the delight and joy that attend an action and here pictures the intense satisfaction of God as he elects a former sinner to become his adopted child. God's will is uppermost as he chooses the individual and calls them to be his own, and this brings him great pleasure.

Van Parunak: "*the good pleasure of His will*" -- His will embraces all that happens, but this does not mean he takes **pleasure** in it all alike.

- **Ezek 33:11**, God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, although that death is certainly according to his will; in fact, he decrees it.
- **Isa 28:21** (cf. **vv.14ff**), God describes judgment as his "*strange work*" and "*strange act*."
- **Micah 7:18**, "*Who [is] a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth [in] mercy*."

III. (:6) GOD'S ULTIMATE PURPOSE IN PREDESTINING US TO ADOPTION AS SONS – HOW DID GOD ACHIEVE HIS GOAL?

A. Magnifying His Grace by Stirring Up Praise

"*to the praise of the glory of His grace,*"

Grant Osborne: In essence, this says that in bestowing his salvation on undeserving sinners God is showcasing his glorious grace for all to see.

Clinton Arnold: God's ultimate purpose in selecting and predestining a people for himself is that it would lead to his own glory. . . In this instance, the **grace of God** is praised; Paul here extols "the quality of its splendour, its magnificence." Because grace receives further emphasis in the following relative clause (ἧς ἐχαρίτωσεν ἡμᾶς), it is better to see it as the object of praise than the glory of God here. Thus, the first refrain functions as an exclamation of praise to the marvels of God's grace bestowed on his people.

Homer Kent: The refrain in **verse 6** ends each stanza of this doxology. It shows how each phase of our redemption moves toward the praise and glory of God. In Paul's view, redemption originated solely with God and was made effective by His unchanging decrees. It is the greatest display of grace conceivable, for it bestows the most glorious privileges on completely depraved and fallen men, and this bestowal is all one-sided. Man merely accepts or rejects; he brings no merits.

Stephen Fowl: **Verse 6** begins by noting that the upshot of God's adoption of believers in Christ is praise. Praise is one of the ends toward which God's predestining is directed. Thus God is both the free initiator of believers' adoption, and praise of God is the end toward which such adoption is directed. The adoption of believers is God's gracious act, which leads not simply to praise of God, but to praise of God for this specific act of grace. The rest of **v. 6**, "*which he has graciously bestowed on us in the Beloved*," elaborates on this grace.

Andrew Lincoln: The goal of believers' predestination as sons and daughters has already been said to be εἰς αὐτόν but now it is also εἰς ἔπαινον δόξης τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ. The redemption, which originated with God, has his own glorification as its end. The predestination, which is the product of God's grace, resounds to the praise of the glory of that grace.

Van Parunak: God's object in choosing us is not just to be gracious, or to show forth that grace as an aspect of his glory, but that the creation would respond in **praise** of that glory. His actions are calculated to inspire our worship and adoration. In a human, such behavior would be considered vain, but it is absolutely appropriate to the sovereign creator and sustainer of the universe. This phrase, "*to the praise of his glory*," is the recurring refrain that marks off the three sections of this opening prayer (**vv. 12,14**). The work of each member of the trinity is calculated to stimulate the creation to praise the glory of our great God.

B. Magnifying His Grace by the Free Gift of Union with His Beloved

"*which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.*"

Andrew Lincoln: **Verse 6** then confirms the thought found earlier, that God's predestining choice of believers to be his sons and daughters is inextricably tied to Christ's being his chosen one and that their experience of this grace is through their being included in the one who is the beloved Son par excellence. Being highly favored with grace means, for the believing community, participation in that divine love with which the Father favored the Son, though the community's participation in this relationship is through adoption (cf. **v 5**).

Frank Thielman: It seems likely, therefore, that when Paul calls Jesus "*the Beloved*" in this passage he has in mind Jesus's embodiment within himself of the beloved and elect people of God (cf. Caird 1976: 36; Lincoln 1990: 26–27; O'Brien 1999: 105). God has shown believers his praiseworthy grace, therefore, not merely "by means of the Beloved," through his atoning death, but also "in the Beloved," through their

identification with Christ. God's delight in this act of free and lavish grace toward believers prompt them to praise him, and **the praise of his people for his grace** was the ultimate purpose of his primordial decision to make believers his people.

CONCLUSION:
It's great to live as God's servants and even enjoy companionship as friends of God -- but the highest calling is to enjoy our relationship as **adopted sons of God**.

* * * * * * * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) How does a view of predestination which says that "God looked down in history, saw who would eventually choose of their own free will to receive his free offer of salvation, and then chose them and predestinated them to adoption" -- How does such a view fail to live up to the intent and impact of these verses in **Ephesians 1**?

2) What children do you know who have been adopted? How precious are they to their parents? What benefits have they received as a result of adoption? What gratitude do we express daily for having been removed from the family of Satan and adopted into God's family?

3) Are we living as Sons of God? Do we understand that our adoption has involved the implanting of a new nature within us?

4) If the immediate goal is that we should be "*holy and blameless*" and the ultimate goal is that we should be "*to the praise of the glory of His grace*", how can we ever slip back into a legalistic type of lifestyle -- one that has no transforming power to renew us after the image of His Son?

* * * * * * * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

J. Ligon Duncan: **Predestined**
I. Christian life and praise is reoriented by an appreciation of the loving and kind predetermination of God.

You see, the point is that this action of predestination is maximally loving, maximally kind, maximally generous. This is displaying God's love, not diminishing it in any way.

II. Christian life and praise is reoriented by an appreciation of the privilege of being welcomed into God's own family.

And you see, the Apostle Paul is saying to those Ephesians who are facing persecution — they were marginalized, they were hated by the world — 'You are a joint heir with the One who rules over all things by the word of His power. You are an adopted child into the family of God. Your last name is God's last name.'

III. Christian life and praise is realized, enjoyed, given and received only in Christ.

God's love for us as Christians was not at first contingent upon our love for Him, but that it preceded our love for Him, that it prompted our love for Him, and that it won our love for Him!

IV. God's chief end is His own glory, and so is ours-and that's a purpose to be driven by!

The Apostle Paul is saying to us now "Live for the glory of God and give to Him the glory due His name."

V. God the Father's saving favor is costly and free, and realizing this is life reorienting.

In other words, God's grace is freely given though expensively bought. And both of those things are crucial for Christians to understand.

S. Lewis Johnson: **The Work of the Father**
The Apostle uses three terms very similarly. They each have a slightly different emphasis. One of them, first of all, is the term: "foreknown." Now we saw that in the Epistle to the Romans – those of you that are following through on that series on Sunday morning – we saw that in **Romans chapter 8**, where it is stated that we were foreknown: "*Those whom he hath foreknown he hath predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son*," Paul said there. Foreknowledge, in that particular context, we pointed out, did not mean "knowledge beforehand," simply, as if what Paul is saying is he [God] looked on down through the years and saw who would believe and chose them. It's not what he foreknew. It's whom he foreknew.

Foreknowledge is a term of election. It's the Hebraic way of stating election. Let me give you an illustration. In Amos we read, "*You only have I known of all the nations on the earth*"—I'm going over this—I know some of you have heard me say this a number of times, but I want you to get so you not only know it but so you can explain it to someone else—"*you only have I known of all the nations on the earth*." Now, of course, God knew all the nations on the earth. When he says, "you only who I have known" it means, it is **you that I have known in a special sense**; he's talking about the Nation of Israel, and of course he's talking about their election. They alone of the nations have been chosen, for a special purpose. So, **foreknowledge is a term of election with stress on the intimacy of the divine choice**. "Knowledge" is the term that we even used of sexual relationships in the Old Testament: "Adam knew Eve, his wife, and she conceived." So it is a word of **intimacy**. It's a word that stressed the intimate

relationship into which we have entered by virtue of God's choice of us. "Foreknown" is to be chosen, and to be chosen out of God's intimate selection of us.

The second word is the word "to choose." Now that is found in **verse 4**, right here, "*according as he has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world*." That word is rather simple; it means "**to select**." When you go into a store and you look at some garments, for example, trying to make up your mind what you want to buy, and finally you say, to the clerk, "Well, I have chosen this." And you pick out this tie, and you purchase it. You have chosen that tie out of the hundreds of ties in the store. So, to be selected, or to be chosen, is to be selected out of a body of possibilities.

When we read here, "*according as he hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world*," he means that we have been **selected out of the mass of individuals**. So the stress rests upon the word "**selection**" in the word "choice." One word then, "foreknowledge," stresses intimacy. This word stresses "selection." But now we also have this one in **verse 5**: "*Having predestinated us unto the adoption of sons*."

Now you can tell from this word, but from its very meaning: "*Predestinated us*" suggests the term destiny. It means to be marked out beforehand for a particular goal. So the term, predestination, **emphasizes the goal** for which we have been chosen. **One suggests then intimacy, the other selection out of the mass. The third stresses the goal:** "*We have been predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son*." Putting it all together, **God has entered into an intimate relationship with the elect. He has selected them by virtue of His love for them. And He has determined in his predestination that they are going to be, well, sons here and like our Lord Jesus Christ**. So these three words say the same thing, with three different emphases, "*having predestinated us unto the adoption of sons*." What it means, simply, is to be earmarked by divine grace, and for grace. And the believer carries the hallmark of the eternal good will in the fact that he has been predestinated to the adoption of sons according to the good pleasure of his will.

Ken Peterman: God not only chose us in eternity past but predestinated us to be exactly what He wanted us to be … His sons. The word '*predestinated*' is different than the word '*elect*.' '*Horizo*' (predestined) means 'to mark out before time for a specific purpose. Our English word '*horizon*' is a transliteration of the Greek word.

'*Horizon*' = a boundary; something limited or defined; marked out definitely. While the word '*elect*' refers to the act of God's choosing, the word '*predestinated*' refers to the purpose for which the subjects of election are chosen.

- Marked us out for a purpose;
- Defined the purpose of our existence;
- Fixed the horizon of our lives;
- Determined the reason for our election;

The purpose is to become like Jesus Christ in reality. God wants to look down and be able to say "*This is my Son in whom I am well pleased*."

Summers: As grateful recipients of God's redemptive work, it is natural that we should think first of the benefit that comes to us as we experience this grace. In the New Testament, however, the major emphasis is not on the benefit that comes to the individual who receives this grace. It is rather on the benefit that accrues to God who has extended this grace.

Stephen Fowl: Paul, however, is the only NT writer to use this word. Although the LXX does not use the word, there are a variety of occasions in the OT where someone might be thought of as adopting someone (levirate marriage in **Deut 25:5–10**; Abraham's provisional ceding of his goods to Eliezer in **Gen 15:2**; Jacob's adoption by Laban in **Gen 29:14–30**; and Moses' adoption by Pharaoh's daughter in **Exod 2:5–10**). Throughout the OT, relatives and others are expected to care and seek justice for orphans, yet the OT does not preserve clear evidence of a legal process for adopting a child (Walters 43).

Roman law allowed adoption. There were two aspects to this process: Initially, the son's ties to his biological father were severed, and all of the father's considerable control was relinquished. This then allowed the son to come under the full control of the adoptive father (Lyall 86–99; Walters 52–55; Hoehner 196). This Roman pattern fits well with points Paul will make later in Ephesians. In **Eph 2:1–5**, Paul speaks of the Ephesians as formerly "*sons and daughters of disobedience*" and children of wrath (by nature)—as part of a more comprehensive description of their alienation from God, a situation rectified and altered in Christ.

In the light of this description, it appears that Paul uses the image of adoption through Christ here with its Roman overtones of breaking all former bonds to a natural father and coming under the domain of a new father. In this respect, adoption is not simply God's gracious act: it bespeaks the comprehensive and total transfer of one's passions, love, and allegiance from the world to God. Finally, we only obtain our share in this adoption through the true son, Christ. Paul spells this out more clearly in **Gal 4:4–5** where "*God sent his Son, born of a woman,… that we might receive adoption as sons and daughters*" (AT).

William Hendriksen: The Father is described as having *pre-horizoned* or *pre-encircled* his chosen ones. In his boundless love, motivated by nothing outside of himself, he set them apart to be his own sons. *'As the hills are round about Jerusalem, so Jehovah is round about his people*' (**Ps. 125:2**). He destined them to be members of his own family (cf. **Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:5**). It is rather useless to look for human analogies, for the adoption of which Paul speaks surpasses anything that takes place on earth. It bestows upon its recipients not only a new name, a new legal standing, and a new family-relationship, but also a new image, the image of Christ (**Rom. 8:29**). Earthly parents may love an adopted child ever so much. Nevertheless, they are, to a large extent, unable to impart their spirit to the child. They have no control over hereditary factors. When God adopts, he imparts his Spirit! This adoption is *through Jesus Christ for himself*. It is through the work of Chirst that this adoption becomes a reality.

By his atonement the new standing and also the transformation into the spirit of sonship were merited for the chosen ones. Thus, they become God's children who glorify him.

Ray Stedman: Here is a partial explanation of how God takes care of the past failures and shame of our lives in order to make us holy and blameless. He does it through a change of family relationship…

More than that, the emphasis is upon living as a full-grown, mature, responsible son. We are not put into this family as mere babes; we are put in as mature, grown-up individuals. As soon as we grasp the truth we can exercise it. In other words, to put it very simply, we are to live exactly as Jesus lived.. He was a Son, the Son of the Father, and as such, a certain way of life was his. And now, in him, we have his lifestyle.

Frank Thielman: Paul next uses the aorist participle προορίσας (*proorisas, having predestined*) to describe God's choice more fully. Just as the preposition πρό (*pro, before*) in **1:4** placed God's choice of his people before his creation of the world, so Paul prefixed this preposition to the verb ὁρίζω (*horizō, determine*) to place God's decision to mark off a people for himself chronologically before the world began. Did Paul think there was a difference between God's choice of his people before the world's creation and God's delimiting his people before the world's creation? If not, then the statement certainly seems **redundant** (Hoehner 2002: 194). Perhaps, therefore, we should take the aorist tense of the participle to refer to antecedent time and understand Paul to say that God predestined his people and then chose them (Alford 1857: 69; Ellicott 1859: 7–8; cf. **Rom. 8:28–30**). Alternatively, perhaps προορίσας states the **cause of God's choice**: he chose his people because he determined beforehand that they would be his people (Hodge 1856: 37; Lightfoot 1895: 315; Abbott 1897: 8; Hoehner 2002: 194).

If Paul were engaged in a philosophical discussion about the precise logic of election (cf. Calvin 1997: 113–20), and if Ephesians demonstrated an economy of language that made redundancy improbable, one of these explanations might be correct. Paul's focus, however, is not on the logic of election but on its occurrence and the need to praise God because his choice of a people for himself is such a clear demonstration of his grace. Paul's use of language in Ephesians generally, and in this benediction particularly, moreover, is as lavish in its own way as the grace of God, which he praises. Redundancy, then, is not a valid objection to understanding προορίσας ἡμᾶς as a **restatement** of ἐξελέξατο ἡμᾶς. **Paul simply turns the jewel slightly and views it from a different angle**, now describing God's primordial action on behalf of his people not as his choice but as his predetermination of them. God determined that they would be his people before the foundation of the world. Their status as his people, therefore, came as an utterly free gift, irrespective of anything they could possibly have done to merit it.

This shift in perspective also means that Paul now changes his angle of vision on God's purpose in predetermining who his people would be. Though in **1:4** Paul had said that

God's purpose in election was that they might be holy and blameless before him in love, he now describes God's purpose in predetermining his people as their "*adoptive sonship*" (υἱοθεσίαν, huiothesian).

Gerald Cowen: **Adoption, as it was practiced in the Roman world of Paul's day, meant three things.**

> **(1)** Barclay points out, "The adopted person lost all rights in his old family, and gained all the rights of a fully legitimate son in his new family. In the most literal sense, and in the most binding legal way, he got a new father."
>
> **(2)** Next, he became an heir to his new father's estate. No matter how many other sons there were at the time or how many were born thereafter, he was co-heir with them. This was not subject to change.
>
> **(3)** Finally, the old life of the adoptee was completely erased. All debts were legally canceled. He was regarded by the law as a new person. Barclay cites a case in Roman history that shows how completely this was true. The Roman emperor Claudius adopted Nero so that Nero could succeed him as emperor. Claudius had a daughter named Octavia. Nero wished to marry Octavia to seal the alliance. Although they were not blood relations, in the eyes of the law they were now brother and sister and could not marry. The Roman senate had to pass a special law in order for them to marry.

In like manner, believers, when they are adopted, are removed from under the authority of Satan and given a new Lord, who is now also their Father. They are guaranteed an inheritance with all the children of God, of which the Holy Spirit is the down payment and guarantee. The Spirit is also the witness that adoption has taken place. Finally, they are new persons, all their sins are forgiven, and they have a clean slate before God. What a tremendous blessing to know that God has made us His own**.** (*Salvation- Word Studies from the Greek New Testament* – Gerald Cowen)

Hoke: Re **vs. 1-6** -- What a powerful passage! In Christ you are significant. In Christ you are sufficient. In Christ you are secure. You can say it another way. In Christ you are righteous. In Christ you are rich. In Christ you are received. You are a saint, so learn to realize your righteousness. You are blessed with every spiritual blessing, so learn to rely on your resources. You are accepted in the Beloved, so learn to rest in your relationship.

Study of Parallel Passages dealing with the topic of Adoption as Sons:

I. (Galatians 4:5-7) -- ADOPTION -- THE GOAL OF REDEMPTION

Background: a little different picture here: not entrance into the family of Gode, but the distinction between the OT position as a child under the tutelage of the Law and the position in this Age of Grace as mature sons

A. Accomplished by Redemption -- costly, expensive (:5)

1 Pet. 1:18-19

"*in order that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons*."

B. Involves some sort of Freedom and Liberty

In this context: freedom from "*the elemental things of the world*," from "*under the law*" -- no need to fear earning blessing

C. The Consciousness of Sonship is Created in the Heart by the Holy Spirit (:6)

"*And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba, Father*!'"

Significance of the expression "Abba, Father" -- the Aramaic and the Greek equivalent; the everyday Jewish family term used in the intimacy of the family; signifies tenderness, trust, love

cf. small children crying out "Daddy" -- connotes delight and total security -- this is the expression in seed form; weheras "Abba, Father" is a more mature expression

used by Christ -- **Mark 14:36**

seems to have become a formula for addressing God in the early church

we should have assurance we are in God's Family -- should be able to feel that relationship and intimacy

D. Associated with our Inheritance (:7)

"*Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God*."

entitled to all that their Father's resources can give them

II. (Romans 8:15 -- whole chapter) -- ADOPTION -- THE SPIRIT OF FREEDOM

Those who are being led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God by adoption and have been freed from the spirit of slavery which leads to fear and given new confidence. We are under obligation not to live according to the flesh, but the Spirit.

A. (:3) Accomplished by Redemption

B. (:2, etc.) Involves some sort of Freedom and Liberty

C. (:15-16) The Consciousness of Sonship is Created in the Heart by the Holy Spirit

same cry of "Abba, Father"

D. (:17, 23) Associated With Our Inheritance

Involves suffering with Him now knowing that we will be glorified with Him

v. 23 -- shows that there still is a future aspect of this adoption = the redemption of our bodies

III. (Ephesians 1:5-7) -- ADOPTION -- THE OUTWORKING OF GOD'S SOVEREIGN AND BENEFICENT PLAN

(Concentrate on the Application of these same 4 points)

A. (:7) Accomplished by Redemption

"*forgiveness of our trespasses*" -- we will look at this in depth next message

Costly and therefore precious
Already accomplished and therefore certain -- Nothing that we can add to it;
Our obligation is to live for the one who died for us (**2 Cor. 5:15**)

B. (:7) Involves some sort of Freedom and Liberty and Confidence

freedom from the guilt and penalty of sins

no awkwardness or fear in our relationship with our Father, but boldness and access

C. (:15-16) The Consciousness of Sonship is Created in the Heart by the Holy Spirit

The Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are His children; there is no need to ask God for external signs or confirmation.

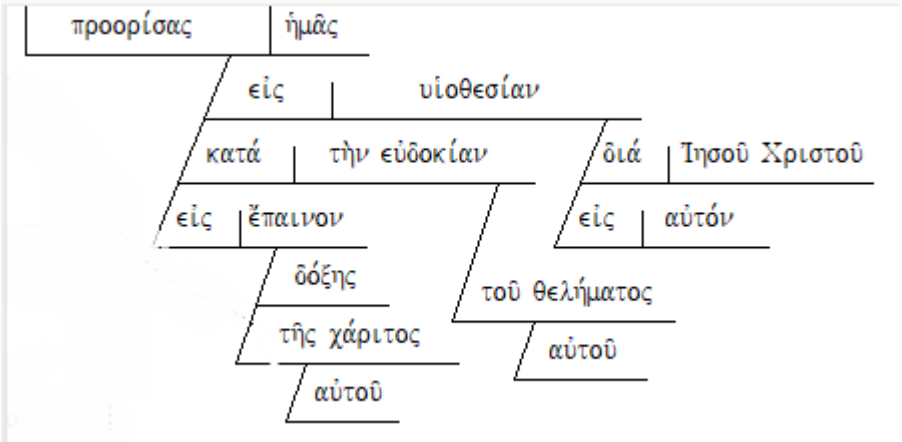
We need to expect and cultivate the fruit of the Holy Spirit -- Holiness especially -- this leads to greater assurance (on a different track) of our sonship.

We should spend time crying out, "*Abba, Father*".

D. (:17, 23) Associated With Our Inheritance

Keep the sufferings of this life in perspective -- Plan and live accordingly (we can afford to risk all).

Leedy Greek Diagram



TEXT: EPHESIANS 1:7

TITLE: THIRD SPIRITUAL BLESSING = LIBERATED BY REDEMPTION

BIG IDEA:
REDEMPTION FREES US FROM THE BONDAGE OF CAPTIVITY TO JOYFULLY SERVE CHRIST

INTRODUCTION:

We live in an age of terrorism where the taking of hostages is a frequent occurrence. We understand what it is like to be a hostage; we identify with the hostages in their joy of release and appreciation of freedom.

God says that we all enter this life as hostages -- under the dominion and bondage of sin and of the rule of Satan (**2:1-3**). We must understand this bondage to appreciate our redemption.

Illustration #1:
Can you imagine our Secretary of State being sent over to a hostage situation (remember Iran … remember the crew of the downed spy plane in China …) with containers full of ransom money and a huge military evacuation plane fueled up and sitting on the runway cleared for takeoff, ready to fly the hostages to freedom. Now picture the hostages refusing all help, crying "Yankee Go Home", and willingly staying in captivity.

Of course, Satan is a lot more crafty than any terrorist or political foe:

1) He has the advantage of willing captives -
We are sinners by nature; we are at home in the realm of Satan. Even though we were created by a perfect God who has the rights of prior ownership and allegiance -- who made Adam and Eve in His own likeness and then watched them become entrapped in sin -- all the time working out His perfect plan of redemption.

2) He is supported by:
- the power of peer pressure
- and the desire to conform to this age -

In a typical hostage situation, it is only a few that are held captive compared to the rest of the world. In the spiritual realm, it is the vast majority that are held captive. Broad is the way that leads to destruction and many take that route. The whole concept of Holiness has at its root the idea of being different and being separated from the world and from sin and dedicated to God and His purposes.

3) He makes captivity attractive -

Satan's captives are not sitting around blindfolded in some dungeons -- fully aware of the wrath of God hanging over their heads and the lake of fire that awaits them. But while his captives are enjoying the pleasures of sin for a season, they do have spiritual blindfolds on.

The beauty of the situation from Satan's perspective is that his hostages (and perhaps even Satan himself) don't think they are in bondage -- they don't realize that they are in danger of eternal separation from a holy God in the fires of hell.

In fact, they make a big deal about how free and independent they are: free spirits; free thinkers; in control of their own destiny; "I do it my way" …

The truth is that all men are owned by someone. You cannot separate salvation from Lordship. If people are honest they must admit that there are specific sins that have dominion over them (anger, etc.).

Key Question: Whom are you going to have for your Master?

Back to our illustration: We know that the hostages in the spiritual realm do not have independent free wills in the sense that they will never choose to get on the plane to freedom apart from God's election and His predestinating them to adoption as sons and His working in their lives so that they come to choose to trust Christ.

Illustration #2:
Can you imagine the hostages being loaded on the plane and ferried back to the U.S. to be reunited with their family and to be given the opportunity of freedom and the abundant life; but then sitting around in their room at home, overcome by fear -- paralyzed and continuing to live as captives.

Too often this is our position. God wants to shout at us this morning: "You Are Free!" Your sins have been forgiven; the chains of sin have been torn off; now willingly live as slaves of Christ, enjoying full rights as mature sons of God.

Benjamin Merkle: Paul moves from God's predetermining choice before time to his work of redemption in the course of history. This verse is structurally parallel to verses **11** and **13**, as each begins with "*In him*." The redemption believers have is "*in him*," that is, "*in the Beloved*" (**v. 6**). The Greek word translated "*redemption*" indicates release or liberation from imprisonment or captivity. It occurs 10 times in the NT, seven of those times in Paul's writings (cf. **Rom. 3:24; 8:23; 1 Cor. 1:30; Eph. 1:14; 4:30; Col. 1:4**; cf. also **Heb. 9:15; 11:35**).

The concept of redemption is found also in the OT, where it describes both the release of slaves from bondage (**Ex. 21:8; Lev. 25:48**) and the deliverance of God's people from slavery in Egypt (**Deut. 7:8; 9:26; 13:5; 1 Chron. 17:21**). In **verse 7** Paul

specifically indicates that our redemption in Christ is "*through his blood*"; the means by which redemption is procured is the sacrificial death of Jesus.

The redemption believers receive is then equated with "*the forgiveness of our trespasses*." Forgiveness implies an offense requiring just punishment. Here, Paul uses "*trespasses*" instead of the more common word "*sins*," though the parallel passage in **Colossians 1:14** uses "*sins*." The believer's redemption is presented as the fulfillment of a "new exodus" prophesied in the OT. In other words, the redemption Christians receive is the fulfillment of what was typified when Israel was redeemed from Egypt. And just as Israel's exodus from Egypt was accompanied by the institution of the Levitical system so that Israel could atone for their sins, so also the believer's redemption in Christ from sin is accompanied by full and final forgiveness.

Grant Osborne: picturing a ransom payment made to bring about freedom from bondage, whether from slavery or for a prisoner of war. It refers both to the payment made and to the deliverance from bondage it produced. Christ's blood sacrifice on the cross became a ransom payment that purchased us from the bondage of sin and from the curse of the law (**Gal 3:13**), producing our salvation and effecting the forgiveness of our sins.

Clinton Arnold: In the larger context of Ephesians, redemption is not only to be defined in terms of forgiveness. **Eph 2:1–3** makes it clear that believers now have freedom from the three forces that once held them in bondage and destined them to death, that is, the power of "*the age of this world*," "*the ruler of the realm of the air*," and the "*flesh*." Believers have also been redeemed from "*darkness*" and the resultant alienation from God (**4:18**). Ultimately, their experience of redemption exempts them from condemnation on the future day of judgment (**4:30**).

PROLOGUE

"*In Him*"

Bruce Hurt: *In Christ*, or in union with Christ we have or more literally "are having" this blessing. It is not merely in a blessing that exist as a future possession, but it is ours by virtue of our faith in Christ. The redemption is "*in Christ*" not only as the source but also as the sphere in which they (and we) live (we have obtained redemption [through the payment to set the captives free] in Him, in Christ, and we now and forever live in the "atmosphere" of the light, truth and power of that same eternal redemption [**He 9:12**+]. It's as if the "redemption" Christ has provided is now the "air" in which we as believers live and breath and have our being, if that helps you understand the picture of "*in Him*".)

I. THEOLOGY OF REDEMPTION

"*we have redemption*"

A. Definition of Redemption

To bring back into rightful ownership (restoration to one who possesses a more fundamental right or interest) by the paying of a price, or ransom

Buying back a slave or a captive; making him free by the payment of a ransom

Deliverance from bondage (any difficult situation) as a result of the payment of a ransom

This Greek word is an intensified form that emphasizes the separation from the former state -- the finality of our redemption -- never again to be brought into bondage

B. Jewish Background of Redemption

In the LXX, this same Greek word is connected with the Year of the Jubilee (**Lev. 25:10**). The land belonged to the Lord. The Israelites only possessed the right to use the fruit of the land. If a family forfeited this right because they incurred debts and had to sell the property (imagine the sadness) the parcel of land was returned to the original family at the Year of Jubilee, which came every 50 years. Prior to this automatic restoration, the land could be redeemed (**vs. 25**). The nearest kinsman had the responsibility to do this (**vs. 26** -- cf. story of Ruth and Boaz) and there is a price involved.

Also used of the release of people from slavery.

Other Greek words picture Christ coming into the marketplace and over to the slave auction block where He purchases slaves and removes them from the auction block and the market place forever.

C. Redemption Viewed as a Present Possession for Us (The Saints)

Importance of the context in Ephesians --

- Redemption is the focal point of history = the coming of Christ to redeem His people (**Gal. 4:4-5**)
- Redemption is the focal point of our spiritual blessings
- Redemption secured the adoption of sons
- Redemption is the focal point of the work of the Triune God on our behalf

Summers: The tense of the verb '*have*' speaks of the present reality of the possession. Redemption is ours as a present possession. This is the concept found throughout the New Testament. It is not to deny that there is a sense in which the future will reveal many things relative to our redemption.

Klyne Snodgrass: Redemption is seen here as a present possession, although the emphasis elsewhere is future (e.g., **1:14; 4:30**). This tension between the present and the future is one of the most consistent parts of Christian thinking. All of the Christian

faith is a **blend of the now and the not yet**, of what we already possess in Christ and what we still await.

II. REDEMPTION ACCOMPLISHED THROUGH HIS BLOOD = THE MEANS OF REDEMPTION AND THE RANSOM PRICE

"*through His blood,*"

There is no deliverance without the shedding of blood (**Heb. 9:22**).

Contrast with the OT sacrificial system -- where you could cover sins for a year on the Day of Atonement -- but these sacrifices were only types and shadows of the ultimate sacrifice of the Lamb of God

When you look at what redemption cost Christ, surely He doesn't want us to continue in bondage to sin.

We can't add anything to the work of Christ -- no purgatory awaiting us where we will suffer for our sins; Christ made a once for all sacrifice for all time.

Blood sacrifices are not pleasant -- messy, smelly -- reminding us of our sins.

R.C. Sproul: The contemporary view is that God doesn't really take sin seriously. Yes, he acknowledges that evil is evil, but what he does with evil is that he simply forgives it. The means of redemption, however, is **the blood of Christ**. Nothing could speak louder about how seriously God views the problem of the alienation that exists between us and him because of our rebellion through our sin. An atonement was made, a blood sacrifice was offered, and that becomes the basis of the forgiveness of sin. So redemption is accomplished through the atonement of Christ.

Transition: But while God wants us to remember our sins to appreciate the great price that Christ paid, He also wants us to forget our sins just as He has provided complete forgiveness.

III. THE MAIN RESULT OF REDEMPTION = THE FORGIVENESS OF OUR TRESPASSES

"*the forgiveness of our trespasses,*"

Andrew Lincoln: The forgiveness of trespasses is in apposition to "*redemption through his blood*" and so depicts the primary way in which believers experience their liberation at present. They can be assured of the cancellation of their offenses against God and thereby of a restored relationship with him.

A. The Meaning of God's Forgiveness

1. "*Forgiveness*"

to send forth; send away; a dismissal; release

Sin thought of as an obligation; like a bad debt that we just can't get rid of no matter what we do.

Separated from us as far as the east is from the west; we did not just get off on some technicality -- but God's justice and holiness and righteousness were satisfied.

2. "*Trespasses*"
"a false step, a blunder"

Literally: "a fall beside" -- deviation from uprightness and truth and holiness

cf. the self-righteous Pharisees who don't think they take any false steps.

B. The Measure of God's Forgiveness
"*according to the riches of His grace*"

That which God possesses in abundance; boundless -- like God's love, mercy, kindness.

Not a stingy, begrudging God, but a loving heavenly Father who wants to shower us with spiritual blessings.

We don't have to worry that our sin will outstrip God's gracious forgiveness.

Clinton Arnold: It is used in the OT to refer to the riches of King Solomon, which excelled beyond all of the kings of the earth (**1 Kings 10:23**).

Summers: Paul's meaning is that we have the forgiveness of trespasses in proportion to the riches of God's grace. Our forgiveness is not in proportion to our merit.

CONCLUSION:
We now have the liberty to serve Christ (**Rom. 6:15-18; 1 Cor. 6:18-20; Titus 2:14**). The higher our conception of God's holiness and deeper our sense of personal sinfulness, the greater our appreciation of the riches of His grace that were necessary to provide such redemption.

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Note the switch in emphasis to the work of the Second Person of the Triune God. What is the significance of Christ being the one who has forgiven our sins?

2) Have we grasped both the concepts inherent in redemption -- the concept of

liberation as well as that of new ownership? Have we submitted to the Lordship of Christ and are we enjoying the freedom from the bondage of our sins?

3) Trace the emphasis in the Old Testament and in Hebrews on the significance of blood sacrifice. How does the awful price which Christ willingly paid impact our appreciation of our redemption?

4) Do we view God as miserly and stingy in how He works in our life, or do we praise Him for "*the riches of His grace*"?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Frank Thielman: A heated debate has surrounded the issue of whether ἀπολύτρωσις, when it appears in the NT, refers specifically to God's purchase of people from captivity to sin at the cost of Christ's death (e.g., Morris 1955: 37–48; Ridderbos 1975: 193–97), or more generally to God's deliverance of people from the plight into which sin has plunged them (e.g., Abbott 1897: 11–13; Büchsel, TDNT 4:351–56; D. Hill 1967: 71–76).

When the debate reaches our text, those on one side see the phrase διὰ τοῦ αἵματος αὐτοῦ (*dia tou haimatos autou, through his blood*) as a reference to the price that Christ paid for our redemption (Morris 1955: 38–41; Ridderbos 1975: 194; Hoehner 2002: 205–6), and those on the other side of the debate respond that διά followed by the genitive case only describes the **means** through which the deliverance was accomplished and does not specify a redemption price. If Paul had intended to speak of a redemption price, he would have simply used the genitive case ("the genitive of price") without an intervening preposition (D. Hill 1967: 73; Best 1998: 130; cf. Lincoln 1990: 28). . .

In evaluating the evidence, it seems first of all necessary to clear the theological air by observing that the NT unambiguously describes the blood of Christ as the ransom price for sinners. This is implied by the most natural readings of **1 Pet. 1:18–19; Heb. 9:12; Rev. 1:5; 5:9** (Lightfoot 1895: 316; cf. Best 1998: 130). . . The basic notion that transgression results in a plight analogous to captivity or slavery—and that Christ's death has satisfied the conditions for release from that captivity and thus paid the necessary ransom—is unambiguously a biblical idea. . .

It seems likely, moreover, that in **Eph. 1:7** Paul's Greek-speaking readers in western Asia would have most readily understood the term ἀπολύτρωσις as a metaphorical reference to the price paid to buy the freedom of a captive or slave and would have understood the phrase διὰ τοῦ αἵματος αὐτοῦ as a reference to the **purchase price**. . .

At the same time, Paul probably appreciated, and hoped that some of his readers would appreciate, the **biblical overtones** of this word. The noun ἀπολύτρωσις is closely related to the verb λυτρόω (lytroō, ransom), which the LXX translators used to render two Hebrew verbs, גָּאַל (gāʾal) and פָּדָה (pādâ), both of which also mean "redeem" (HALOT 1:169; 2:911–12). In both the Hebrew Scriptures and the LXX, all three terms and the nouns associated with them frequently carry a metaphorical meaning, distinctive to Biblical Greek, in which the notion of a purchase price fades into the background and the simple notion of **deliverance or rescue**, whether from Egypt, Babylon, other nations, or personal distress, becomes primary. . .

To summarize, Paul's use of the phrase τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν διὰ τοῦ αἵματος αὐτοῦ probably means that the metaphor of redemption from slavery through the payment of a price was alive for him. It is unlikely that he failed to realize that this meaning would occur readily to his Gentile readers and, therefore, unlikely that he did not intend to communicate this meaning. Paul's primary concern in using the metaphor, however, was probably to communicate that in the death of Christ, God came powerfully to the rescue of his people just as he had done in former times when he rescued them from the Egyptians, the Babylonians, and other nations. Paul saw this climactic rescue effort, accomplished through the death of his Beloved Son Jesus Christ, as a measure of God's lavish grace.

John MacArthur: Israel's greatest holy day was Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. On that day the high priest selected two unblemished sacrificial goats. One goat was killed, and his blood was sprinkled on the altar as a sacrifice. The high priest placed his hands on the head of the other goat, symbolically laying the sins of the people on the animal. The goat was then taken out deep into the wilderness, so far that it could never find its way back. In symbol the sins of the people went with the goat, never to return to them again (**Lev. 16:7-10**).

Criswell: There are three ways in which God forgives our sins. First, there is personal forgiveness, a cessation of the moral indignation and righteous resentment of God because of our personal sin. Second, there is ethical forgiveness, the alleviation of the awful burden and oppression of guilt in our lives and on our souls. And third, there is legal forgiveness, the commutation of the sentence of judgment and damnation and death.

Bryan Chapell: Redemption involves the payment of a ransom to reclaim something that has been taken away or is held captive. Sin (both our personal sin and the sin nature we inherited from Adam) takes away the righteousness God intended to characterize our lives and holds us hostage to Satan's purposes. Apart from Christ's provision, we would perpetually exist in a prison of guilt and shame. We cannot escape by our actions. They too are tainted by our sin. We have to be rescued from this sinful state by something outside ourselves. The price for our ransom from sin's captivity is the sacrifice of God's Son. By the gift of his life, we are freed from our captivity to sin. Here, as elsewhere (e.g., **Col. 1:20**), this redemption clearly is tied to Christ's shed blood on the cross. Paul also emphasizes the redemptive nature of Jesus' "blood" in

Romans 3:25; 5:9; and we honor this redeeming sacrifice in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper (**1 Cor. 10:16; 11:25, 27**).

Homer Kent: The higher one's conception of God's holiness and the deeper his sense of human sin, the greater is his discernment of the riches of grace that were necessary to provide such a redemption.

Martin: The Pharisees rightly observed (for once) that no man can forgive sins but God only (**Mk 2:7**). The fact that the Lord Jesus Christ forgives is evidence that he is God.

Bruce Hurt: Paul explained our former state of bondage to these cruel masters writing...

Of the Law -- *It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery. Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you. And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law.* (**Galatians 5:1-3**)

Of Sin -- *Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin* (literally "the Sin"), *but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin* (literally "the Sin") *reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin* (literally "the Sin") *as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin* (literally "the Sin") *shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace.* (**Ro 6:11, 12, 13, 14**)

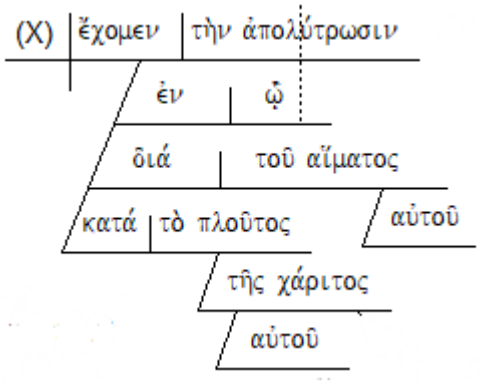
Of Satan -- *For He delivered* (rescued - see rhuomai) *us from the domain* (exousia) *of darkness* (nothing less than the kingdom of Satan, in which we were all once captive slaves - **Eph 2:1-2+, Eph 2:3**+), *and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son* (Literally - the kingdom of the Son of His love), *in Whom we have redemption* (apolutrosis), *the forgiveness of sins*. (**Col 1:13+, Col 1:14**+) See also **Acts 26:18**+ *" to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.'* "

Of this evil world system -- (Jesus) *Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver (exaireo) us out of this present evil age* (NIV = "present evil world" = aion), *according to the will of our God and Father... But may it never be that I should boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world (kosmos) has been crucified to me, and I to the world.* (**Galatians 1:4+, Gal 6:14+**)

And yet now in Christ and through the efficacious work accomplished by His blood shed on the Cross almost 2000 years ago, we have truly been set free, for as Jesus triumphantly declared...

> *If therefore the Son shall make you free (see eleutheroo), you shall be free (eleutheroo) indeed.* (**John 8:36**)

Leedy Greek Diagram:



TEXT: EPHESIANS 1:8-10

TITLE: FOURTH SPIRITUAL BLESSING = INSIGHT INTO THE MYSTERY OF GOD'S WILL

BIG IDEA:
GOD HAS BLESSED US WITH INSIGHT INTO THE MYSTERY OF HIS WILL = THAT CHRIST SHOULD HAVE THE PREEMINENCE

INTRODUCTION:
All of us wrestle with the question: What is the will of God for my life? Why doesn't God show me clearly what He wants me to be doing? Why does it seem so much like a mystery?

Review: In studying this first Chapter of Ephesians we have already learned much about who we are as Christians and what type of spiritual blessings God has showered upon us. Just as Paul was commissioned to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God and could be confident of God's will for him, we have been commissioned to be saints -- that is God's will for us. We have been blessed with the riches of God's grace = every spiritual blessing:

(1) First Spiritual Blessing -- **God chose us -- to be holy and without blemish** -- to be saints; to be like the Lord Jesus

(2) Second Spiritual Blessing -- **God predestined us to adoption as sons** -- to be saints, conformed to the image of His Son

(3) Third Spiritual Blessing -- **God redeemed us and has forgiven us our sins** -- to free us from bondage to sin so that we can live like saints; willing servants of our Lord Jesus Christ

Now we are going to look at the Fourth Spiritual Blessing.

Klyne Snodgrass: Paul now shifts to the revelation of God's plan and how that plan centered on Christ.

Frank Thielman: God made the mystery known to his people because it gave him pleasure to do this, and to do it in a way that made Christ of central importance. His revelation of the mystery to his people was part of his administrative work within history for accomplishing his ultimate purposes. . .

Here Paul says only that the mystery of God's will, which he graciously made known to his people, reveals that God intends to sum up in Christ the disparate elements of the universe, both heavenly and earthly. Christ will emerge as the organizing principle of all creation.

Grant Osborne: One of the primary blessings lavished on us is knowledge—God's "*making known*" (*gnōrisas*) the "*mystery of his will*" (**1:9**). Some have taken the "*all wisdom and understanding*" of **verse 8** with what precedes, meaning that God has lavished his grace on us "*with wisdom and insight*." However, it is best to take it with what follows, further defining the process of "*making known*" the divine mysteries to us. Wisdom and revelation are closely intertwined throughout Scripture, and God's wisdom determined the "*fullness of time*" (**Gal 4:4**) when it was best to reveal the truths he had kept hidden throughout the old covenant period.

From eternity past God had decided how he would bring humanity back to himself through the death of his Son (see **1:5**) and how he would bring history to an end, but he kept many of the details hidden until he determined the time was right. Paul's point was that the time of fulfillment had arrived (see **Mark 1:15**), and the mysteries have now been made known. "Mystery" is connected in meaning with "apocalyptic," referring to the process by which God reveals hidden truths (*apokalypsis* is the Greek title of the book of Revelation) and to the content of these truths.

All of this proceeds from God's will—that which he determined long ago to do in order to redeem sinful humanity, bring this evil world to an end, and replace it with the new heavens and new earth. It is incredibly comforting to know that God's sovereign will is ultimately behind the progress of history. This is called "salvation history": God's control of human history to end evil and bring about final salvation. Here, the mystery is the unification of the cosmos in Christ at the eschaton (the end of history). In **3:3, 4**, "*mystery*" refers to the coming of Christ, in **5:32** to Christ and the church, and in **6:19** to the gospel of Christ. In **Colossians 1:26–27** it is the inclusion of the Gentiles, and in **Revelation 10:7** it is the events of the eschaton. In general, then, **the mystery is the progress of God's salvation from the coming of Christ to the end of this evil world and the arrival of the eternal reign of God.**

This all takes place "*in accordance with his good pleasure*," which demonstrates further the love of God for his redeemed people. He is pleased and filled with delight to see his salvation worked out in human history (as in **1:5**) and to reveal to his followers the plan he has formed for accomplishing this. Note that this plan has been "*purposed in Christ*," meaning that the Father and the preexistent Son devised this plan in union with each other. It was designed to be carried out by Christ in his coming to earth to become the atoning sacrifice on the cross (**Phil 2:8**).

In **verse 10** we are told that this plan, devised by the Godhead "*before the creation of the world*" (**1:4**), was intended to "*come into effect in the fullness of times*," a phrase paralleled in **Galatians 4:4**, which speaks of the birth of Christ in "*the fullness of time*." This is similar to the summary of Jesus' teaching in **Mark 1:15**, "*The time is fulfilled*," meaning that God's plan has now completed the old covenant period and begun the new covenant with the arrival of the kingdom in Jesus. One could say here as well, "The time is up; God has arrived!" The term used for "plan" connotes the idea of administration, so one could translate this "come into effect when God administers and

brings his plan of salvation to a close in history." These days have initiated the end times, as God's people will see

(1) his purposes fully realized in history and
(2) this world come to an end.

The final point of this section shows the true goal of his plan: "*to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ*." The Greek can be translated "*to sum up all things in Christ,*" but there is a difference of opinion as to the exact meaning of the verb. It includes the verb *kephelaioō*; some link this with *kephalē* ("*head*") and translate "*bring under one head, Christ*." However, the verb here does not connote headship but denotes "*summing up*" an argument. So it is best to interpret this as God summing up or unifying all creation in Christ.

The primary theme, "*in Christ*," appears twice in the verse—"*sum up all things in Christ, things in heaven and earth in him*." Christ will bring together all aspects of God's diverse and disparate creation in himself. In **1 Corinthians 15:27–28** and **Ephesians 1:22** God will place everything under Christ; in **Colossians 1:20** God will reconcile all of creation to himself through Christ; and in **Philippians 2:10** all things in heaven, on earth, and under the earth will bow at his feet. This passage in a sense brings together all of these. Every part of creation—including the cosmic powers (**Eph 3:10; 6:10–16**)—will submit and pay tribute to Christ.

I. GOD BLESSED US WITH INSIGHT INTO THE MYSTERY OF HIS WILL

Why? So that we don't stumble around in the dark, never understanding how our life fits together and makes sense.

Instead, we can live as saints with insight into the will of God, understanding God's purposes and plans for the future.

A. This Blessing of Wisdom and Insight is Practical

"*which He lavished upon us. In all wisdom and insight*"

There is no dichotomy between head and heart knowledge in the Greek mind; your heart can only know through the head.

1. Wisdom -- the larger concept -- wisdom in its broader sense; insight into the true nature of things

2. Insight -- the wisdom of action; the practical use of wisdom; the understanding that leads to right action
(cf. title of Christian radio program -- "*Insight for Living*")

These 2 Greek words are linked together in the Septuagint:

1) Solomon -- **1 Kings 3:12**

2) Proverbs (written by Solomon) -- **1:2; 8:1**
3) Daniel

obviously not an academic subject or just ivory tower knowledge in view

John MacArthur: *Sophia* (*wisdom*) emphasizes understanding of ultimate things -- such as life and death, God and man, righteousness and sin, heaven and hell, eternity and time. Paul is speaking of wisdom concerning the things of God. *Phronesis* (*insight*), on the other hand, emphasizes practical understanding, comprehension of the needs, problems, and principles of everyday living. It is spiritual prudence in the handling of daily affairs.

Klyne Snodgrass: No distinction is intended between the terms "wisdom" and "understanding." The two words form a hendiadys—one idea conveyed through two words. . .

Does [the phrase "*in all wisdom and understanding*"] belong to **verse 8b** or **verse 9a**? Does Paul mean that God's grace was lavished on us in all wisdom and understanding, or that with all wisdom and understanding God made known to us the mystery of his will? Either is possible, but the latter seems more fitting (cf. a similar theme in **1:17; 3:10–11**).

Stephen Fowl: Paul's combination of "*wisdom*" and "*prudence*" here connects **wisdom**, which involves knowing God, including one's proper relation to God (e.g., **Prov 1:2–7; Job 28:28; Ps 111:10; Isa 33:6**), a wisdom that may stand in contrast to the wisdom of unbelievers (e.g., **1 Cor 1:21–25; 2:6–7; 3:19**)—with **prudence**, which employs that right understanding of God and one's relationship to God in order to live faithfully in concrete situations.

Recall that the prepositional phrase "*in love*" at the end of **v. 4** can refer back to the discussion of our election and modify the participle "*he predestined*" in **v. 5**. Similarly here the prepositional phrase "*in all wisdom and prudence*" both reflects back to the grace that God has caused to abound in believers and points forward to the participle at the beginning of **v. 9**, referring to the means by which God has enabled us to comprehend the "*mystery of his will*."

B. God is not Stingy with His Blessings (not like Scrooge)

Background:

v. 3 -- "*every spiritual blessing*"
v. 7 -- "*the riches of His grace*"

1. All wisdom and insight

2. He made to abound unto us

Illustration: of a cup running over -- granting something to someone richly so that they have it in abundance

2 Cor. 9:8; James 1:5

C. God Graciously Revealed This Insight to Us in the Proper Context of His Program for the Culmination of History

"*He made known to us the mystery of His will,*"

1. Described as "*the mystery of His will*"

"*mystery*" = something once hidden and not revealed, but now made known openly -- a secret (Not something we can't take in or understand even when it is declared to us)

Background in pagan religions -- special esoteric knowledge for the initiated; Instead by God's grace it is practical knowledge for all of the saints

Once God reveals a mystery, He does not want it to remain a secret;
Problem: natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God

Concept applied to:

1) divine plan of redemption as a whole
2) particular things belonging to that divine plan
   a) inclusion of the Gentiles -- **Rom. 11:25; Ephes. 3:3, 9**
   b) Transformation of Christians alive on earth at Christ's coming **1 Cor. 15:52**
   c) Union of Christ and the Church -- **Ephes. 5:32**
3) Mystery of lawlessness -- **2 Thess. 2:7**

2. He wants us to know this and has determined that we shall know it

"*according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him*"

"*according to His good pleasure*"

"*which He purposed in Him*" = setting before oneself and so determining

3. Understood in the proper context of his program for the culmination of history

"with a view to an administration suitable to the fulness of the times"

"*fullness of times*" -- *kairos*

Stephen Fowl: The phrase "*fullness of times*" is similar to Paul's usage in **Gal 4:4** where in "*the fullness of time… [Christ is] born of a woman*." The difference is that in Galatians the birth of Christ signals the climactic moment in the world's history. In

Ephesians the plural "*of times*" indicates the end point, or telos, of God's will, that toward which everything is ultimately moving. . .

in this context *the administration of the fullness of times* is when God brings all things in heaven and earth to their proper end through and in relation to Christ. The array of various images for describing this point in time should remind Christians that this truly is a mystery. Nobody knows when this will happen, how it will happen, or exactly what it will look like. The result, however, will be in accord with God's will, and the result will represent the fulfillment of God's best intentions for creation. Thus it must require the renewal of all things rather than their destruction. Moreover, at this point humans will be brought into a new and ever-deepening union with God. All Christian discussion of these ends will need to operate at least within these parameters. Obviously, these parameters can comprehend a variety of other images; they also, however, exclude images suggesting that God's intentions can ultimately be thwarted or that Christ's lordship will be constrained in any way.

a. *chronos* -- **Gal. 4:4** -- time measured quantitatively in days and months and years

b. *kairos* -- seasons; the critical epoch-making periods foreordained by God; the decisive times of fulfillment in the purposes of God

Here we are looking at the final culmination of human history; the close of a series of periods (dispensations) each of which had its peculiar character -- speaking of the millennial kingdom and the eternal state with the new heavens and the new earth that will be ushered in

History is headed somewhere -- the idea of a great household of which God is the Master and which has a certain system of management wisely ordered by Him.

II. THE UNIFYING PRINCIPLE OF THE WILL OF GOD IS THAT CHRIST SHOULD HAVE THE PREEMINENCE

"*that is, the summing up of all things in Christ,*
things in the heavens and things upon the earth. In Him"

Andrew Lincoln: It is not until **v 10b**, with the thought of the *summing up of all things in Christ*, that the content of the mystery of God's will mentioned in **v 9a** is expressed. .

The summing up of all things in Christ means the unifying of the cosmos or its direction toward a common goal. In line with this letter's close links with Colossians, a similar thought about Christ and the cosmos had been expressed in the Colossians hymn in terms of reconciliation and with explicit soteriological connotations (**Col 1:20**). Both passages appear to presuppose that the cosmos had been plunged into disintegration on account of sin and that it is God's purpose to restore its original harmony in Christ. . .

The divine purpose is to sum up all things ἐν Χριστῷ. The ἐν αὐτῷ phrase at the end of the verse after the elaboration of τὰ πάντα repeats this thought.

Klyne Snodgrass: While the primary intent in this text does concern the ultimate fulfillment of God's purpose at the end of time, Paul viewed that fulfillment as already having begun in Christ's life, death, and resurrection. He is already Lord of all times. Just as redemption is both present and future, the revelation of God's will points both to the present and the future.

Illustration: In your job you need insight into the unifying principle that should govern your actions (Often: "to make money")

Greek word for "summing up" -- the Greek practice was to add up a column of figures and put the sum at the top. They would want to know "What's the top line?" just as we ask "What's the bottom line?" this is what is really important and ties everything together and helps make sense out of all the other numbers.

Also used of repeating summarily the points of a speech, gathering its argument together in summary form.

3 Ideas present in this picture:
1) Restoration -- never lose sight of God's original creation and what was lost through the Fall

2) Unity -- in the end, all things will be restored to their intended function and to their unity by being brought back to the obedience of Christ; the gathering together of objects now apart and unrelated into final, perfect unity

cf. **Rom. 8:20-22; Heb. 2:8**

Remember the Lord's Prayer -- "*thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven*"

3) God wants to exalt His Son -- He wants Christ to have the preeminence in everything; He will accomplish this purpose ultimately in history.

Clinton Arnold: This expression ["*to bring under headship once again*"] contributes to Paul's larger argument that Christ is the solution to the problem of rampant rebellion against God, especially in the spiritual domain. Christ has begun to exercise his headship over the powers, but there will come a time when all of creation will have to submit to his authority as sovereign Lord. The final "*in Christ*" reiterates—**in a way that seems redundant but is here simply emphatic**—that Christ is the one who will serve as God's agent in bringing all the rebellious creatures in all of creation under God's sovereignty. Paul expressed a similar idea to the Philippians when he declared that there will be a day when "*at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father*" (**Phil 2:10–11**).

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Why did God create a *mystery* if it was His intention to reveal that mystery to us?

2) Are we always confident that God's intentions towards us are kind and meaningful?

3) What are the "*things in heaven*" that need to be summed up in Christ?

4) How does a Christian view of history (a Christian world view) help us to maintain perseverance and hope despite the discouraging world news that flood the airwaves every day?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

James Boyer (Grace Seminary): Paraphrase of passage: "God brought His grace to bear abundantly on us in our mental capacities by making known to us the hither-to unrevealed purpose which He set before Himself by His own sovereign preference, a purpose which has as its goal a scheme of divine administration which is suited to the time when all the ages shall have run their full course. That purpose is to make all things come under the headship of Christ."

John MacArthur: When every trace of evil has been disposed of, God will establish an incomparable unity in Himself of all things that remain. That is the inevitable goal of the universe.

Macbeth pessimistically declared that history is 'a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing' (Shakespeare, Macbeth, 5.5.19).

Apart from the wisdom and insight God provides His children, such a hopeless conclusion is inescapable. But history belongs to God, not to the puny plans of man or the perverse power of Satan. History is written and directed by its Creator, who will see it through to the fulfillment of His own ultimate purpose -- the summing up of all things in Christ. He designed His great plan in the ages past; He now sovereignly works it out according to His divine will; and in the fulness of the times He will complete and perfect it in His Son, in whom it will forever operate in righteous harmony and glorious newness along with all things in the heavens and things upon the earth.

Homer Kent: "*The fulness of* times" is an expression similar to one used to describe the period which began with Christ's first coming (**Gal. 4:4**). It will reach its consummation when Christ comes again. It is called the fullness of the times because it is the period long prophesied in the Old Testament as bringing about the

consummation of God's plan through Messiah. Thus we find the New Testament referring to the present age as "*the ends of the world*" (lit. *"ends of the ages*," **1 Cor. 10:11**), *"last time"* (lit. *"last hour*," **1 Jn 2:18**), and *"these last days"* **Heb 1:2**).

Paul, therefore, is stating that now God has revealed to us His plan for the management of the universe. It consists in bringing together all things in Christ… God has a plan for the universe and it will be fully accomplished through Christ. By the redemption which he made, sin was defeated and righteousness for man provided. Even the physical universe will eventually be cleansed from the disastrous effects which sin has caused, and all is due to the divine management which God put into operation through Christ."

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James Boice: **Message: "Where is History Going?"**

Introduction: We might not be sure of all the details, but the question assumes that something significant is in process. In our culture people question whether history is going anywhere. This has not always been the case throughout history.

Progress involves motion and a plan. People have lost sight of the Planner; what remains is just chaotic motion.

1) Greek View of History --
cyclical view -- nations rise and fall, but don't really get anywhere; there is no purpose; Greeks had no real interest in history in our sense;
Salvation consisted in escaping from history altogether = escape from the body -- eventually in death; but right now by the exercise of the mind

2) New View of History involving Concept of Purpose -- based on Christian input

a) New view of God -- no longer the unMoved Mover; but the Sovereign God in control of history; compassionate and concerned with creatures; intervened in history

b) New view of Man -- doctrine of the resurrection of the body (the body in itself is not bad)

c) New view of Final Judgment -- What we do counts; Life is meaningful

3) Darwinian, Scientific input -- Progress is Inevitable

Today we view that position as naïve because we have seen:
a) increasing knowledge does not predispose how that knowledge will be used (cf. nuclear bombs)

b) social planning does not guarantee progress -- there is great disillusionment today in government circles; government can no longer be projected as the answer to society's problems

4) Modern view -- people just shrug their shoulders and say they are not sure where history is headed, if anywhere

5) View of Christ -- **Matt. 6:9**

a) There is a Goal in History = kingdom of God coming on earth

b) There is a Struggle -- i.e. the goal has not yet been realized

c) There is a Responsibility -- Pray and live in accordance with the realization of that goal

FIVE GREAT DOCTRINES IN CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY THAT IMPACT A BIBLICAL VIEW OF HISTORY

I. Doctrine of Creation -- Genesis 1

God brought things into being for a purpose and will accomplish that by His sovereignty. the history of the human race is one history = all coming from Adam.

Problem in trying to write a universal history (cf. German Spengler and English Toynbee -- everyone takes a different perspective) is that since we are living in history and our viewpoint is constrained by our experience, it is impossible to be ojective. Solution: God has revealed the true view of history.

II. Doctrine of Providence -- God's Intervention in History

Natural laws flow from God's character; not just abstract and mechanical. All doesn't happen with ordered regularity. God is not interested in running trains on a tight schedule. (cf. dry periods and rapid, active periods of intervention in our own personal lives and in history)

III. Doctrine of Revelation -- strong view of Scripture is essential)

IV. Doctrine of Redemption

A. View of Sin -- it is still with us and affects us

B. View of the Cross of Christ -- stands at the center of Christian history

V. Doctrine of Final Judgment -- What I do Matters

Each individual and generation exists for the glory of God. Therefore, each of us counts a lot. God will not just judge history at that final moment in time, but will judge everyone who has participated in history.

God is bringing in His kingdom and God is interested in reproducing the

character of Christ in us.

- Satan says: Who cares if you do the right thing or not?
- Holy Spirit says: Do the right thing; it matters and I will show you what the right thing is.

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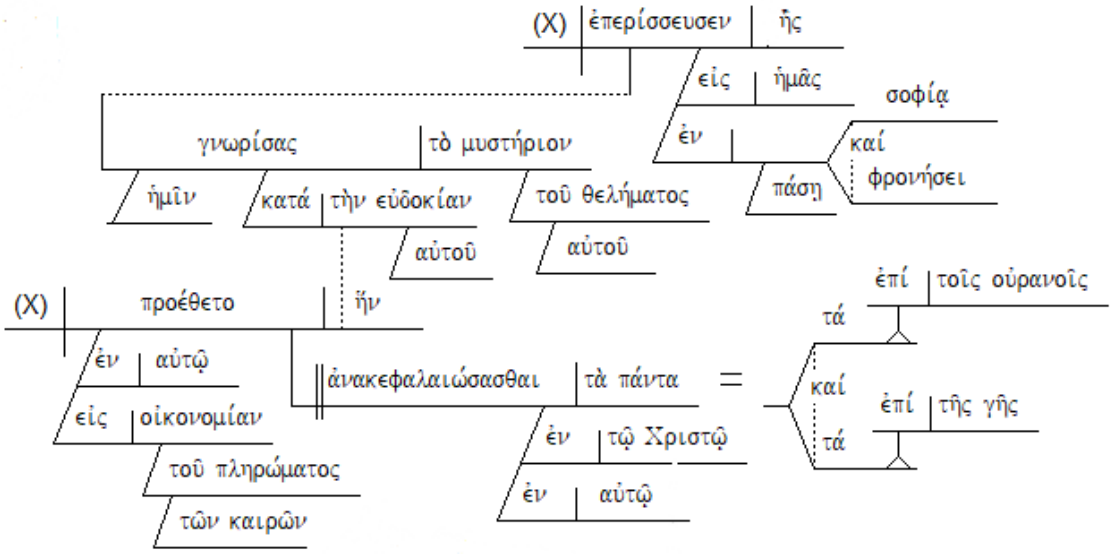
Leedy Greed Diagram:



TEXT: EPHESIANS 1:11-12

TITLE: FIFTH SPIRITUAL BLESSING = INHERITANCE

BIG IDEA:
OUR SOVEREIGN GOD PREDESTINED US TO AN INHERITANCE THAT MAGNIFIES HIS GLORY

INTRODUCTION:

Frank Thielman: God did not simply predetermine that they would be his children because it gave him pleasure to do so (**v. 5**), but in his capacity as the God who effects all things, he also worked very deliberately to make believers his heirs; he did this in accord with his "*purpose*" and the "*counsel*" that resulted in the doing of his "*will*." . . .

Paul praises God because he has made his adopted children **his heirs**. In other words, they have all the blessings that come with membership in God's household. Their status as God's heirs is not a result of some accident or of anything they did but because God **carefully planned in advance** to give them this blessing. He did this so that his people might exist to **praise him** not only in the future but also in the present as they wait in hope for all things to take their assigned place in relationship to Christ.

Grant Osborne: There is considerable debate as to the meaning of **1:11–14**. Many believe that the "*we*" of **verses 11–12** are Jewish believers and the "*you*" of **verses 13–14** are Gentile believers, signifying the unity of the two groups in Christ and the church. Others feel it is stylistic, with the **emphasis on all believers** ("*we*") and then the specific readers of this letter ("*you*"). This is a difficult decision, and either is viable. However, while I spent most of my teaching career opting for the first view, since I do not see the Jew-Gentile issue addressed until **2:11** I now think the latter view is more likely. Paul is continuing his emphasis on God's salvific gifts and recapitulating the **blessings to all Christians** he mentioned earlier.

Charles Spurgeon: When Jesus gave himself for us, he gave us all the rights and privileges which went with himself; so that now, although as eternal God, he has essential rights to which no creature may venture to pretend, yet as Jesus, the Mediator, the federal head of the covenant of grace, he has no heritage apart from us. All the glorious consequences of his obedience unto death are the joint riches of all who are in him, and on whose behalf he accomplished the divine will. See, he enters into glory, but not for himself alone, for it is written, "*Whither the Forerunner is for us entered*." **Heb. 6:20**. Does he stand in the presence of God?-"*He appears in the presence of God for us*." **Heb. 9:24**. Consider this, believer. You have no right to heaven in yourself: your right lies in Christ. If you are pardoned, it is through his blood; if you are justified, it is through his righteousness; if you are sanctified, it is because he is made of God unto you sanctification; if you shall be kept from falling, it will be because you are preserved in Christ Jesus; and if you are perfected at the last, it will be because you are complete

in him. Thus Jesus is magnified-for all is in him and by him; thus the inheritance is made certain to us-for it is obtained in him; thus each blessing is the sweeter, and even heaven itself the brighter, because it is Jesus our Beloved "*in whom*" we have obtained all. Where is the man who shall estimate our divine portion? Weigh the riches of Christ in scales, and his treasure in balances, and then think to count the treasures which belong to the saints. Reach the bottom of Christ's sea of joy, and then hope to understand the bliss which God hath prepared for them that love him. Overleap the boundaries of Christ's possessions, and then dream of a limit to the fair inheritance of the elect. "*All things are yours, for ye are Christ's and Christ is God's*."

I. POSSESSION PROMISE

"*also we have obtained an inheritance,*"

Frank Thielman: In the Ephesians benediction itself, Paul will say in **verse 14** that the Spirit is "*the down payment of our inheritance*" (κληρονομίας ἡμῶν, *klēronomias hēmōn*), a phrase that, as we will see below, refers to the eschatological inheritance of God's kingdom, over which Jesus, the Messiah, rules as God's vice regent (**5:5**). In **verse 18** Paul will speak of God's "*inheritance in the saints*" (τῆς κληρονομίας αὐτοῦ ἐν τοῖς ἁγίοις, *tēs klēronomias autou en tois hagiois*). It seems probable, therefore, that when Paul uses the term ἐκληρώθημεν here in **verse 11**, he intends for it to refer not simply to an "allotment" or "portion" that has been given either to believers or to God, but specifically to an "inheritance" that has been given either to believers or to God.

But is the inheritance theirs or God's? Since Paul will speak of the inheritance of believers in the next subsection of the benediction (**v. 14**), it seems likely that he also intends to refer here to the status of believers as heirs. If so, then the thought is similar to that of **Rom. 8:17**, where Paul describes believers as adopted children of God and therefore his "*heirs*" (κληρονόμοι*, klēronomoi*; cf. **Gal. 3:29; 4:1, 5, 7**). Paul has already praised God for his adoption of believers (**Eph. 1:5**). Here in **1:11**, he praises God for making believers his heirs.

John MacArthur: [Explaining the two ways that this verse can be translated:]
The passive form of the verb (*kleroo*) in **Eph 1:11a** allows for two possible renderings, both of which are consistent with other Scripture. It can be translated "*were made an inheritance*" or, as here, *have obtained an inheritance*. The first rendering would indicate that we, that is, believers, are Christ's inheritance. Jesus repeatedly spoke of believers as gifts that the Father had given Him (**John 6:37, 39; 10:29; 17:2, 24**; etc.). Jesus won us at Calvary—as the spoils of His victory over Satan, sin, and death—and we now belong to Him. " *'And they will be Mine,' says the Lord of hosts, 'on the day that I prepare My own possession'* " (**Mal. 3:17**). From eternity past the Father planned and determined that every person who would trust in His Son for salvation would be given to His Son as a possession, a glorious inheritance.

Translated the other way, however, this word means just the opposite: it is believers who receive the inheritance...

Both of the translations are therefore grammatically and theologically legitimate. Throughout Scripture believers are spoken of as belonging to God, and He is spoken of as belonging to them. The New Testament speaks of our being in Christ and of His being in us, of our being in the Spirit and of His being in us. "*The one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him*" (**1Cor. 6:17**). Paul could therefore say, "*For me, to live is Christ*" (**Phil 1:21**).

The practical side of that truth is that, because we are identified with Christ, our lives should be identified with His life (cf. **1Jn 2:6**). We are to love as He loved, help as He helped, care as He cared, share as He shared, and sacrifice our own interests and welfare for the sake of others just as He did. Like our Lord, we are in the world to lose our lives for others.

Although either rendering of *eklērōthēmen* can be supported, Paul's emphasis in **Ephesians 1:3-14** makes the second translation more appropriate here.

II. PROCESS PLAN

A. Sovereign Divine Predestination

"*having been predestined*"

Grant Osborne: We are "*predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will*." God's actions are not contingent on historical developments on earth. He is in absolute, sovereign control and has a plan of salvation that guides history in accordance with his will. The forces of evil are powerless against the divine plan and purposes, for he is in the process of working out everything according to this providential purpose; this applies especially to his predestined choice of every believer. We belong to God as his inheritance (**Zech 2:12**), and he will protect each one of us. In **verse 5** Paul stated that the Christian has been predestined "*in accordance with his pleasure and will*," and this restates that truth. The emphasis here is on the **pleasure** God takes in seeing his will worked out in the lives of his children. Paul wants his readers to realize how **incredibly blessed and privileged** we are to have the God of all creation care so deeply and work so mightily for us!

Andrew Lincoln: With the use of two prepositional phrases beginning with κατά and a genitive construction linking two synonymous nouns, this clause heavily underlines that believers' appointment in Christ to their destiny is part of God's sovereign purpose.

B. Sovereign Divine Purpose

"*according to His purpose*"

Bruce Hurt: God has an eternal purpose for all things. If God is God at all, He is sovereign. He cannot work independently of His own nature, for then He would cease to be God, something that is impossible. He is a wise God; therefore, His eternal purpose is a wise one. He is a powerful God; therefore, He is able to accomplish what

He purposes. He is a loving God; therefore, what He purposes will manifest His love. He is an unchanging God; therefore, His purpose is unchanging.

William Hendriksen: Neither fate nor human merit determines our destiny. The benevolent purpose—that we should be holy and faultless (**Ep 1:4**-note), sons of God (**Ep 1:5**-note), destined to glorify him forever (**Eph 1:6**-note, cf. **Ep 1:12, 13, 14-notes Ep 1:12; 1:13; 1:14**)—is fixed, being part of a larger, universe–embracing plan. Not only did God make this plan that includes absolutely all things that ever take place in heaven, on earth, and in hell; past, present, and even the future, pertaining to both believers and unbelievers, to angels and devils, to physical as well as spiritual energies and units of existence both large and small; He also wholly carries it out. His providence in time is as comprehensive as is His decree from eternity.

C. Sovereign Divine Working

"*who works all things after the counsel of His will,*"

Frank Thielman: The blessing of God's relationship with his people comes at God's joyfully considered initiative. . .

Words that emphasize God's meticulous planning and sovereign control pile up one upon another: πρόθεσις (*prothesis, purpose*), ἐνεργέω (*energeō, work*), βουλή (*boulē, counsel*), θέλημα (*thelēma, will*). This piling up of words arises not merely from stylistic verbosity but also from Paul's desire to encourage his readers to think of themselves as an **especially privileged people**—privileged not because of their accomplishments (**2:5, 8**) but because of what God, who effects all things, has done for them. He carefully planned to make his people his heirs before he did it. This action was neither haphazard nor dependent on anything they would do to earn it.

G. Campbell Morgan: Our God is a God who not only wills; He works; and He works according to His will … The word counsel stands for deliberate planning and arranging, in which the ways and means of carrying out the will are considered and provided for

Alfred Martin: There is no clearer of more sublime statement anywhere in Scripture concerning the sovereignty of God.

S. Lewis Johnson: What is the **providence of God**, put simply?: **God's care over everything in his universe**. Every little thing in the universe is subject to the purpose and planning of God. "*According to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his will*." There are no accidents in the program of God. All things are things that take place within the counsel of his will.

Everything. Notice how universal it is: "*of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his will*." Every little thing. Because in the final analysis, many of the greatest things are the result of very little things. . . You see, often the little things are the things that are really the important things. God is not a God who handles the big

things but leaves the little things up to us. It's the little things that make the big things happen.

III. PRAISE PURPOSE

"*to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.*"

William Hendriksen: If, then, God's decree from eternity is thus all-embracing, and if it is fully carried out in history, and if the destiny of his children was included in this plan, then Pau and the readers have no reason whatever for boasting in themselves.

Grant Osborne: The verb *proēlpikotas* ("*first to put hope*") could well be emphatic—"*put our hope completely*"—rather than referring to time—"*put our hope beforehand*"; that would make better sense in this context. If so, Paul is celebrating the further blessing that in Christ we who are the chosen children of God are enabled to place our hope entirely in him.

Clinton Arnold: It is better, however, to take the preposition as **intensifying** the force of the verb and maintain the referent of "*we*" as **all Christians**—Jewish and Gentile. Thus, "*placed their hope firmly*" expresses this idea well. Part of the difficulty in determining the meaning of this compound verb is that it appears nowhere else in the LXX or NT. It is clear, however, that the preposition προ- does not necessarily have a temporal connotation. There are many examples of words for which it simply serves to intensify their meaning. Ernest Best correctly notes, "In Hellenistic Greek prepositions often do little more than stress the main thought of their verb" and thereby concludes that "this verb may mean the same as the simple verb." The perfect tense refers to all those who have already put their hope in Christ and continue to do so.

Frank Thielman: Paul ends the third section by briefly describing the **eschatological tension** in which all believers live. The benediction's second section (**vv. 7–10**) has spoken of God's plan "*to sum up all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth in him*" (**v. 10**). Christ is the very person in whom all Christians exist, and therefore the participation of all believers in this summing up of all things is assured. Now, however, before all that happens, believers **live in hope** that it will happen, a hope that is not some fragile expectation that may or may not come to pass, but a hope whose basis is Christ himself. God has made his people heirs so that even now "*we who hope beforehand*"—before the full summation of all things in Christ—will exist for the praise of his glory.

Vaughan: A third matter to be considered is God's aim in making believers His possession. This is expressed by the words *"that we should be to the praise of his glory"* (**vs. 12**). God's intention was not that believers might take pride in their position and boast of their special privileges.

Andrew Lincoln: In the final analysis God's working out of his purpose serves his own glorification and the believing community exists to further that end. The praise of God's glory is the goal of its whole existence, not merely of its cultic worship.

John MacArthur: Scripture always presents salvation from God's side, in order that He should have full credit. In our humanly-oriented society, God's wanting exclusive credit seems inappropriate -- but only because men have no concept of His greatness, holiness, and glory. What views they may have of Him are simply projections of themselves. The praise and glory that men so much desire are totally undeserved, and their motives for wanting them are purely sinful. But God seeks glory for the right reasons and because He alone is deserving of it. His seeking glory is a holy desire of which He is supremely and singly worthy.

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1. Does the doctrine of predestination fill you with encouragement and assurance?

2. Why does God have to be in control of the little things in order to be in control of the big things?

3. Does this passage teach that God has given believers a precious inheritance or that the covenant community itself is a precious inheritance of God?

4. How can God be sovereign over evil and yet not responsible for it?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

John Stott: Putting these two Greek expressions together, with their clear Old Testament background, it is difficult to resist the conclusion that Paul is alluding to the church as God's "inheritance" and "possession". These words used to be applied exclusively to the one nation of Israel, but are now reapplied to an international people whose common factor is that they are all "in Christ". The fact that the same vocabulary is used of both peoples indicates the spiritual continuity between them.

This teaching, though entirely hidden by RSV and obscured by most of the English versions, is nevertheless basic to what Paul is writing in this paragraph. God's people are God's "saints" (**verse 1**), God's heritage (**verse 12**), God's possession (**verse 14**). Only when that has been grasped, are we ready to ask two further questions. First, how did we become God's people? Secondly, why did he make us his people? Paul answers the first question by reference to God's will and the second by reference to his glory. And he states each truth three times.

William Hendriksen: Neither fate nor human merit determines our destiny. The benevolent purpose -- that we should be holy and faultless (**verse 4**), sons of God (**verse 5**), destined to glorify him forever (**verse 6**, cf. **verses 12 and 14**) -- is fixed, being part of a larger, universe-embracing plan. Not only did God make this plan that includes absolutely all things that ever take place in heaven, on earth, and in hell; past, present and even the future, pertaining to both believers and unbelievers, to angels and devils, to physical as well as spiritual energies and units of existence both large and small; he also wholly carries it out. His providence in time is as comprehensive as is his decree from eternity.

John MacArthur: **Divine Promises Guaranteed**
Let's look at **verse 11**. "*In whom*" – now, watch this - "*In whom also we have obtained an inheritance*." Now, stop right there. "*In whom also we have obtained an inheritance.*" This is the word of God to us. He's saying we have obtained an inheritance. Now, what tense is that verb? **Past tense** - I remember that, even - past tense. That means it already happened. You say, "Well, wait a minute, we've already received this inheritance?" That's right. The moment you invited Jesus Christ into your life, the inheritance is yours. . .

I think he's talking about **what we receive in Christ**. And the New Testament talks so much about that. In **1 Peter, chapter 1, verse 3**, it says that because we have been begotten in Christ, **verse 4** says we receive "*an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you*." . . .

There are three things I want you to see; three things: the ground of our inheritance, the guarantee of our inheritance, and the goal of our inheritance.

Steven Cole: **Glory to Our Sovereign God**
Whenever Scripture presents a doctrine that is intended to lead us to praise and glorify our great God, but certain men attack that doctrine, it is a sign of the enemy at work. Satan is opposed to anything that exalts God and humbles proud man. So when the truth of God's Word is proclaimed in a way that brings us to absolute dependence on His sovereign grace, the enemy attacks. Such is the case with the doctrine of God's sovereignty as it relates to our salvation.

Our sovereign God purposed to save us so that we would be to the praise of His glory.

I believe that the main reason Paul emphasizes this here is to give us assurance that our salvation rests on God's eternal, unshakable purpose, and not on anything in us. Also, as **verse 12** makes clear, Paul wants all the praise and glory for our salvation to go to God alone.

But, some have objected to the doctrine of predestination because, they argue, it destroys our free will. It makes us robots or puppets. I don't like the term "free will," because it is widely misunderstood. None of us are absolutely free; we do not make any

choices with complete freedom. I did not choose to be born as a white male in 1947, to American parents who had just become Christians. All of that was determined. And, we all make choices based on many factors that are outside of our immediate understanding. We choose based on our upbringing, our culture, our knowledge, our life experiences, and many other factors. We are responsible to God for the choices we make, but we do not make those choices from a position of absolute freedom.
While the Bible teaches that God foreordains or predestines everything that happens, including sin and evil, it also teaches that He is not the author of evil or responsible for it. Joseph's brothers committed a great evil by selling him into slavery. They did it on one level, yet on another level, God did it for a higher purpose (see **Gen. 45:5, 7, 8; 50:20**). Evil men crucified the sinless Son of God, and they were responsible for their actions. Yet, at the same time, God purposed and predestined to put His Son to death on the cross (see **Acts 2:23; 4:27-28; Isa. 53:4, 10**). If God predetermined the cross, then He necessarily predetermined the fall of man into sin. If anyone objects that God did *not predetermine* the fall, but only *permitted* it, then I ask you the question that John Calvin asked such objectors: Did He permit it *willingly* or *unwillingly*? . . .

If you deny that God works *all things* after the counsel of His will, you rob believers of the comfort that He "*causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, who are called according to His purpose*" (**Rom. 8:28**). It would be a scary universe indeed if some things are not under God's sovereign control! The Bible rather presents a universe under the sovereign control of a wise, loving, omnipotent God who will judge all evil in His perfect time and plan. A god who is not in control of all the evil things that happen is not the God of the Bible! We can trust Him to keep His promises because He works all things after the counsel of His will. . .

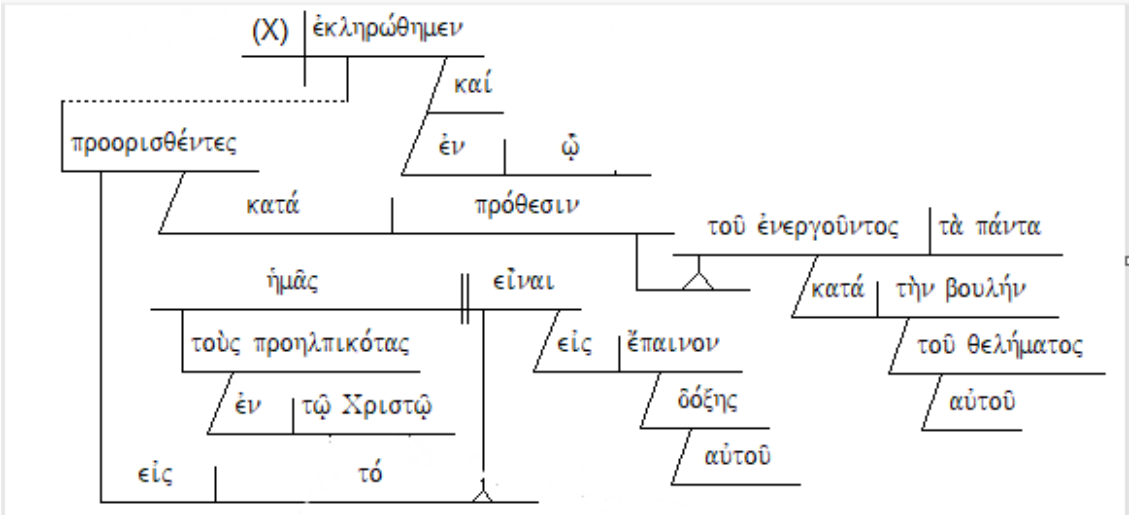
Those who emphasize our "free will" and our faith, which they say we can exercise apart from God's gracious intervention, undermine God's grace and glory. Martyn Lloyd-Jones wrote (*God's Ultimate Purpose* [Baker], p. 225), "In every view of salvation the place given in it to the glory of God provides the ultimate test. The proof that it is truly scriptural is that it gives *all* the glory to God."

As I said at the outset, it is evidence of the enemy at work that the clear, straightforward, inescapable truth that Paul sets forth here even needs to be debated among those who claim to believe in Christ. The truth that our sovereign God predestined to save us according to His purpose and the assurance that He will bring it to pass because He works all things after the counsel of His will, should fill us with great joy. We should bow before His throne, lost in wonder, love and praise.

J. Ligon Duncan: **Living to the Praise of His Glory**
The first thing we're going to see is the **particular blessing** that Paul is praising God for that is life re-orienting to you and me. So the first thing you'll see in *verse 10* and the first phrase of **verse 11** will be the blessing, the truth, that is life re-orienting. Then, if you look at the second part of **verse 11**, which begins with "…*having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will*…" — if we look to that phrase, Paul is telling you there how you got the blessing

which was described at the beginning of **verse 11**. So, he moves from the blessing to how you got the blessing. Then if you look at **verse 12**, he tells you why you got the blessing.

Leedy Greek Diagram:



TEXT: EPHESIANS 1:13-14

TITLE: SIXTH SPIRITUAL BLESSING = SEALED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

BIG IDEA:
THE HOLY SPIRIT SECURES THE SAINTS' FUTURE --
SECURES IT FOR US AND FOR GOD

INTRODUCTION:

God wants us to appreciate the blessings He has given us. Sometimes we need a little reminder to get our focus off of some of the areas of confusion and uncertainty in our life and focus on His blessings. Insecurity about the future affects our enjoyment of the present and our performance in the present.

Clinton Arnold: **The Role of the Spirit**
The Spirit imparts God's blessings to us, marking us as belonging to God and assuring us of our future with him. The passage begins and ends with the Spirit of God (**1:3, 13**), as it likewise does with reference to the Father, yet Christ is at the center of the text. There is thus a strong **Trinitarian character** to this passage with the Father as the main planner and initiator of redemption, Christ as the central figure of the plan, who secures the redemption and becomes the nexus point for the relationship the redeemed have with God, and the Spirit now as the agent who bestows the blessings on the people God has redeemed.

In a context where people were seeking help and inspiration from a wide variety of spirit beings, this passage would be instructive in helping them to see that there is only one Spirit they should seek. God's Spirit does not come alongside as a divine supernatural assistant (*paredros*) to fulfill our every self-serving demand. In the first place, this Spirit comes to abide with us as a sign of God's presence; we are God's property until the final redemption. This Spirit is also a powerful presence within us as a **resource for living the Christian life**. The Spirit, in fact, has his own agenda, which involves promoting and empowering a holy life (**1:4**). This is consistent with the fact that he is the Holy Spirit.

Frank Thielman: The fourth and final section of the benediction turns directly to Paul's readers to remind them of their conversion and especially of the gift of the Holy Spirit that God gave to them at that time. When they heard and believed the gospel, Paul says, God sealed them by means of the Holy Spirit.

He did this for two reasons. First, the Holy Spirit's seal protects them from the wrath that God will one day pour out on the wicked. Although Paul does not say this explicitly, it is implied in his use of such words as σωτηρία (*sōtēria, salvation*), σφραγίζω (*sphragizō, seal*), and περιποίησις (*peripoiēsis, saved remnant*). In the context of Paul's theology and of the Scriptures that Paul used, these terms speak of

protection from the destruction that will come to the wicked on the final day when God judges all people. Second, and more positively, the gift of the Holy Spirit also serves as a down payment on the inheritance that he will give to the remnant he has saved from his wrath. The Spirit's presence with them is a guarantee that when God brings his purposes to an end, he will fully apply to them the redemption that Christ's death has accomplished for them (**v. 7**).

As with all the other blessings for which Paul praises God in the benediction, these blessings are applied to the believer "*in Christ*" (**v. 13 [2x]; cf. vv. 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10 [2x], 11, 12**). Paul's readers have heard the gospel of salvation, have believed it, and have been sealed by the Holy Spirit in the sphere of reality that Christ defines. The ultimate purpose for these blessings, moreover, is also identical to the ultimate purpose of the others: God has blessed Paul's readers in this way so that he might receive their praise (**v. 14**; cf. ***vv. 6, 12***).

Grant Osborne: Like today, the first century featured a bewildering kaleidoscope of competing religious claims, and it was critical to realize that the Christian claim alone is the true message. Now there are even more religious alternatives, and apologetics (defending the truth of Christianity) is more important than ever. We must remember that Christianity is an exclusive religion, and there is no hope for eternal life apart from Christ. This is clear in **John 14:6** ("*No one comes to the Father except through me*") and **Acts 4:12** ("*Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved*"). Those Christians who in the name of tolerance think pious people from any religion can be saved by following different paths are tragically wrong. There is only one gospel, only one truth claim that can be the source of salvation!

I. (:13) THE HOLY SPIRIT SECURES THE SAINTS' FUTURE AS A SEAL FROM GOD

A. Whom is Paul addressing here?

"*In Him, you also,*"

Clinton Arnold: By the time we reach this fifth and final section of the introductory eulogy, Paul's use of "*in Christ*" almost reaches a monotonous level because of its repetition. He does this, however, to stress the importance of incorporation in Christ as the source of all of these spiritual blessings. Outside of Christ, such blessings do not exist.

Note the change in pronouns -- in **verses 3-12** all first person pronouns -- Paul including himself and the apostles together with all the saints; in **verse 13** introduces the second person plural; 2 options:

1. Possibility that Paul is here just beginning to introduce the distinction between Jewish believers and Gentile believers that will be an important theme later in the Book as he describes how both have been united into one body -- the church.

Certainly it would have been difficult for some Jews to accept that God was now treating the Gentiles so favorably and on an equal footing, so the fact of the sealing with the Holy Spirit should help to clinch this and give these Gentile believers the assurance about their future that they need.

2. Otherwise the distinction would not be as dramatic, and would merely be between Paul and his associates and all the believers at Ephesus (with no special Gentile emphasis). Certainly it is true that all believers of all ages have been sealed with the Holy Spirit, not just Gentile believers.

Andrew Lincoln: With the ὑμεῖς **v 13** introduces a change in the personal pronoun. Those who interpret "*we*" in **v 12** as Jewish Christians take "*you*" here as a contrasting reference to Gentile Christians. However, the Jew/Gentile theme does not become part of the writer's discussion until **2:11** and even then in **2:11—3:21** "*we*" is used of all believers, Jews and Gentiles, not just of Jewish Christians. The proposed distinction between "*we*" as Jewish Christians and "*you*" as Gentile Christians is one that simply does not hold for the rest of the letter. In fact the return to the first person plural in **v 14** tells overwhelmingly against such a proposal. "*Our inheritance*" is that of **all believers**, not least of those who have just been described as having been sealed with the Holy Spirit, and is not just the inheritance of Jewish believers. Again, in **1:15–23** the second person plural in **vv 15–18** shifts to the first person plural in **v 19** but it would be extremely hard to see any Jew/Gentile distinction as remotely envisaged in such a variation. These variations in usage also make it unlikely that the distinction between "*we*" in **v 12** and "*you*" in **v 13** is one between first- and second-generation believers (contra Mitton, 57). It is far more likely that the "*you*" in **v 13** marks the point at which **the letter's recipients are addressed** and explicitly drawn into the blessing offered by believers in general as they are reminded of their reception of the gospel (cf. also Dahl, TZ 7 [1951] 259–60; Gnilka, 62, 84; Lindemann, Aufhebung, 101; Halter, Taufe und Ethos, 229, Jayne, ExpTim 85 [1974] 151–52). **The writer makes a distinction between believers in general and his present audience, and yet is saying that the same blessings have come upon both groups.**

B. 2 Prerequisites -- Hearing and Believing

"*after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—*
having also believed,"

Paul is finally looking at salvation from the standpoint of man's responsibility and response to the work of God in his heart; up to now the emphasis has been totally on God's initiative and working.

Sealing with the Holy Spirit is not something that happens as some time subsequent to believing; not a second blessing or second work of grace; but rather is associated with our hearing and believing.

Proper content is essential -- not so much the personality or manner of presentation by the speaker. Described here as:

"*the word of truth*"

"*the gospel of your salvation*"

We must expose ourselves and our families to the proper content.

Lack of security in any area of our life should be addressed in the same way -- seek to hear God's truth as it applies to that area and believe it. Trust the Savior who is able to deliver from insecurity.

Frank Thielman: When he attaches the gospel to the concept of truth elsewhere in his letters, he most often intends to draw a contrast between the true version of the gospel and a false version that is competing with it (Gal. 2:5, 14; cf. 2 Cor. 4:2; 2 Tim. 2:15). Such a contrast may have been in the back of his mind when he dictated these words, especially if he had recently written Colossians. That letter was designed to refute a specious philosophy that had melded its teaching with the Christian gospel (Col. 2:3, 8), and there Paul had also described the Colossian Christians' conversion as a result of hearing τῷ λόγῳ τῆς ἀληθείας τοῦ εὐαγγελίου (tō logō tēs alētheias tou euangeliou, the word of truth, the gospel; Col. 1:5; cf. Eph. 4:14–15).

Bryan Chapell: **Belief itself** indicates the presence of the seal (mark) of the Spirit of God that guarantees we are God's children because without the Spirit we could not and would not believe (**Rom. 8:6–9; 1 Cor. 2:14**).

We fail to recognize belief as the indication of the seal of the Spirit when we fail to remember how supernatural is the gift of our faith. The gospel says you are a sinner, and Jesus, the Lord of all and Lamb of God, died for your sins. The world doesn't believe that. The gospel says that even when you are faithless, the faithful God has forgiven your past, laid claim on your life, and secured your future. The world doesn't believe that. The gospel says that though you were dead in your trespasses and sins, Christ died for you, rose from the dead as the victor over your sins, gives purpose to your life now, and is coming to claim you eternally. The world cannot believe that. Not until the Holy Spirit comes and supernaturally changes a heart can anyone believe the truths of the gospel. Thus, says the apostle, **your believing is the evidence that the Holy Spirit is in you.**

The Holy Spirit who has already enabled you to taste the sweetness of God in the gospel of your salvation is giving you a foretaste of the glory that awaits you, guaranteed by his mark of belief in you. Already by the Holy Spirit's using the gospel, your spiritual world has been turned upside down and made new. Your belief is the proof that the Bible speaks truth when it says that you are a new creation. In addition, this testimony of God's Spirit in your heart affirms that what the Bible says about God's work throughout creation can be trusted. The Bible says the entire creation is being conformed to God's purposes and for his glory. Because we have witnessed the re-creating work of God in our hearts, we are able to trust that what the Bible says about God's ultimate renewal of all things is also true.

C. Significance of the Holy Spirit as the Seal from God

(Remember, it is God who does the sealing)

"*you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise,*"

Frank Thielman: Paul probably conceived of all three events as happening at the same time: hearing the gospel, believing it, and receiving the seal of the Holy Spirit all happened at once.

Andrew Lincoln: The "*seal of the Spirit*" is therefore baptism of the Spirit, to which in the conversion-initiation process baptism in water was the reverse side of the coin, an expression of the faith to which God gives the Spirit.

Steven Cole: Many teach that there is a time lapse between believing in Christ and receiving the Holy Spirit and that only some experience the sealing of the Spirit. This view was fostered by the old King James translation, which stated, "*in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.*" The word after implies a time lapse. Even Charles Spurgeon and Martyn Lloyd-Jones, whom I greatly respect, err in arguing that the sealing of the Spirit is an experience that only some believers receive subsequent to salvation. But that undermines Paul's entire point here, which is to **assure all believers** that God has sealed them with the Spirit at the moment of faith in Christ.

1. Meaning of the seal
    a. Marking as one's own possession -- ownership;

This is the objective sense = the meaning of the seal to God and to others (cf. Branded); Believers belong to God forever; the issue of ownership has been settled. They had a number of ways of accomplishing this sealing function in those days. The seal usually was made from hot wax, which was placed on the document, letter, etc. and then impressed with a signet ring (cf. how we use a Notary today). Served as an official mark of identification.

R C Sproul: The word for sealing is used only a very few times in the New Testament. The concept is of an indelible mark, representing a promise. The closest thing to this in the ancient world would be whenever a king wanted to authenticate a decree and marked it with a wax impression from his signet ring. This signet ring wax impression, in the Greek world, was called a *throgos*, a seal, and it represented and guaranteed that what had been promised would take place.

Christians debate whether it is possible for a Christian to lose his salvation. I believe that if we were left to ourselves then it would not only be possible for us to lose our salvation, but I wonder if it would be possible for anybody to persevere in salvation. But my perseverance in the faith does not rest in my own ability to persevere. My conviction that no Christian is ever lost is based on the promises of God and on statements like this from the first chapter of Ephesians: that when we believe in Jesus

Christ, God the Holy Spirit is sealed on us and our souls are marked indelibly as the children of God.

b. Confirming or authenticating

Subjective sense -- testimony to our own consciousness that we belong to God and enjoy all of these spiritual blessings (Rom. 8:16); people whom nothing can harm and for whom all things work together for good

c. Making secure -- to protect against tampering or harm;

(just like they sealed up Jesus' grave and sealed Daniel in the lion's den);

Primarily the significance of "a" and "b" are involved in our passage.

2. Fulfillment of God's promise -- "*the Holy Spirit of promise*"

a. OT prophecies:
Joel 3:1-5
Is. 32:15; 44:3
Ezek. 36:26; 39:29
Zech. 12:10
emphasis on a new heart and new spirit

b. NT promises of Christ
John 14:16-17; 15:26; 16:13
Acts 1:4

c. Fulfillment on Day of Pentacost
Acts 2:1-4; 16-21; 38

3. Emphasis on Holiness

word position in the Greek makes this emphatic;

The primary nature of the Spirit's work in those he seals is to make them holy (**2 Thess. 2:13**); This has been Paul's theme throughout the first paragraph of Ephesians. We have been saved to be saints, to be holy.

This should be the objective mark of identification to others; they should know we belong to God because of our holiness; they should see our good works and glorify the Father. This should be the inward assurance of the reality of our union with Jesus Christ (cf. the tests of eternal life in **1 John**). How are we progressing in this area?

II. (:14) THE HOLY SPIRIT SECURES THE SAINTS' FUTURE AS A DOWNPAYMENT FROM GOD

"*who is given as a pledge of our inheritance,*
with a view to the redemption of God's own possession,
to the praise of His glory."

A. Significance of the Holy Spirit as the Downpayment from God

First installment; partial payment in advance (cf. engagement ring); Our present possession of the Spirit is a sample and guarantee, a partial payment of our future inheritance.

Full salvation will be different from our present experience only in degree, not in kind

Bryan Chapell: The Holy Spirit is not just a mark of God that we are his possession; the Spirit also is a deposit guaranteeing the redemption that is to come. This deposit is similar to a down payment on a house that secures your position as the buyer, or the first fruits of a crop that indicate that the rest of the harvest is coming. The Spirit is the first evidence of the full grandeur of God's completed purpose in our lives.

B. 2 Things that have been made Secure regarding the Saints' Future

1. With respect to the saints -- Our Inheritance

Resurrection body which will correspond to our new position as adopted children of God free from sin and evil; full enjoyment of all spiritual blessings

Transition: our inheritance is marvelous, awesome and guaranteed, but it is not the primary purpose of our salvation

2. With respect to God -- Full Redemption and Possession of Us

We will be totally His for all of eternity; no undivided allegiance. This is the great overriding purpose of God's redemption of men -- the rescuing of what is His own possession.

CLOSING REFRAIN

"*to the praise of His glory*"

His ultimate goal is "*the praise of His glory*"

Frank Thielman: Paul concludes not only this fourth section of the benediction, but also the benediction itself, by stating the **ultimate purpose** for which God has sealed Christians with the Holy Spirit and intends to redeem and save them in the future. He has done this εἰς ἔπαινον τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ (*eis epainon tēs doxēs autou, for the praise of his glory*). This statement recalls the benediction's opening expression of praise: "*Blessed is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us . . .*" (**v. 3**). It also recalls the expressions of praise that punctuate the benediction at the conclusions of the first and third subsections. God has predetermined that he will adopt his people as his children through Jesus Christ "*for the praise of his glorious grace*" (**v.**

6), and he has predetermined that he will make them his heirs in Christ so that they may exist "*for the praise of his glory*" (**v. 12**). This concluding doxology therefore describes not only why God intended to redeem those whom he has sealed in Christ with the Holy Spirit (**vv. 13–14**) but also why he "*blessed [them] with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ*" (**v. 3**). He did all this "*for the praise of his glory*."

CONCLUSION:

- Let's appreciate our spiritual blessings.
- Our secure future should enable us to enjoy the present and to perform in the present.

* * * * * * * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Note how this passage confirms the principle that "*faith comes from hearing and hearing by the Word of God*." Are we looking for opportunities to gain a hearing before unbelievers? Do we take seriously every opportunity we have to hear and respond in faith to the Word of God to grow ourselves? Do we encourage ourselves with the fact that we have responded in faith to the gospel message?

2) If God is the one who has done the sealing … who is powerful enough to break that seal and to bring into question our eternal security?

3) How good is God at keeping His promises? What a comfort it is to have already received "*the Holy Spirit of promise!*"

4) Why does God want to fully redeem us and possess us as His own possession?

* * * * * * * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Grant Osborne: This section (**1:3–14**) has provided an incredible summary of all the spiritual blessings that a generous and loving God has heaped upon his children. Paul wants us to bask in delight as we contemplate the divine riches lavished on us by our gracious Father. In the midst of all the pressures and difficulties life throws at us, we need to ponder our true heritage and realize all that is awaiting us from the God who has chosen us and redeemed us through the atoning sacrifice of his Son. We have all these blessings "*in Christ*," and we must live lives appropriate to our union with him.

Homer Kent: The goal of this sealing is stated as twofold. It guarantees the eventual experiencing of all aspects of redemption. Believers themselves are God's purchased possession. What we now enjoy in part will ultimately be experienced to the full (cf. **Ro 8:15-24**). There is also a benefit which God receives. By the work of the Spirit in

regenerating and sealing believers, praise will come to the Father for all eternity because of His matchless saving grace.

John Stott: The glory of God is the revelation of God, and the glory of his grace is his self-disclosure as a gracious God. To live to the praise of the glory of his grace is both to worship him ourselves by our words and deeds as the gracious God he is, and to cause others to see and to praise him too.

John MacArthur: Faith is man's response to God's elective purpose. God's choice of men is election; men's choice of God is faith. In election God gives His promises, and by faith men receive them…

Men have always wanted assurances. Because the promises of other men are so often unreliable, we demand oaths, sworn affidavits, surety bonds, guarantees, warranties, and many other such means of trying to assure that what is promised is received.

God's simple word should be sufficient for us, but in His graciousness He makes His promises even more certain -- if that were possible -- by giving us His own guarantees. Here the Lord guarantees His promises with his seal and with his pledge.

Wood: The "*seal*" (*sphragis*) had various uses (MM, pp. 617, 618), all of which are instructive as applied to the Holy Spirit. It was affixed to a document to guarantee its genuineness. It was attached to goods in transit to indicate ownership and ensure protection. It also represented a designation of office in the state service.

Robinson: It is noteworthy that St Paul is careful to employ in regard to the Gentiles the very terms – "*promise"*, *"inheritance*", "*emancipation"*, "*possession*" -- which were the familiar descriptions of the peculiar privilege of Israel. Moreover in the phrase *"our inheritance*" he has suddenly changed back again from the second person to the first; thereby intimating that Jews and Gentiles are, to use a phrase which occurs later on, *"co-heirs and concorporate and co-partakers of the promise*".

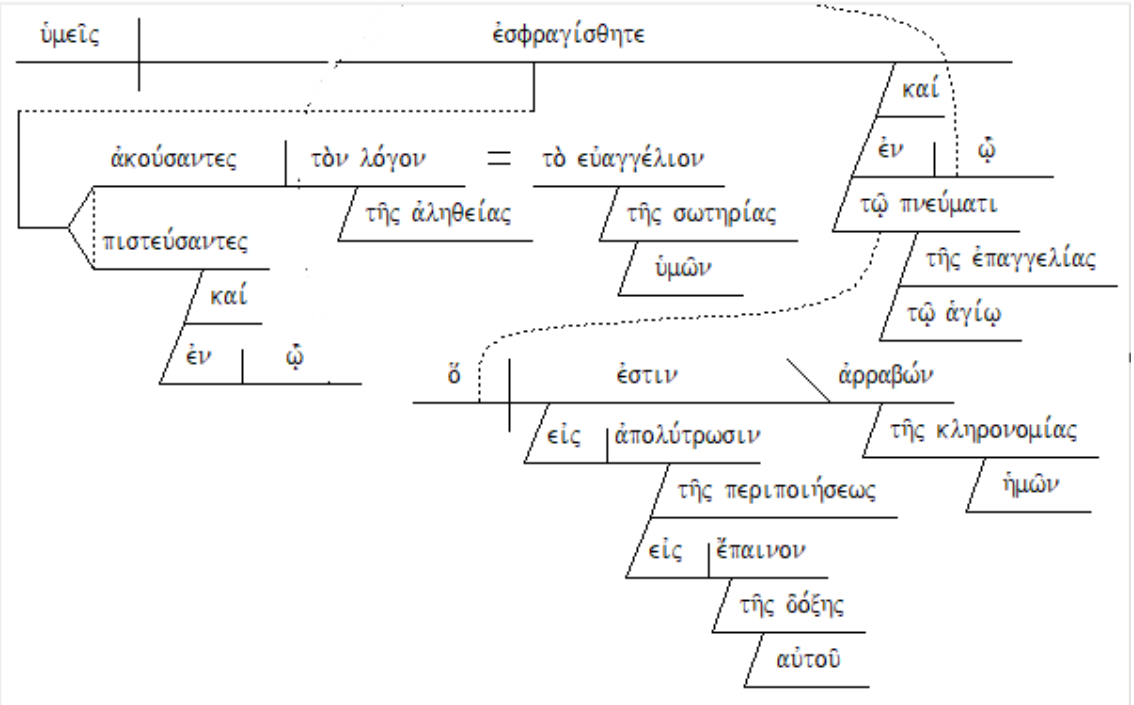
At last the great doxology comes to its close with the repetition for the third time of the refrain, *"to the praise of His glory*" -- words which recall to us the unfulfilled destiny of Israel, *"that they might be unto Me for a people, and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory: but they would not hear"*.

John Piper: So then, what is God saying to us when he gives us his Holy Spirit and calls him a guarantee or a downpayment? He is saying, "My great desire for those who believe in me is that you feel secure in my love. I have chosen you before the foundation of the world. I have predestined you to be my children for ever. I have redeemed you by the blood of my Son. And I have put my Spirit in you as a seal and a guarantee. Therefore, you will receive the inheritance and praise the glory of my grace for ever and ever. And I tell you this here in Ephesians chapter one because I want you to feel secure in my love and my power. I don't promise you an easy life. In fact, through many tribulations you must enter the Kingdom (**Acts 14:22**). I don't promise

always to speak in soft tones of approval, but to warn you in love whenever you begin to seek security in anything but me," says the Lord.

Frank Thielman: In this final part of the benediction, Paul addresses his readers directly to emphasize that all the blessings that come to those who are in Christ, and that he has described in **verses 3–12**, also belong to them. This happened when they heard the gospel, believed the gospel, and entered the sphere of existence defined by Christ. In that place, the Holy Spirit began his work in their lives. The Holy Spirit sealed Paul's readers, keeping them safe from God's eschatological wrath, and provided them with a guarantee of the inheritance that God has promised to his people. God did all this in order that Paul's readers, as members of God's people, might praise him. Paul has provided a model for this sort of praise in his benedictory prayer.

Leedy Greek Diagram:



TEXT: EPHESIANS 1:15-19a

TITLE: THANKSGIVING AND PRAYER FOR SPIRITUAL ENLIGHTENMENT

BIG IDEA:
WE NEED THE ENLIGHTENING WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT TO FULLY UNDERSTAND AND RELATE TO GOD

INTRODUCTION:

When a baby is born, his eyes are opened to a whole new world, a different dimension than anything he has ever known. He is very limited as to what he can see at birth. As the baby develops his eyes start to focus in on more things and he also starts to see not just what is close up, but things that are farther away. Still there is a growing process in terms of how much he can really understand and how well he can relate to what he sees -- this growing process can be described as enlightenment.

Just being alive would be abnormal as time goes by. However, many Christians seem content with just being alive, with having their eyes opened to some of the blessings of this new spiritual dimension, but never really growing in any depth in their personal knowledge of God and ability to relate to Him.

We need to catch the vision for our opportunity to know God better. We want to be able to see things that are far off, not just those things that are up close. We don't want our vision clouded by our own indifference, our persistence in sin, our love for the world, etc. We need to be open to the ministry of the Holy Spirit in our heart.

CONTEXT: **Verses 3-14** presented a fantastic account of how God has already blessed us with every spiritual blessing. Now Paul is switching gears and praying that God will give us spiritual insight to understand, appreciate, and appropriate these blessings.

It is important to keep the balance between:

1) Praise for what God has given us, and
2) Petition for what we realize we need for spiritual growth

The danger of being lopsided here:

1) Some people are complacent with their limited understanding of God and have no appetite to go deeper
2) Some people are always praying for new spiritual blessings while seemingly ignorant of what they already have

Balance:

Yes, we have the Holy Spirit who has sealed us. Praise God!
Yes, we need the Holy Spirit in His ministry of enlightening us. Petition God for His grace in this area.

Frank Thielman: Among the Pauline Letters, only Ephesians begins with a benediction, a thanksgiving prayer report, and an intercessory prayer report. . . As is common with Paul's letters, it is difficult to tell in Ephesians precisely where the thanksgiving prayer report ends and the intercessory prayer report begins. Paul says he does not cease giving thanks for the letters' recipients when he remembers them in prayer (**1:16**), but when he describes his prayers in the following subordinate clause, they turn out to be prayers not of thanksgiving but of intercession (**1:17–19**).

Clinton Arnold: **(:15-23)** -- In this **prayer of thanksgiving and intercession**, Paul expresses gratitude to God upon hearing of the spiritual vitality of the readers. This leads him to pray intensively that the Spirit will reveal to them their hope and their great value to God, and especially that they will gain an expanded awareness of the extraordinary and unsurpassed power of God manifested on their behalf.

Klyne Snodgrass: Similar to the previous passage, the Greek text of **1:15–23** is one long sentence. The process of thought is clear:

A. The report Paul has of their faith and love (**1:15**)
B. Affirmation that he gives thanks and prays for them (**1:16**)
C. Intercession for the gift of revelation (**1:17–23**)
    1. The primary request is that God will give his revealing Spirit (**1:17**)
    2. The goal of the prayer is that the revelation will bring a three-part knowledge of God (**1:18–19**)
    3. Description of the working of God's power in Christ (**1:20–23**)

I. (:15-16) MOTIVATION FOR THE REQUEST = THE REALITY OF THEIR SPIRITUAL LIFE

(:15a) Transition -- Reason for Thanksgiving

"*For this reason I too*"

These Gentile believers genuinely possessed the Holy Spirit who had sealed them and been the downpayment for their full inheritance.

Frank Thielman: Because his readers have heard and believed the gospel and have been sealed with the Holy Spirit, Paul says, "*I in particular*" have reason to give unceasing thanks in my prayers.

Klyne Snodgrass: "*For this reason*" points back to the doxology, which affirms the foundational character of that passage. The theology of the doxology motivates everything else in the letter and should be reread in connection with each new section. The way God has worked to accomplish salvation motivates both Paul's praise and his intercession. The intent of this prayer is that people will know in their own lives the benefits mentioned in the doxology. . .

Paul's intent is clear—that God's Spirit, already given to his readers, will continually give wisdom and revelation for life and understanding. The result is that the "inner eyes," the instruments of sight and understanding for the inner being, will receive light by which to see. In other words, the apostle prays the lights will go on inside people so that they know God and understand the benefit of the gospel.

A. (:15b) Two Fundamental Qualities of Genuine Spiritual Life
"*having heard*"

Paul was in prison and had time to pray for these saints on a regular basis. He gave thanks for them and expressed his pastoral concern in praying for their growth.

1. Faith
"*of the faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you*"

Bruce Hurt: **Faith** (4102) (*pistis*) means a firm persuasion, conviction, belief in the truth. Refers not only to their initial act of saving faith, but the day by day exercise of their faith in the Lord Jesus for daily living. The same faith that saved is the faith needed to live daily. Faith is the expression of the believer's trust in God (vertical relationship) whereas love is the evidence of one's proper relationship with others (horizontal relationship). Faith is not something a sinful soul can conger up from their depraved heart but is the God-allotted ability or capacity to trust Him. True faith is not based on empirical evidence, but on divine assurance, a gift of God. Real faith is shown to be authentic by real obedience. As Spurgeon said "Faith is the foot of the soul by which it can march along the road of the commandments (**ED**: Enabled by the Spirit)."

William Barclay: **Faith** begins with receptivity. It begins when a man is at least willing to listen to the message of the truth. It goes on to mental assent. A man first hears and then agrees that this is true. But mental assent need not issue in action. Many a man knows very well that something is true, but does not change his actions to meet that knowledge. The final stage is when this mental assent becomes total surrender. In full-fledged faith, a man hears the Christian message, agrees that it is true, and then casts himself upon it in a life of total yieldedness.

2. Love
"*and your love for all the saints*"

Frank Thielman: Paul also gives thanks for "*the love*" his readers have "*for all the saints*" (ἡ ἀγάπη ἡ εἰς πάντας τοὺς ἁγίους, *hē agapē hē eis pantas tous hagious*). Ἅγιοι (*hagioi, saints*) here, as usual in Ephesians, refers to all Christians (**1:18; 3:8, 18; 4:12; 5:3; 6:18**), and love is a theme of particular interest to Paul in this letter: God's love for believers (**2:4; 3:17; 6:23**), Christ's love for believers (**3:19**), the love of believers for Christ (**6:24**), and especially the love of believers for each other (**1:4; 4:2, 15, 16; 5:2, 25, 28, 33**). Just as he does elsewhere in his opening thanksgiving prayer reports, therefore, Paul congratulates his readers for displaying precisely the quality that he will urge them later in the letter to cultivate.

Grant Osborne: Paul is thrilled with their spiritual state, both in its vertical (faith in Jesus) and horizontal (love for the saints) aspects. They are growing spiritually in every area of their Christian walk, and this moves Paul to prayer. It had been five to six years since Paul had last seen the Ephesian Christians (a time period including his trip to Jerusalem, arrest, two-year stint in Caesarea, and at least a year so far on trial in Rome), so such good news would have been very heartening to Paul.

John MacArthur: A second mark of genuine salvation is **love for all the saints**, and because of such love Paul offers thanks for the Ephesian believers. Christian love is indiscriminate; it does not pick and choose which believers it will love. Christ loves all believers, and they are precious to Him. By definition, therefore, Christian love extends to all Christians. To the extent that it does not, it is less than Christian. Paul calls for believers to be "**maintaining the same love**" (**Phil. 2:2**+), which is to love all believers the same. Sometimes we hear Christians say, "*I love him in the Lord*," which seems to imply that they have no personal affection for nor commitment to the needs of the individual. They extend a certain spiritualized kind of love only because the other person is a fellow believer. But that is not genuine love. To truly love a person in the Lord is to love him as the Lord loves him—**genuinely and sacrificially**....Important as it is, sound theology is no substitute for love. Without love the best doctrine is like "*a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal*" (**1 Cor. 13:1**+). True salvation goes from the head and heart of the believer out to other believers and out to the world to touch unbelievers in Christ's name. True salvation produces true love, and true love does "*not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth*" (**1 John 3:18**+). Always in the New Testament true spiritual love is defined as an attitude of selfless sacrifice that results in generous acts of kindness done to others. It is far more than a feeling, an attraction or emotion. When the Lord had washed the feet of the proud and self-seeking disciples, He told them that what He had done for them was the example of how they were to love each other (**John 13:34**).

B. (:16) Thanksgiving and Intercession

1. Thanksgiving

"*do not cease giving thanks for you*,"

2. Intercession

"*while making mention of you in my prayers*"

II. (:17) MAIN REQUEST = THE GIFT OF THE ENLIGHTENING WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

A. Flows out of the Identity of God

1. Identified in Relationship to Jesus

"*that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ*"

If our Lord, the object of our faith and our all-sufficient one for deliverance in every respect willingly submitted to God the Father here

on this earth and needed insight, etc. how much more we do.

Clinton Arnold: In his description of God, Paul closely associates the one God with Jesus of Nazareth, whom he terms Lord and Messiah. This is a reiteration of a similar designation for God at the beginning of the blessing at the outset of the letter (for more discussion, see on **1:3**). It is in and through Jesus of Nazareth that God has fulfilled his promises and brings his redemptive plan to the world.

2. Identified in Relationship to His Preeminence

"*the Father of glory*"

His characteristic quality is glory. He is the one that deserves the preeminence in every respect. If the one we have the opportunity to get to know is the Father of glory, how can we be diverted by lesser pursuits?

[Remember the refrain: "*to the praise of the glory of His grace*"]

Andrew Lincoln: "*Glory*" denotes the splendor of the divine presence and power. In fact, in Paul "glory" and "power" can be synonymous in terms of God's activity (cf. **Rom 6:4** and **1 Cor 6:14** with reference to his activity in raising Christ). Here in **1:17**, as well as focusing on the radiance of God's being, glory may also be linked with the notion of enlightenment in **1:18** as the power to illuminate (cf. the connection between the glory of God and the light of knowledge in **2 Cor 4:4, 6**).

Kenneth Wuest: He is the *Father of the glory* in the sense that He is the Father to Whom glory belongs.

Bruce Hurt: **Doxa** relates to inherent value (real weight) and hence used of the glory of God, i.e. His substance (the essence of His eternal, infinite being). God's glory encompasses all of His attributes. **Glory** (doxa) speaks of a manifestation of God's true nature, presence, or likeness. He is glorified when He is allowed to be seen as He really is. To be where God is will be **glory**. To be what God intended will be **glory**. To do what God purposed will be **glory**. The basic idea in the word doxa is that of manifestation. The **glory** of God is the manifestation of His Being, His character and His acts. The **glory** of God is what He is essentially. **Glory**, therefore, is the true apprehension of God. God's being (glory) is the only measure (ultimately) to weigh anything. Only the Lord has meaning in and of Himself; people derive their meaning by knowing Him – like the moon draws its light (reflects) the sun (Son).

B. Focuses on the Work of the Holy Spirit

"*may give to you a Spirit of wisdom and revelation*"

Why do I think this refers to the Holy Spirit and not just a capacity or disposition in our human spirit?

1) the two are closely related anyway since the Holy Spirit would have to produce such a capacity
2) emphasis on the work of the Trinity
3) prominence of the Holy Spirit in the entire epistle
4) context in **1:13-14** dealt specifically with the Holy Spirit
5) concept of "revelation" is better connected with Holy Spirit
6) parallel verse from OT -- **Isaiah 11:2** "*And the Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and strength, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord*"

1. "*Wisdom*" -- intellectual insight into things as they really are
not just wisdom in understanding the Word of God, but wisdom in our trials -- in how to face all the pressures of our daily lives

2. "*Revelation*" -- the unveiling of something previously hidden or unknown

Could be some confusion here. In our technical doctrinal classifications we tend to label this as the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit (helping us to understand what God has already revealed) since we do not believe God is revealing new truth today (through dreams, prophecies, etc.). But in a non-technical sense the Holy Spirit is constantly revealing new insights to us.

Andrew Lincoln: God's wisdom can never be totally possessed, since it is inexhaustible.

Ligonier Ministry: At regeneration, the Holy Spirit opens our eyes so that we can see who God is and who we are for the very first time. **But after conversion, He continues to work to give us insight into His revealed Word and to deepen our personal relationship with Him (John 16:13; Gal. 5:16)**.

C. Fixes Attention on the Full Experiential Knowledge of God
"*in the knowledge of him*"

Frank Thielman: Paul makes explicit the **theocentric** aspect of both the wisdom and the revelation that he prays God would give his readers with the phrase ἐν ἐπιγνώσει αὐτοῦ (*en epignōsei autou, in the knowledge of him*). Some interpreters have thought this clause gives the means "*by*" which the wisdom and revelation come (e.g., Haupt 1902a: 36), and others have attached it to the first part of **verse 18** so that Paul prays for the enlightenment of his readers "*in the knowledge of him*" (e.g., Abbott 1897: 28). The most natural reading grammatically and contextually, however, takes it as a description of the sphere of knowledge with which Paul's prayers are concerned (e.g., Ellicott 1859: 23–24; Hoehner 2002: 259). He prays not for knowledge generally but that God's Spirit, who reveals wisdom and understanding to God's people, might reveal the knowledge of God to the believers who read this letter.

III. (:18-19a) MANIFOLD REQUEST FOR HEIGHTENED AWARENESS

A. Repetition of Request for Enlightenment

"*I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened*"

Best translation of this Perfect tense in Greek here:
"*since the eyes of your heart have been enlightened*" -- Refers to the present possession of something received or experienced in the past. It was at salvation that the eyes of our heart were opened by God's grace through faith. Now we need these eyes focused by God's grace through faith. This prayer for spiritual enlightenment regarding the full knowledge of God can only apply to those who already have spiritual vision. That is why the reality of spiritual life in others should motivate us to pray in this way for them.

(Study **Luke 24:13-35**) for a good example of spiritual enlightenment)

Frank Thielman: πεφωτισμένους modifies δώῃ adverbially and describes what will happen when God gives the Spirit of wisdom and revelation to Paul's readers: the eyes of their heart will be enlightened. This enlightenment will, in turn, prepare them to know

- the hope of God's calling (**v. 18b**),
- the immense glory of his inheritance among the saints (**v. 18c**),
- and the massive power he has used for the benefit of believers (**v. 19**).

B. Threefold Request for Heightened Awareness

"*so that you will know*"

Clinton Arnold: A threefold request flowing out of the illumination (**1:18–19**)

a. For an awareness of their hope (**1:18**)
b. For an awareness of their value to God (**1:18**)
c. For an awareness of God's power available to them (**1:19**)

1. His Goal for Us

"*what is the hope of His calling*"

Primarily centers on holiness and being completely like the Lord Jesus Christ; includes our resurrection body and full inheritance

Frank Thielman: When Paul speaks of "*the hope of [God's] calling*" here in **1:18b**, therefore, he describes something that, although future and therefore invisible, arises from God's call and is bound to happen (cf. **Rom. 8:24–25**). Paul's readers have this hope (**1:12**), but Paul prays that the Spirit will illumine the eyes of their heart so that they might see it clearly.

Grant Osborne: This refers to the final hope in our eternal inheritance but also to the hope expressed in our present salvation and the Christian life that ensues. This must be understood in terms of what is called "inaugurated eschatology," the tension between **the already** and **the not yet**. The already refers to our present blessings in Christ and to

the fact that our future on earth will entail our walk in Christ and the glory and joy of knowing we are being "*kept by his power*" (**1 Pet 1:5**). The not yet refers to the culmination of all God's promises in our final heavenly home. Moreover, it is a "*living hope*" (**1 Pet 1:3**), not a secular hope, which is an ephemeral and completely uncertain yearning for a future that is virtually unattainable. Ours is a Christian hope resulting from God having called us to be his own (see **Eph 4:4**)—the certainty of the "*new heaven and new earth*" (**Rev 21:1**) and of the crown of life that awaits us (**Jas 1:12**; see also **2 Tim 4:8; 1 Pet 5:4**). Our near future is secure, and our eternal future is guaranteed.

2. His Gift for Himself

"*what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints*"

This refers to the inheritance that will belong to God, not the inheritance that will belong to the saints. Reasons:

1) Note the same two-sided emphasis in **verse 14** -- the Holy Spirit secures the saints' future both for the saints and for God
2) The phrase "*in the saints*" only makes sense in this view
3) There are parallel verses like **Titus 2:14**.

We are valuable to God. This should improve our sense of worth.

Frank Thielman: Paul prays God would give his readers an understanding of their status as God's very glorious inheritance. In the benediction Paul has already said that his readers, as God's adopted children, are his heirs (**1:5, 11**) and have been sealed with the Holy Spirit as a down payment of their coming inheritance (**1:14**). Now we learn that God too has an inheritance, and it is his people—οἱ ἅγιοι (*hoi hagioi, the saints*), as Paul calls them (cf. **1:1, 15; 2:19; 3:8, 18; 4:12; 5:3; 6:18**). In a similar way, the benediction had emphasized the glory of God and of his grace (**1:6, 12, 14**), and Paul has just described God as the Father, or origin, of glory (**1:17**). Now we learn that believers too are glorious; indeed, they have a wealth of glory. Paul wants his readers to know, therefore, that they are of great value to God: they are rich in glory and they are his inheritance.

3. (:19a) His Guarantee for Success = Resurrection Power

"*and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe.* "

Klyne Snodgrass: Significantly, the focus on God's power here is not on God's inherent power or on some cosmic display of force. Rather, it is on God's life-giving power as it is specifically available for believers. In this way the prayer looks back to the emphasis in the doxology on God's activity of planning and working for us and our salvation.

Stephen Fowl: Paul prepares for the emphasis on Christ's relationship to the created powers and principalities in **v. 21** by asserting that God's power is unsurpassed and cannot be challenged by created forces. Thus, although the powers and principalities are

not yet fully subjected to Christ (**1 Cor 15:24–28**), they cannot ultimately resist his power.

CONCLUSION:

Walt Russell: We do not know wat was the short-term response of the church in Ephesus to Paul's heart-felt prayer for them. We do have an insight into their response some 35 years later when the Apostle John recounted Jesus Christ's assessment of the church in **Rev 2:1-7**. The particularly tragic part of that assessment is in **verse 4**: "*But I have this against you, that you have left your first love*." The eyes of their hearts had grown dull over the years. Instead of loving their wonderful God more and more each year, they lost even the early flush of love that they had felt toward Him. They lost the focus of the eyes of their heart.

There is no priority in life that is greater than the priority of coming to know God better. How does that fit in your priority scale?

1) Pray for the Holy Spirit to enable you to get to know God more fully each day.
2) Invest significant time this week getting to know God better.

* * * * * * * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Does our spiritual life reflect a healthy growing balance of both dynamic *faith* towards our Lord Jesus Christ and practical *love* towards all of the brethren without a spirit of favoritism?

2) Do our prayers reflect a dominant tone of *thanksgiving* or of whining and complaining and just asking God for things?

3) Is our teaching driven home to the seat of emotions and the will by fervent prayer for this activity of enlightening and motivating that only the Holy Spirit can accomplish, or do we rely on the communication of content alone?

4) Are we excited about the riches that we enjoy in Christ and our secure future and are we aware of how excited God is to possess us as His very own?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

J. I. Packer: **Notes from *Knowing God*:**
Value of Knowing God -- proper attitude is that of Paul (**Philippians 3:7-10**)

1. One can know a great deal about God without much knowledge of Him.

2. One can know a great deal about godliness without much knowledge of God.

<u>4 Characteristics of People who Know God</u> (from a study of **Danie**l):

1) They have a great energy for God (**Dan. 11:32**)
"*the people who know their God shall stand firm and take action*"
They have a definite reaction of action to the anti-God trends which they see operating around them; also have a lot of energy to pray for God's causes

2) They have great thoughts of God
God's sovereignty is clearly presented in Daniel; His hand controls all of history -- "*the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men*"; His kingdom and righteousness will prevail in the end

3) They show great boldness for God
"*We ought to obey God rather than men"* (**Acts 5:29**)
cf. fiery furnace incident and Daniel in the lion's den

4) They have great contentment in God
Rom. 5:1; note contentment of Shadrach and friends before King Nebuchad.
Daniel 3:16-18 -- Live or die, they are content

<u>How to pursue a knowledge of God:</u>

1) Recognize how much we lack knowledge of God

2) Seek the Saviour

We have been created to know God -- that should be our aim in life:

John 17:3 "*this is life eternal, that they might know thee*"

Jer. 9:23 "*Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neigher let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me*"

The more complex the object, the more complex is the knowing of it. One does not know a living thing till one knows, not merely its past history, but how it is likely to react and behave under specific circumstances.

<u>Knowing God involves:</u>

1) listening to God's word and receiving it as the Holy Spirit interprets it, in application to oneself
2) noting God's nature and character, as His word and works reveal it
3) accepting His invitations, and doing what He commands

4) recognizing and rejoicing in the love that He has shown in thus approaching one and drawing one into this divine fellowship

Analogies the Bible uses to picture Knowing God:

1) a son knowing his father
2) a wife knowing her husband
3) a subject knowing his king
4) a sheep knowing its shepherd

All four analogies point to a relation in which the knower 'looks up' to the one known, and the latter takes responsibility for the welfare of the former. We know God in this way only by knowing Jesus Christ (**John 14:6, 9**).

Curtis Vaughan: Many necessary and worthwhile endeavors compete for the Christian's time and energy, but without doubt prayer is the most important thing that ever engages his attention. It nurtures the soul, refines the character, promotes spiritual growth, and gives fortitude for victorious Christian living. The day of judgment will likely show that those who have done the most to advance God's cause in the world have been persons who made prayer a large factor in their lives. It is unquestionably the mightiest weapon that one can wield in the struggle against evil.

A person's prayers are the mirror of his inner life. They reflect the depth of his emotions, the tenderness of his affection, the breadth of his sympathies, and the sincerity of his devotion. Moreover, a person's prayers are an index to his sense of values. They reveal the things he considers to be really important.

Ray Stedman: He is talking about motivation of the will here, for this wise Apostle knew that nobody ever gets motivated by truth alone. Truth can be dull and academic, so he prays that their hearts might be stirred by the truth.

It is prayer that will do that. I have been greatly moved by this passage because it has made me aware that we must add, deliberately and intelligently, the dimension of prayer to our teaching. Teaching truth is never enough. We can teach another person--a student in the Sunday School or our own children at home--so that they can parrot the truth back to us, and we are often satisfied by that. But the Apostle was not satisfied. He knew that you don't know truth in that way. You never know it until it has gripped you, and you have been changed by it.

David Thompson: There is actually <u>one main prayer request</u> that Paul prays: **His request is that God the Father would permit these believers to have deep knowledge and insight of Him.**

Notice carefully from **verse 17** that the prayer is for "*deep knowledge* (επιγνφζει) *of Him*." This knowledge level is way beyond the surface. This is a very specific kind of deep knowledge of God and the doctrines connected to God. Paul's prayer is not that they have deep knowledge of philosophy, psychology, sociology, psychiatry, history,

science or government. Paul prays that they will have deep knowledge of God and His Word. At the moment of salvation every believer receives the Holy Spirit, but not every believer grows to a deep knowledge and insight of God and His Word.

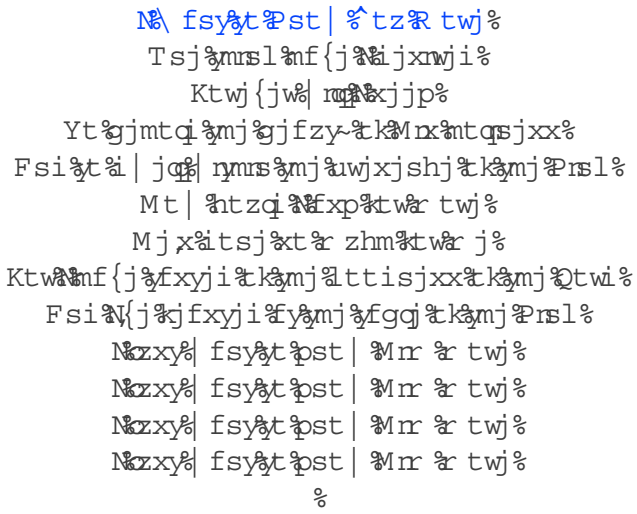
Also notice from **verse 17** that it is God the Father who must authorize the answer to this prayer. The glorious Father must give the believers a depth level of understanding or they will not have it. We don't need new prophets or new revelation; what we need is for God to give us deep knowledge of what He has already revealed. The word "*wisdom*" (ζοθια) means we need to perceive accurately the truth that God has "revealed" or "unveiled" (αποκαλσυεφς) in His Word in "*deep knowledge*" (επιγνφζκφ) of Him.

In fact, **verse 18** says we must have the "*eyes of our hearts enlightened*." So this is not simply an academic pursuit of the mind. God must open our hearts and minds to want a deep understanding of His Word. This becomes a matter of the heart. Hearts and minds are blinded by Satan (**II Cor. 4:3-4**), but God has the power to change one's mind and heart so he senses the great need to grow deep in the Word of God.

Eerdman: Paul asks that these Christians may be granted that moral temper, that spiritual disposition, by which they would be able to receive divine truth and appropriate it for their lives.

W. A. Criswell: Seeing with the eyes of the soul--this is the intuitive insight (which is the highest of God's exalted and heavenly gifts) that God has confirmed upon the man He made. To see with the eyes of the soul, that is what the painter does. He paints what his soul feels and sees. The great English painter, Turner, was famed throughout the world for his gorgeous sunsets. A woman came up to him one time and said, "Mr. Turner, I never saw a sunset like that." And the artist replied, "Ah, but do not you wish you could?"

Don Moen:



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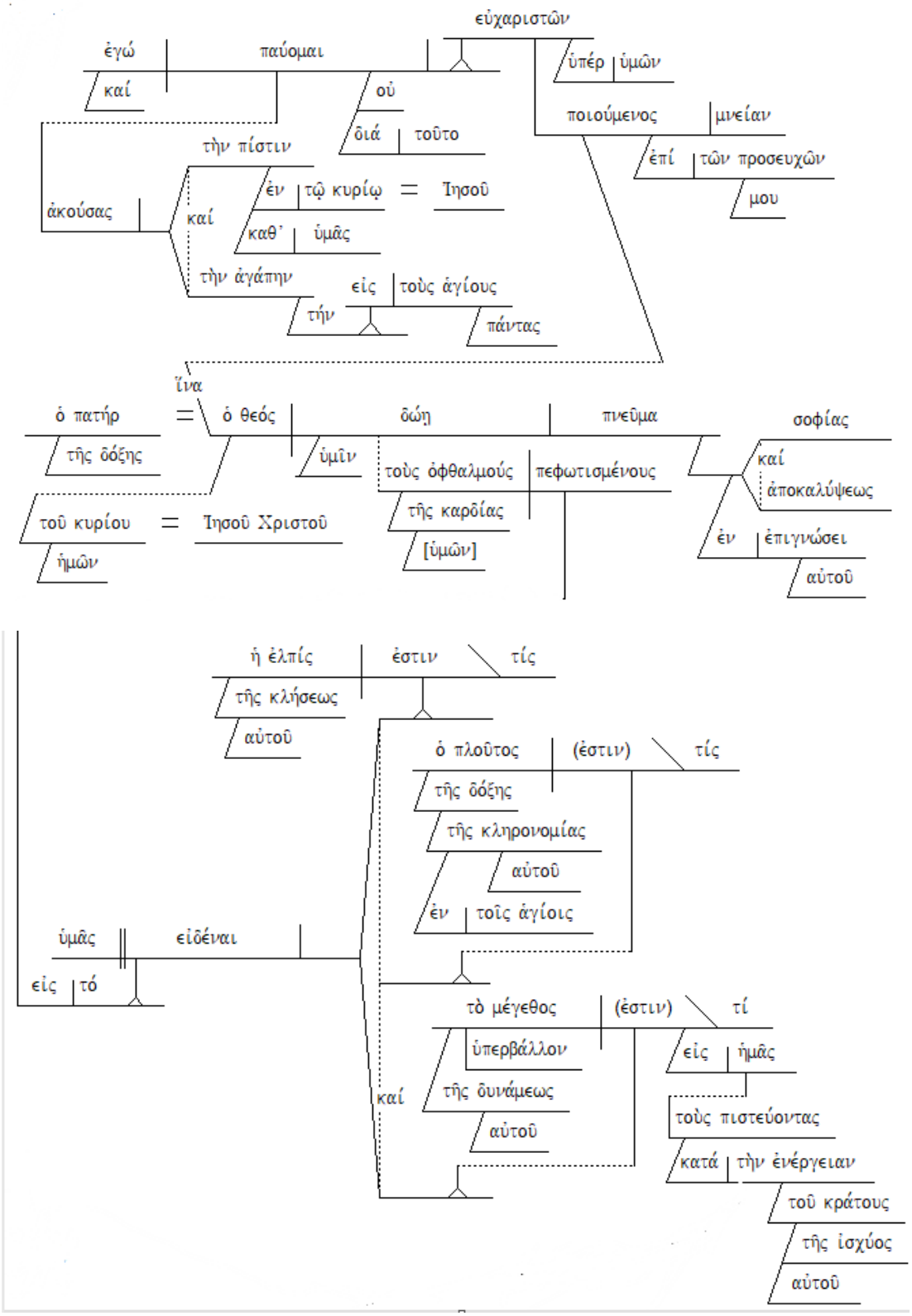
Leedy Greek Diagram:



TEXT: EPHESIANS 1:19b-22a

TITLE: GOD'S POWER WORKING FOR US

BIG IDEA:
THE GUARANTEE FOR SUCCESS IS GOD'S POWER WORKING FOR US -- THE SAME POWER THAT RESURRECTED AND EXALTED CHRIST TO HIS POSITION AS HEAD OVER ALL (BOTH IN THE UNIVERSE AND IN THE CHURCH WHICH IS HIS BODY)

INTRODUCTION:

Why do we need the Enabling Power of God?
1) We are in a war! We are attacking Satan and his world system and sin with the standards and purposes of a holy, sovereign God. We are under attack as well (**Ephes. 6:10-13**). Do we feel the pressure of the battle? Are we actively fighting? The purpose of the church is to equip soldiers to fight.

We need to tap into God's resources and power in order to live victoriously -- otherwise we will be discouraged and become casualties -- rendered ineffective and useless for fighting. Soldiers are not concerned with their comfort or quality of life during the conflict, but are oriented towards the future in expectation of the higher quality of life that will be enjoyed at that time. Our expectations should be focused on the future as well.

2) Our commander-in-chief is invisible! The Apostle Paul had been taken prisoner by the enemy. He is concerned that the believers don't lose heart at his tribulations (**3:13**). He is still actively fighting effectively behind the lines as an ambassador in chains relying on the same power of God (**6:20**). Paul points the saints to the exalted Lord Jesus Christ as their commander-in-chief. We do not want to have an unhealthy dependence on human spiritual leaders.

The enemy will try all sorts of propaganda techniques to try to discourage us. God's answer = We have the same POWER available to us as was evidenced in Jesus Christ (just as we saw that our spiritual blessings and privileges are identical to those of our Lord Jesus Christ).

Klyne Snodgrass: A concern for **spiritual power** is evident throughout the letter, climaxing in a discussion of spiritual warfare in **6:10–20**. A recent study of Ephesians argues that the letter was written to address attitudes and beliefs about spiritual powers in first-century Asia Minor and that Ephesians was the result of a pastoral concern to instruct readers about the relation of Christ and believers to spiritual powers. The emphasis on magic and spiritual powers in and around Ephesus gives some plausibility to this view (cf. **Acts 19:11–41**, with its focus on miracles, exorcism, the burning of magical books, and the riot over offense to Artemis, the primary deity in Ephesus, with

whom astrological beliefs were associated). On the other hand, this letter cannot be subsumed entirely under this one theme.

Ray Stedman: The apostle knows that these Ephesian Christians, like Christians everywhere, are oftentimes **immobilized by the grip of fear**. He knows their insecurity. He knows that they are afraid of their neighbors, afraid of failure, afraid of persecution and ridicule. There is a deep sense of inadequacy and of impotence in their lives. They don't think they can do anything. They know how entrenched the forces of evil around them are and it seems hopeless to try to challenge any of the social situations of the day. They know what tremendous, relentless pressures the world can bring to bear upon those who seek to relieve some of these situations, and they are afraid.

The answer to fear is power. The minute you feel a sense of adequate power, you lose fear, because power overcomes fear. Love overcomes fear. These forces are mighty, powerful forces. And so Paul prays that Christians will get their eyes open, in a practical way, to the power available to them -- "*that you may know ... what is the immeasurable greatness of his power in us* [not up in heaven somewhere -- in us] *who believe*."

Grant Osborne: The extent of this divine strength is beyond our ability to comprehend, so Paul piles up multiple terms to help us understand what God is doing for us. It is as though the greatest offensive line in the history of football is clearing the path for us as we run the race of life. Note that this power is exercised "for us who believe." Paul wants us to realize our part. God makes his power available and exerts it for us. We, however, must have the faith to put his power into operation in our lives—that is, to trust in him rather than in our own selves to live the Christian life.

GOD'S POWER IS MORE THAN SUFFICIENT:
- BY DEFINITION
- BY ILLUSTRATION

I. (:19) GOD'S POWER IS MORE THAN SUFFICIENT -- BY DEFINITION

A. The Nature of This Power

"*These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might*"

Paul presses all the words for power in his vocabulary into service in order to convey something of its all-surpassing character.

4 different Greek words (but the emphasis is not on the different nuances of meaning in each; rather the cumulative effect of these words):

1. "*dunamis*" -- strength, might, power -- general word to introduce the whole subject
   (cf. "dynamite")

2. "*energeia*" -- power in action; working power
(cf. "energy")

3. *"kratos*" -- the strength exercised in the activity; over-powering master; dominion

4. *"ischus"* -- inherent ability -- whether exercised or not; strength possessed

Alan Carr: Paul uses four different words to describe the awesome power of God.

- ***Power*** – This is the word "***dunamis***". This is the word which gives us our English words "***dynamite and dynamo***". It refers to "***inherent power residing in a thing by virtue of its very nature***". Paul tells us that this power is "***exceeding great***". This means that it is more power than we will ever need, or could ever want. This power is given to "***us-ward who believe***". This is power that only the child of God has. The lost person cannot know this power, but it is given to us in great abundance when we come to Jesus.

- ***Working*** – This is the word "***energia***". It refers to "***energy***". It speaks of the energizing power of the Holy Spirit within us that enables us to live for Jesus day by day. As the Lord works within us, He gives us the energy to live for the Lord.

- ***Mighty*** – This is the word "***ischus***". It speaks of "***ability, force and strength***". The power of God within our lives gives us supernatural spiritual ability, force and strength. God enables us to do things that would be impossible for the natural man.

- ***Power*** – This is the word "***kratos***". It speaks of "***dominion, or great power and strength***". The Spirit of God gives us the ability to have dominion over our lives. We have the power to live for God.

Harold Hoehner: How do these words for power relate to each other? All four terms are closely related and overlap with one another. First, ἰσχύς speaks of the inherent strength or of power possessed. Second, κράτος is close to ἰσχύς but denotes even more emphatically the presence and significance of the strength or force of power, or the ability to overcome resistance, or more at the visible aspect of strength, perhaps its supremacy. Third, ἐνέργεια stresses the activity of power, namely, it is power in action. Fourth, δύναμις, found earlier in this verse, denotes capacity in view of its ability or potential power. By way of illustration, a bulldozer has the ability, capacity, and potential of routing out trees (δύναμις). By looking at it, one senses its inherent strength (ἰσχύς) but when its engine roars and it begins to move, its power of mastery becomes obvious (κράτος). However, when it comes to a tree and knocks it over one sees the activity of its power (ἐνέργεια). Similarly, Calvin illustrates the use of these words by stating that ἰσχύς is like the root, κράτος the tree, and ἐνέργεια the fruit. It seems that δύναμις is the more **general term** and that the **other terms support it**, as is the case in

this passage. Again these words overlap and the point of using all of these words is not so much to emphasize their distinctiveness but to enforce the idea of **God's abundant power available to all believers.**

Stephen Fowl: Although **1:19** is hard to translate into elegant English, it is not hard to understand. Paul piles a combination of words together to speak of God's power. It is probably a mistake to try to read various nuances into these terms. They all work together to convey the sense of God's unparalleled and unsurpassed power. The important thing for the Ephesians to understand, the eyes of their heart having been enlightened, is that this power has been deployed on their behalf and on behalf of all who believe. Paul prepares for the emphasis on Christ's relationship to the created powers and principalities in **v. 21** by asserting that God's power is unsurpassed and cannot be challenged by created forces. Thus, although the powers and principalities are not yet fully subjected to Christ (**1 Cor 15:24–28**), they cannot ultimately resist his power.

Clinton Arnold: Paul commends to the readers a direct access to the power of God and never advocates calling on angelic intermediaries. Neither does Paul condone the use of incantations, formulas, magical symbols, or the performance of certain rituals to gain access to divine power; he simply prays for their increased awareness of God's power already available to these believers. Finally, whereas in magic, people often sought spiritual power as a means of influencing and gaining ascendancy over people, Paul will argue that the power of God is manifested in the lives of believers to help them resist evil forces, live virtuous lives, and manifest love to people.

B. The Measure of This Power

"*the exceeding greatness*"

You cannot measure it or exhaust it; it goes beyond all that we could ask or think (**3:20**).

Why would anyone fight on the other side? Let's make sure we are not fighting against the power of God. If we have such unlimited power available, let's do some significant fighting. The victory in the war is assured; the only question is which soldiers will get the medals.

II. (:20-23) GOD'S POWER IS MORE THAN SUFFICIENT -- BY ILLUSTRATION

FOUR GREAT ACTS OF GOD described (2 groupings of 2) –
what He already did for Christ:

"*which He brought about in Christ*"

First Grouping:

- raised Him

- seated Him

Second Grouping:

- put all things under His feet
- gave Him to the church to be head over all

Clinton Arnold: The controlling verb governs the four clauses that complete this section. They describe the operation of God's power in the series of extraordinary events following shortly after Jesus' death on the cross. Paul expresses the first two with **aorist participles** that should be interpreted temporally ("*when* …"). After a long interval enumerating the supernatural enemies over which Christ has been exalted, he shifts to **aorist indicative verbs**:

1. He raised him (ἐγείρας)
2. He seated him (καθίσας)
3. He subjected everything to him (ὑπέταξεν)
4. He gave him (ἔδωκεν)

A. (:20a) The Resurrection of Christ from the Dead

"*when He raised Him from the dead*"

Ray Stedman: It is **resurrection power**. That means that it is different; it is not like any other power. It isn't the power of a strong personality, nor of an educated mind. It isn't the power of a good family background, nor of money, nor numbers, nor leadership ability. It is the power that raised Christ from the dead, that is able to bring life out of death. What does that mean in practical terms? Well, it means, as I have often said, that it works best in a cemetery. If you are living in a cemetery, if everything is dead and dull and lifeless around you, try resurrection power. That is what it is for. It means that this power takes no notice at all of obstacles, just as Jesus rose from the dead, paying no attention to the stone, to the decrees of Caesar, to the fulminations of the Jewish priests, nor to the guard in front of the tomb. Resurrection power doesn't pay any attention to obstacles. It just surges on ahead, leaves the problems up to God, and goes on. It means that resurrection power requires no outside support. It doesn't rely upon someone else, nor upon something else. It doesn't need a vote of confidence. It doesn't require any kind of undergirding expressions of support from anybody. It can operate alone, completely alone, if necessary. And it means that it makes no noise or display. It doesn't try to arrest attention by some publicity stunt. It just works quietly and, without any noise, effects its transformation, brings life out of death. And further, you will notice that the apostle declares that it is supreme in the universe.

Represents the best proof of God's might; only God could do this. When the NT writers wish to show the fullness of God's love, they point to the death of Christ (**Rom. 5:8**); but **the chief demonstration of His power is the resurrection**.
Romans 1:4; 2 Cor. 13:4; Heb. 11:19

3 Reasons God wants us to look at a risen Christ:

1. God's Supreme Seal Upon His Son

a. As to His Person -- Christ linked His claim to Deity to His resurrection -- **Matt. 16:14ff**; God validated Christ's claims by the resurrection -- **Matt. 12:38-40; John 10:18; Matt. 27:40, 63-64** -- all His enemies had to do was to produce Christ's body to prove it was a hoax

b. As to His Work -- validation of His death; accepted as sufficient sacrifice -- **Romans 4:25; 8:34; 1 Cor. 15:13ff**

2. God's Guarantee for the Believer's Future -- Answers man's questions about:

a. Death -- it's been transformed -- **Rev. 1:17-18; 1 Cor. 15:54-57**; sting of death is gone because the penalty and guilt is gone; **1 Pet. 1:3-4**; the law calls for the execution of God's judgment on sin

b. This Body -- His resurrection is the guarantee of mine -- **1 Cor. 15:20; Phil. 3:21**

c. Believers in Glory -- assurance of inheritance and place with Him -- **1 Pet. 1:3-4**

3. Provides Power in the Believer's Life Right Now --
Rom. 6:4-5 -- we partake of His very nature

Response of people makes all the difference: some mock; some say it's impossible; some believe

Transition: Christ is not only alive, but reigning; the resurrection and the exaltation are always linked in Scripture

B. (:20b-21) The Exaltation of Christ to the Right Hand of God

1. (:20b) Significance of His Exaltation -- restored to His manifest glory; **Sitting** was a mark of honor or authority in the ancient world in the following contexts:

"*and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places*"

a. King -- sitting to receive his subjects
In Revelation, God is pictured as ruling on His throne;
Mark 14:62;
Heb. 1:3-4; we will reign with Christ

b. Court -- sitting to render judgment

c. Teacher -- sitting to teach -- **Matt. 5:1**;
Christ taught with evident authority

d. High Priest -- always stood -- but Jesus was the exception – **Heb. 10:11-14**

GotQuestions.org: **The Ascension of Jesus Christ is meaningful for several reasons:**

1) It signaled the end of His earthly ministry. God the Father had lovingly sent His Son into the world at Bethlehem, and now the Son was returning to the Father. The period of human limitation was at an end.

2) It signified success in His earthly work. All that He had come to do, He had accomplished.

3) It marked the return of His heavenly glory. Jesus' glory had been veiled during His sojourn on earth, with one brief exception at the Transfiguration (**Matthew 17:1-9**).

4) It symbolized His exaltation by the Father (**Ephesians 1:20-23**). The One with whom the Father is well pleased (**Matthew 17:5**) was received up in honor and given a name above all names (**Philippians 2:9**).

5) It allowed Him to prepare a place for us (**John 14:2**).

6) It indicated the beginning of His new work as High Priest (**Hebrews 4:14-16**) and Mediator of the New Covenant (**Hebrews 9:15**).

7) It set the pattern for His return. When Jesus comes to set up the Kingdom, He will return just as He left-literally, bodily, and visibly in the clouds (**Acts 1:11; Daniel 7:13-14; Matthew 24:30; Revelation 1:7**).

Currently, the Lord Jesus is in heaven. The Scriptures frequently picture Him at the right hand of the Father-a position of honor and authority (**Psalm 110:1; Ephesians 1:20; Hebrews 8:1**). Christ is the Head of the Church (**Colossians 1:18**), the giver of spiritual gifts (**Ephesians 4:7-8**), and the One who fills all in all (**Ephesians 4:9-10**).

2. (:21) The Measure of His Exaltation

"*far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come."*

Possibilities:

a. ranks of good angels
b. includes different orders of demons as well (**6:12** supports this)
c. all grades of authority -- both human and super-human

Maybe not precise terms to specify graduated ranks, but rhetorical terms brought together in order to express the unique supremacy and absolute sovereignty proper to Christ, and meaning simply that whatever powers or dignitaries existed and by

whatever names they might be designated either now or at any time in the future, Christ's dominion is above them all.

The world loves power and seeks after titles and honor and authority. Christ has it all. That same power of God is working for us and is more than sufficient to meet our need for significance and security.

Clinton Arnold: These beings represent the spiritual entities against which all believers will struggle until Christ returns (**6:12**). They are the same forces who work powerfully to hold unbelieving humanity in bondage to sin, working in conjunction with "*the world*" and "*the flesh*" (**2:1–3**). But their rebellion and hostile activity against the church and the redemptive work of God will be brought to an end at the final consummation, when God subdues them under the ruling headship of Christ (**1:10**).

Stephen Fowl: The mention of two ages here, this one and the age to come, points to the fact that although Christ's rule over all things is already determined and established, it has yet to be consummated.

C. (:22a) The Dominion of Christ over the Universe
"*and He put all things in subjection under His feet*"

Ps. 8:4-6; 1 Cor. 15:27; Heb. 2:8-9

Remember the charge given to the first Adam -- exercise dominion over the world; the purpose of God has always been dominion

cf. the song: "Master of the Universe"

D. (:22b-23) The Headship of Christ over the Church (next message)
"*and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all*."

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) How will unbelievers experience the "*surpassing greatness of His power*"? In what areas is our faith challenged to doubt the ability of God's power to work on our behalf?

2) Why is it to our advantage to have the resurrected Christ seated at God's "*right hand in the heavenly places*" as opposed to still continuing His pre-cross ministry here on earth?

3) What prevents the power of God from being unleashed in our life?

4) What type of dominion does God want us to exercise now and then to exercise ultimately?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Dunnam: Why is it that we continue in our anemic life, feebly getting on as best we can? Why is it that we plod along -- our Christian walk more a stumble than a stride? Why is it that we give way to trampling defeats and become uninspiring spectacles of spiritual ineffectiveness? Why do we allow the mean carnalities to shape our lives when a glorious heritage of life after *'the measure of the fullness of Christ'* has been promised?

Why? We do not lay hold of the "*exceeeding greatness of His power toward us who believe*." The RSV designates this the "immeasurable greatness," and the NEB translates it the "vast resources" of His power. Paul opens the floodgates of his language-river to try to communicate the dimensions of this power.

1. **It is resurrection power** –
   the power God"'*worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead*" (**v. 20**).
2. **It is ascension power** –
   "*and set Him at His right hand in heavenly places*"' (**v. 20**).
3. **It is dominion power** –
   "*far above all principality and power and might and dominion … and … has put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the church*" (**vv. 21-22**).

That same power of God, which did all of that for Christ, is available to us who believe. Glory!

The call here is to bring the working power of God out of the past into the present. To be sure, we are to celebrate "the mighty acts of God in history," but that should make us even more aware of Christ as present power. This is the paramount miracle -- that His immeasurable power is available now to heal the sick, to drive out demons, to redeem our sins, to energize our wills, to renew our spirits, to reconcile our relationships, to bring peace.

Hendriksen: The tremendously important place which Christ's resurrection occupied in the thinking of the apostolic age is apparent not only from the present passage but also from the following: **Matt. 28; Mark 16; Luke 24; John 20, 21; Acts 1:22; 2:32; 3:26; 10:40; 13:34; 17:31; 23:6; 26:8, 23; Rom. 4:25; 8:34; 1 Cor. 15; 1 Peter 1:3**; etc. Similarly, the significance attached to Christ's coronation, so that as a reward for his mediatorial work he rules the entire universe in the interest of his church, is clear in the

present epistle from **1:20-23; 4:8ff,** and elsewhere from **Acts 2:33, 36; 5:31; 7:56; Rom. 8:34; Phil. 2:9; Col. 3:1; Heb. 2:8, 9**; etc. See also **Ps. 110:1**… The living and ruling Christ was a living reality to the consciousness of the early church."

Stott: If God's "*call*" looks back to the beginning, and God's "*inheritance"* looks on to the end, then surely God's "*power*" spans the interim period in between. It is on this that the apostle concentrates, for only God's power can fulfil the expectation which belongs to his call and bring us safely to the riches of the glory of the final inheritance he will give us in heaven. Paul is convinced that God's power is sufficient, and he accumulates words to convince us…

It is because of Christ's resurrection from the dead and enthronement over the powers of evil that he has been given headship over the church. The resurrection and ascension were a decisive demonstration of divine power. For if there are two powers which man cannot control, but which hold him in bondage, they are **death** and **evil**. Man is mortal; he cannot avoid death. Man is fallen; he cannot overcome evil. But God in Christ has conquered both, and therefore can rescue us from both.

John Piper: **The Immeasurable Greatness of His Power Toward Us**
Resurrection Power Now
So my message for believers in Jesus is this: The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and what became of him after his resurrection, shows the greatness of God's power toward us now in this life. Perhaps you can remember three words to capture this message: *resurrection power now*. I'm taking this message from this phrase in **Ephesians 1:19**: "*the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe*."

I know that the vast majority of you do not feel that power. It sounds idealistic. It sounds like religious hype. It sounds vague and theoretical. It does not correspond to experience, and so you instinctively feel like this sermon is going to be like a piece of fiction. I don't blame you for feeling that way. I have often felt that way myself. But by God's grace the word of God may change your mind and your heart. I can't. God can. God may.

The Main Reason We Don't Feel It
And there are reasons that we—we Christian believers—do not feel the gracious, omnipotent power of God that is now at work toward us—that we do not feel *resurrection power now*. The most basic reason that Paul mentions here in **Ephesians 1:18** is that the eyes of our hearts are **dull to spiritual reality**. Under this main reason for why we do not feel the magnitude of God's power toward us are three subordinate reasons.

3 Subordinate Reasons
One is that, because of this spiritual dullness, we are not fully aware of the blinding, deadening power of sin that is now being conquered in our lives by God's superior power. If you are feeling healthy, you will be thrilled with the power of your medicine, only if you know the deadly power of the disease it is holding back. If you are forgiven

and have any measure of victory over sin in your life, you will be amazed at the power of God, only if you know the **indescribable depth and power of sin**.

Another reason we don't feel the power of God toward us now is that we are not fully aware of the **magnitude of demonic power** that is coming against us at all times—yes, even in this modern, scientific age. If you feel safe, you will be thrilled with your protector, only if you know the deadly power of the enemy he is holding back. If you have any measure of freedom from demonic control, you will be amazed at God's power toward you now, only if you know the indescribable power of Satan.

And the third reason we don't feel God's power toward us is that we do not consider fully **what has happened to Jesus and his present role in the universe**. If Jesus gave his life for you, and you belong to him—body, soul, and spirit—you will be amazed at God's power toward you now, only if you see what has become of him since the resurrection.

Steven Cole: **God's Mighty Power**
So the question is, how can we reconcile what Paul says here about God's mighty power toward us who believe with what we see all around us? What do these words mean and how do they apply to us? **How can we legitimately experience the reality of God's power in our personal lives?**

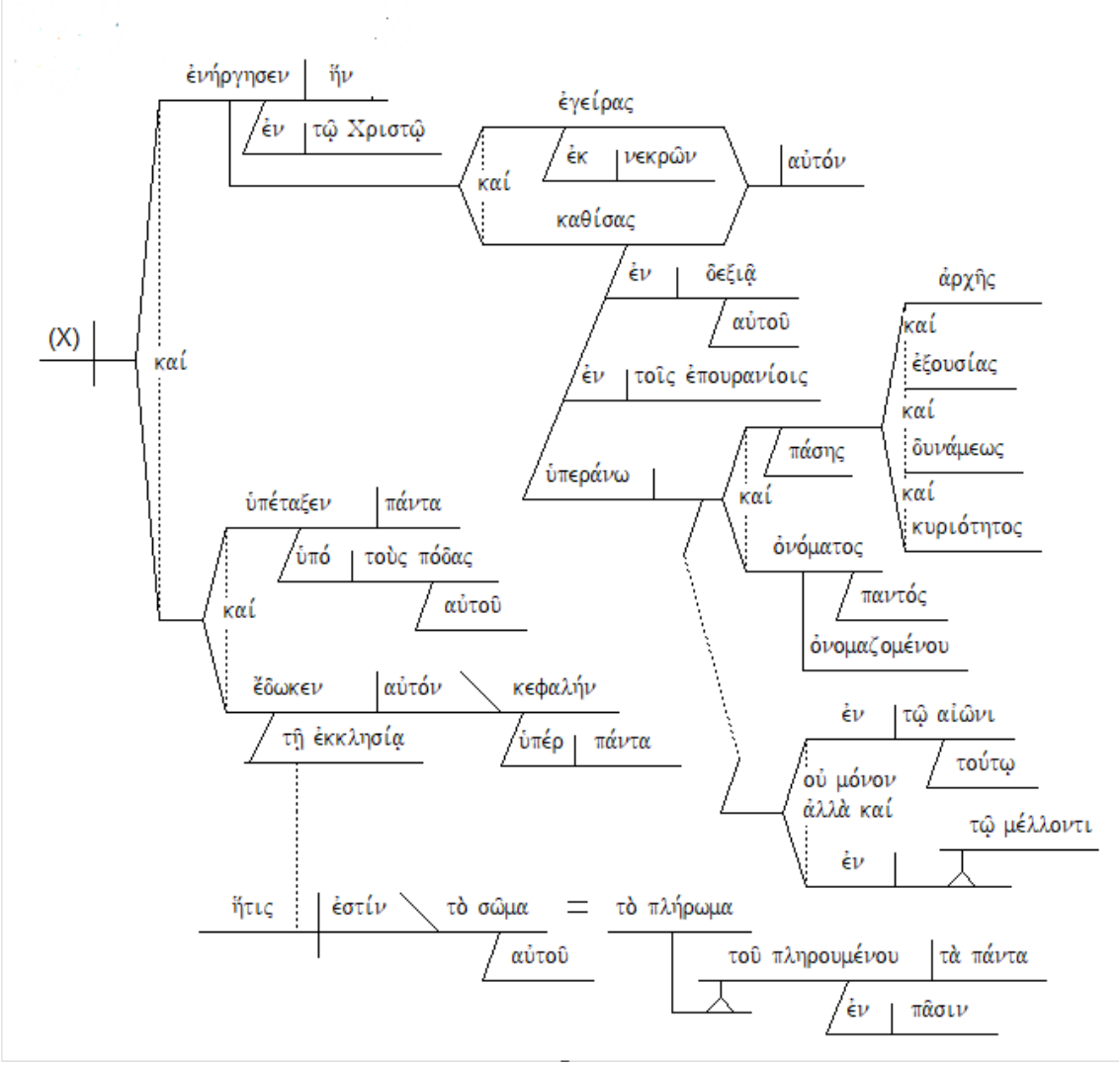
God wants us to understand the magnitude of His mighty power that saved us and exalted Christ over all, so that we will properly represent Him on earth.

1. God's mighty power that saved us is the same power that raised Christ from the dead (**1:19-20a**).

2. God's mighty power seated Christ at His right hand, far above all spiritual powers (**1:20b-21**).

Paul piles up four different words, "*rule, authority, power, and dominion*," to encompass **all spiritual powers**. These words may indicate different gradations of rank or power among the angels and demons (**Matt. 12:45**). But Paul isn't putting our focus on the finer points of angelic or demonic organization. Rather, he means that whatever levels of spiritual power exist, Jesus is over them all. And if we ask why he didn't just call them "angels," Calvin answers (pp. 216-217), "it was to convey exalted views of the glory of Christ…. As if he had said, 'There is nothing so elevated or excellent, by whatever name it may be named, that is not subject to the majesty of Christ.'"

Leedy Greek Diagram:



TEXT: EPHESIANS 1:22b-23

TITLE: THE GIFT OF CHRIST TO THE CHURCH AS HEAD OVER HIS BODY

BIG IDEA:
THE LIVING AND REIGNING CHRIST RULES OVER ALL AS HEAD OF HIS CHURCH

INTRODUCTION:

We have been praying along with Paul that the Holy Spirit would give us spiritual insight in the full knowledge of God so that we would especially know His tremendous power that is at work in us.

We have benefitted from God's power working in Christ because the living and reigning Christ stands in a special relationship to the collective group of saints. As a local group of believers we need to understand and accurately reflect the different facets of that relationship.

Relationships must be defined properly so that people have the proper expectations and act accordingly.

Benjamin Merkle: The final example of God's power displayed in Christ involves his headship over the church. God made Christ head "*over all things*," which denotes his supremacy over all of creation, particularly the hostile spiritual powers previously referenced (**v. 21**; cf. **Col. 2:10**). In addition, Christ's headship extends to the church. "Head" refers to one who is of supreme rank or preeminent status and possesses ruling authority. Thus, God's power in Christ not only has resulted in the sure defeat of his enemies but also is for the good of believers as the promised Messiah graciously rules his church. Although Paul typically uses *ekklēsia* to refer to the local gathering of believers, here it refers to the universal church (cf. **Eph. 3:10, 21; 5:23–25, 27, 29, 32; Col. 1:18, 24**). Paul concludes by again noting that God's gift of Christ as head over all creation is for the benefit of the church. So, his prayer is that his readers would comprehend and apprehend the amazing power of God that he works for their advantage.

Paul switches from the metaphor of Christ's being head over all things, including the church, to the church's being the body of Christ. This metaphor is used here to describe the relationship not of believers to each other but of Christ to his people. He is the sovereign Lord who fills all things in every respect.

Clinton Arnold: *And gave him* [to be] *head over everything for the church* (καὶ αὐτὸν ἔδωκεν κεφαλὴν ὑπὲρ πάντα τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ). The fourth and final way that God has manifested his unsurpassed power in Christ is **by making him the ruling authority over heaven and earth for the benefit of the church.** This benefit to the church is

what led Paul to set forth these four descriptions of the awesome power of God; they are illustrations of God's incredible power "*for us who believe*." Paul is praying that these believers will be able to apprehend the vastness of this power that is for their benefit. . .

God has given Christ a great victory over the powers of darkness and now possesses full authority over them for the benefit of the church. The head of the church is a victorious and powerful Lord. On this basis, Christ can impart to the church all of the empowering resources it needs to resist the attacks of powers and to engage in the mission of filling the world that God has called it to.

Grant Osborne: They need not allow their present difficulties to mar the great hope of their certain future, for they are God's treasured possession, and God is pouring out his mighty power into their lives (**vv. 17–19**). To enable them to understand more deeply this mighty strength made available to them, Paul reminds them that this power has already entered this world in Christ's resurrection and exaltation to the right hand of God. He is absolutely supreme over the demonic forces, and indeed over every part of his created order. He is the head or ruler over creation and exercises his sovereignty for the sake of his body, the church (**vv. 20–23**). The church already has the victory because it is united with Christus Victor, the victorious Christ.

This is just as important to us as it was for the Ephesians. In the midst of all our struggles and all the difficulties that face us, it is incredibly comforting to know that Christ has already won the victory for us, and we like him will in the end stand in glory and see this world of evil end forever. We cannot lose, but we must wait for God's chosen time and have patience in our present trials.

I. (:22b) THE LIVING AND REIGNING CHRIST IS GOD'S GIFT TO THE CHURCH

A. Significance of God's Gift -- God gives good gifts to His children
"*and gave Him*"

1. We Have the Best Possible Leader

a. Raised from the dead -- He is living with no possibility of death; He does not need to be protected or hid in the rear of the battle;

He knows the enemy completely;
Satan and his methods
Sin and its power;
He knows us completely.

A dead leader can inspire, but success will be dependent on our abilities and efforts. A leader that is alive can still fight; our success comes from His abilities and efforts.

It is God's will for local churches to be gloriously alive. The local church is designed by God to be a dynamic, Spirit-led evangelizing and growing community of believers who share a common life in Christ; not some type of dead institution.

b. Seated at God's right hand –
gives us access to God's power and resources.

What do you need? Christ meets the need (Heb. 4:14-16).
We should have confidence.

c. In control of the universe

2. We Have This Leader as a Gift from God

We need to show our appreciation; be satisfied; not try to replace Christ's leadership (which is real but invisible) with leadership that is visible but has tremendous invisible defects.

Stephen Fowl: God's gift of Christ to the church is the greatest possible gift. Christ is filled in every way by God, and that fullness is manifested in his body, the church. If believers in Ephesus or elsewhere were tempted to supplement their faith in Christ through taking on the law (as in Galatians), through ascetic practices designed to lead to visions (as in Colossians), through manifestations of certain spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians), in submission to or veneration of the powers, or through any other means—they are reminded here in **1:23** that the fullness found by becoming a member of Christ's body is complete, absolute, and lacking in nothing. Indeed, to gloss Cyprian, there is no real fullness outside the church. At the same time, **Eph 4:13** indicates that this fullness is yet to be consummated.

Learn a lesson here from the nation Israel. As the only theocracy in the world, they had the best possible king = God himself. That was one way they were different from all the other nations. But instead of appreciating and submitting to His leadership they committed two tragic mistakes:

a. Ignored God's leadership

In the Book of Judges it is often recorded that "*every man did that which was right in his own eyes*" -- to their own harm and the detriment of their corporate testimony in the surrounding nations

b. Substituted visible human leadership

1 Sam. 8 -- Finally they asked God for a king so that they could be like the other nations. Samuel warned them of the inevitable drawbacks, but they persisted in their request.

We do not want to fall into either of these traps. We want to cultivate our appreciation for Jesus Christ as our leader who is sufficient for all our needs.

(Aside: Importance of the Plurality of Elders as opposed to the Single Pastor concept in promoting Christ's invisible leadership.)

B. Significance of Headship

"*as head over all things*"

Sovereign authority coupled with vital unity; denotes superior rank; source of authority and direction

This is an important concept to understand because some have tried to water down the meaning to simple "origin" in order to eliminate the authority of the husband over the wife in the parallel relationship (**Ephes. 5**). The context here shows that authority must be involved.

1. Sustenance -- the head supplies the body with what is needed

2. Authority -- controlling influence over the body; the head tells the other parts what to do

3. Unity -- participation; dependence

The relation between Christ and the Church is not an external relation, or one simply of Superior and Inferior, Sovereign and Subject, but one of life and incorporation; not merely a leader but part of a living organism.

(Plurality of Elders best reflects the Headship of Christ)

C. Significance of the Church

"*to the church*"

ekklesia -- "*called out ones*"
Used for the summons to the army to assemble in ancient times; commonly a political entity or assembly; "assembly, congregation, gathering of people".

Emphasis is always on the **people** -- not the place of meeting. We don't **go** to church; we **are** the church.

1. Universal Church -- all believers in the Lord Jesus Christ from Pentacost until the Rapture.

2. Local Church or Assembly -- It is at the local, organized level that the great realities of God's purposes in Jesus Christ receive visible expression in the world

The primitive Christian ecclesia understood itself as the herald of the Lordship of Christ which was approaching with the imminent end times and was already being realized in their midst.

The starting point was the proclamation of Christ which led to God fulfilling His election through His personal call -- the result was the saints gathering together as the ekklesia. We must start with aggressive outreach and proclamation as well.

This new citizenship does not mean loss of identity as citizens of this world. Instead it creates a new relationship alongside the old; opening up a new dimension in the midst of this world.

The fact that small groups in individual homes are called *ekklesia* (**Philemon 2; 1 Cor. 16:19; Rom. 16:5; Col. 4:15**) indicates that neither the significance of the place nor the numerical size of the assembly determines the use of the term; what counts is the presence of Christ among them and faith nourished by Him.

Harold Hoehner: how is the dative construction τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ to be taken? There are three interpretations:

- first, it could be taken as a **dative of reference** or respect, that is, God appointed Christ as head over everthing with respect to the church;
- second, it could be taken as **dative of advantage**, in which case God appointed or made Christ the head over everything for the church (RSV, NIV, NRSV);
- or third, it could be taken as a **dative of indirect object**, in which case God gave Christ to the church (AV, RV, ASV, NASB, NEB).

The third option is preferred because it allows ἔδωκεν to be translated normally as "*he gave*," while the first two interpretations would make it necessary to translate the verb "he appointed" or "he made." In fact, as Howard points out, ἔδωκεν is never used in the Pauline corpus as meaning "to appoint, to make" but always "to give" and always with an explicit or implied indirect object. He concludes: "This is precisely the usage we find in Ephesians and Colossians without exception, the dative case always being used to express the indirect object (**Eph. i. 17, 22; iii. 2, 7, 8, 16; iv. 7, 8, 11, 27, 29; vi. 19; Col. i. 25**)." The reason that this dative phrase is placed last in the sentence is to make an easy link to the relative pronoun which introduces a further elaboration of the church in **verse 23**.

In conclusion, this verse speaks of two manifestations of power: first, God has subjected everything in creation under Christ's feet; and second, God gave Christ to the church as head over everything, which thus implies that he is head over the church. Certainly there is progression of thought with regards to the role of Christ.

Andrew Lincoln: Syntactically, the weight of this clause falls on τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ at the end, and the **emphasis on the Church** continues in the two descriptive clauses which follow. The notion of believers as the people of God has been present both in the eulogy and earlier in this thanksgiving but now comes to explicit focus. This direction in the

writer's thought has already been set in **v 19** where he has said that the greatness of God's power, which was effective in Christ's exaltation, is "toward us who believe."

Now this is taken further, as the result of that power, and Christ's supremacy over the cosmos is seen to be for the benefit of believers, here described as "*the Church*."

II. (:23a) THE LIVING AND REIGNING CHRIST IS HEAD OVER HIS BODY (SOMA)

"*which is His body*"

A. Significance of the Motif of the Body

1. Unity of Common Life

2. Diversity

3. Interdependence

B. Importance of the Vitality of the Body

1. Importance of Health

nourishment; exercise (cf. emphasis today on taking care of your physical body)

2. Importance of Growth

Body Life emphasis in the local church -- under the Headship of Jesus Christ

III. (:23b) THE LIVING AND REIGNING CHRIST FILLS ALL IN ALL FOR HIMSELF -- SO THAT WE ARE HIS FULLNESS

"*the fullness of Him who fills all in all*" Or
"*the fullness of him who is being filled entirely*."

"*fullness*" -- 2 possibilities:

- **Active sense** -- "that which makes something full or complete; complement" -- so that the Body would be the complement to Christ, the Head; used in ancient literature of a ship's cargo or crew filling the ship; this active sense is the most common

- **Passive sense** -- "that which is full of something" -- the body is that which is wholly filled by the mighty working of Christ (Jn. 1:16; Col. 2:10); Christ possesses all the fullness of God (Col. 1:19; 2:9) so He can impart this fullness

Either interpretation is possible here. However, the context is emphasizing the Lordship and Headship of Christ. Meaning #2 seems more appropriate.

Frank Thielman: and the participle πληρουμένου (*plēroumenou*) could be

- in the middle voice ("*the one who fills for himself*"),
- in the active voice but with a middle form ("*the one who fills*"),
- or in the passive voice ("*the one who is filled*"). . .

The **passive voice**, therefore, makes the best sense: the church is that which is filled by the One who is himself filled, presumably Christ (e.g., Best 1998: 188; Dawes 1998: 241, 244–45; Hoehner 2002: 298–99). Since the participle is in the present tense, moreover, Paul probably intends his readers to understand this filling as something that takes place continually. . .

If we now put all this together, Paul is saying that **the church, as Christ's body, is filled by Christ who is himself continually and completely filled (by God).** The thought is close to Paul's comment in **Col. 2:9–10**. There Paul tells the Colossians they should not fall under the spell of human fabrications parading as "*philosophy": ". . . because in* [Christ] *all the fullness* [πλήρωμα] *of the Deity dwells bodily* [σωματικῶς, *sōmatikōs*], *and you have been filled* [πεπληρωμένοι, *peplērōmenoi*] *in him, who is the head of all rule and authority* [ὅς ἐστιν ἡ κεφαλὴ πάσης ἀρχῆς καὶ ἐξουσίας, *hos estin hē kephalē pasēs archēs kai exousias*]."

Homer Kent: The church as Christ's body is filled by Him with all the graces and powers which it possesses.

Salmond: The plenitude of the divine powers and qualities which is in Christ is imparted by Him to His church, so that the church is pervaded by His presence, animated by His life, filled with His gifts and energies and graces.

1) Christ is the sole Head of the universe which is supplied by Him with all that is needed for its being and order.

2) He is also the sole Head of the Church, which receives from Him what He himself possesses and is endowed by Him with all that it requires for the realization of its vocation.

This fullness is not concentrated in one or two key leaders, but in the entire church, the body of Christ; everyone is significant and needs to be using their spiritual gifts.

[Alternative View]
Clinton Arnold: The way commentators have responded to these issues has given rise to three main interpretations of the passage. There are various permutations of these three views, but these are the most prominent views of the overall meaning of the text:

(1) *The church is filled (by Christ) and Christ fills the world completely (through the church)* (the participle is active, the noun is passive, and τὰ πάντα is the direct object). The church receives all that it needs from Christ and participates with him accomplishing his purposes throughout the world (or, totally).

(2) *The church is filled by Christ, who, in turn, is filled completely by God* (the participle is passive, the noun is passive, and τὰ πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν is adverbial). Christ is in a dynamic relationship with the Father and constantly receives from him all that he needs.

(3) *The church is the completion (or, complement) of Christ, who is being completely filled (as more and more members are incorporated into his body* (the participle is passive, the noun is active, and τὰ πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν is adverbial). Christ is incomplete without the church; he is in the process of being completed by the church.

My analysis of this clause will be organized around the three disputed elements of the text. **The first view** is the most compelling overall interpretation of the clause.

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Trace the usage of "*fullness*" in this epistle (**1:10; 1:23; 3:19; 4:10; 4:13; 5:18**). In what sense does Christ fill us individually? corporately?

2) Do we view all of our problems and frustrations and challenges as totally "*in subjection under His feet*"? Are we trusting in the dominion of our Lord?

3) Do we run around engaged in a lot of activity like a chicken with its head cut off, without taking the time to seek direction from our Head = the Lord Jesus Christ?

4) If Christ is not ashamed to have us for His body, how can we ever shrink back from giving Him the glory as our Head?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Foulkes: He is *"supreme head"* (NEB) or more literally Head over all things "*to*" or "*for*" the Church. There is given to the Church, and for the Church's benefit, a Head who is also Head over all things. The Church has authority and power to overcome all opposition because her Leader and Head is Lord of all. Jesus Himself had authority because He was under the Father's authority; He was doing His will and therefore had all the authority of God.

Homer Kent: Frequently in Paul's career, he had to combat wrong teaching which diverted men from trusting solely in Christ. Some insisted on veneration of angels (**Col 2:18**), others on religious observances (**Gal 5:1-2**). Ascetic practices (**Col 2:20-23**), human philosophies (**Col 2:8**), and unworthy human leaders (**2 Ti 2:17-18**) all had their devotees. The epistle to the Ephesians sounds the note with unmistakable clarity that Christ is the head of the church, and as its head He supplies it with all the fullness of divine life and power. This inexhaustible power of God, displayed to us in Christ, is what Paul prays here that believers should come to know.

John Stott (quoting Markus Barth): Pointing out that the "body" and the "fullness" images come together in **Ephesians 4:13-16** and **Colossians 1:18-19** as well as here, and that medical writers of approximately Paul's time, like Hippocrates and Galen, thought of the head or brain as controlling and coordinating the functions of the body, Dr. Barth summarizes Paul's understanding that "the head fills the body with powers of movement and perception, and thereby inspires the whole body with life and direction."

William Hendriksen (quoting Roels): Paul most probably refers to the fact that the Christ, exalted over all, is now involved in the historical realization of the already accomplished reconciliation of the universe by directing all things to their determined, divinely appointed, end.

John Piper: [Re **v.23**] -- It means: God AIMS to fill the universe with the glory of his Son, Jesus, by making the church the showcase of his perfections. Or, to put it another way, and include the idea of body: God means to fill the universe with the glory of his Son by putting the church on display as the embodiment of his Son.

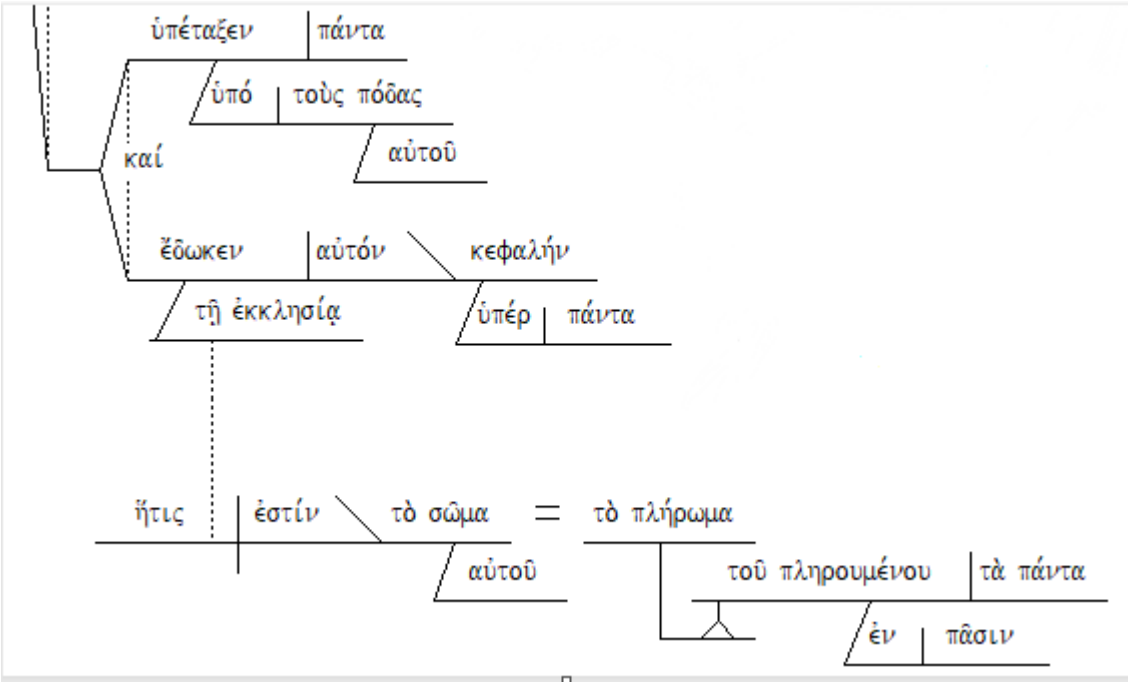
Christ fills the universe with his glory by showing the universe his body--how he chose her, how he destined her, how he came for her and taught her and suffered for her and died for her and rose for her and reigns for her, how he called her and justified her and cleansed her and kept her and will raise her and glorify her and satisfy her for ever and ever with himself.

Frank Thielman: In Ephesians, Paul's use of the metaphor is reminiscent of his use of it in all three of the other letters, but it also receives some further development. In Ephesians, just as in 1 Corinthians and Romans, the church is made up of various members who should work together harmoniously as a "body" (*4:4, 11–13, 15–16, 24–25; 5:30*), although the figure of a single body with many harmoniously working parts is not as prominent as it is in those earlier letters (Dunn 1992: 149–50; Best 1998: 193). Just as in Colossians, Christ is the head of his church-body, and as the head, he supports his body's growth (**Eph. 4:15–16; 5:23**; cf**. Col. 1:18; 2:19**).

Two new uses of the metaphor, however, emerge in Ephesians. First, in **2:15–16** Paul will describe the unity of Gentile and Jewish Christians through the cross as a union of the two groups in "*one body*." He then implies that this "*one body*" is a new human that replaces the fallen Adam.

Second, as we have just seen in the exegesis of **1:22**, Paul in Ephesians uses the head metaphor independently to speak of **Christ's victorious rule over the inimical powers of the cosmos.** In this specific capacity as head over all things (particularly the inimical powers), God has given Christ to the church. Here the metaphor takes a direction unique in the Pauline corpus. Christ is the head over all things, and God has given him this role for the benefit of the church. The church, moreover, is the body of this Christ who is head over all things. Christ is not said to be head over all things and therefore head of the church, but head over all things and, since the church is his body, identifiable with the church. The church, then, is also in some sense head over all inimical powers, and they lie conquered beneath its feet, just as they lie conquered beneath Christ's feet. Paul will make this point more explicitly in **2:6,** where he says that his readers have been raised with Christ and seated in the heavenly places "*in Christ Jesus*" at God's right hand.

Leedy Greek Diagram:



TEXT: EPHESIANS 2:1-10

TITLE: GOD'S POWER HAS CHANGED OUR POSITION AND OUR PRACTICE

BIG IDEA:
GOD'S POWER HAS CHANGED OUR OLD POSITION (DEATH)
TO OUR NEW POSITION (LIFE);
GOD'S POWER HAS CHANGED OUR OLD PRACTICE (SIN)
TO OUR NEW PRACTICE (HOLINESS: GOOD WORKS)

INTRODUCTION:

Stephen Fowl: These verses focus on how Christ's superiority over all things enables him to free the Ephesians from their bondage to sin. The first part of this exposition establishes the Ephesians' comprehensive alienation from God. They lived and acted within the realm dominated by oppressive powers opposed to God. They were dead. Although the Ephesians were captivated by their attachments to sin, through God's gracious activity they have been raised together with Christ and seated with Christ in the heavenly realms. . .

Structurally, the passage begins (**2:1–3**) with a description of the Ephesians' state prior to Christ. Then Paul in some detail proceeds to describe God's work in making the Ephesians alive in Christ in three basic moves: The transition from death to life (**v. 4**) and then two descriptions of salvation in Christ (**vv. 5–7, 8–10**).

Frank Thielman: The passage shows how, in personal terms, the great power of God, exhibited in the resurrection and enthronement of Christ, took Paul's readers from existence under the power of the world, the Ruler of the demonic realm, and their own disobedient nature (**vv. 1–3**) into a position of victory over these forces (**vv. 4–7**). It describes how they moved from being objects of God's justified wrath against those who disobey him (**v. 3**) to products of God's re-creative handiwork (**v. 10**), from walking in trespasses and sins (**vv. 1–2**) to walking in the good works that God created them to do (**v. 10**). This movement has happened by their union with the living, risen, and enthroned Christ (**vv. 5–6**). It came to them as an entirely free gift (**v. 5**), received by faith (**vv. 8–9**), and as the result of God's richly merciful and loving character (**v. 4**).

Clinton Arnold: In the previous paragraph, Paul elaborated on and extolled the remarkable power of God, which he displayed when he raised Christ from the dead and exalted him to his right hand (**1:20–23**). Paul expressed this after praying that the readers of this letter would be able to understand and appreciate the magnitude of God's power that he manifested for them and made available to them (**1:19**). Now in **2:1–10**, Paul explains specifically how God has exerted his power for their benefit. It is nothing less than making them alive from their state of death. This has happened through their participation in the resurrection and exaltation of Christ. What Paul has said of Christ in **1:20–21** is now applied to the church, that is, to all who are "*in Christ*." Paul speaks of

this whole experience of co-resurrection and co-exaltation as "*having been saved*," using the perfect tense of the verb. This definition of "salvation" informs how one should understand the "*helmet of salvation*" in **6:17**. . .

This passage contrasts the horrible plight of believers before their experience of Christ with their new life in Christ now. This experience can only be described as passing from death to life by virtue of their participation with Christ in his resurrection and exaltation. This salvation experience is a gift from God and enables them to live the lives God has called them to live.

I. (:1-3) GOD'S POWER DEALT WITH OUR OLD POSITION (DEATH)

[Outline points from Dr. Kenneth O. Peterman]

A. (:1) We were DEAD

"*And you were dead in your trespasses and sins,*"

Death means **separation.** In this case, spiritual death is total, absolute, complete and full separation from God. We were absolutely powerless, helpless, unable, incapable to think, feel, or will anything to do with God or for God because we were dead in trespasses and sins. The Greek word translated "trespass" means "stepping over the mark or boundary" -- being a rebel. The word in the original for "sins" here means "missing the mark", "falling short" or being a failure. In our dead state, (separated from God) we were both rebels and failures.

Paul strives to clarify the fact that being fully dead, we were unable to come to God unless He provided everything -- including faith. We were capable in our old position to provide nothing toward God. We could not will to accept Christ because our natural will was inoperative. We were lost, undone, depraved, and unable to come to God.

Many believers do not like this teaching because they desperately want to be able to do something to earn or merit their salvation. Consequently, many present-day fudamentalist preachers teach that man is not fully dead, but can, in some weak measure, receive Christ if the man so chooses. The teaching that every man is just as capable as any other man to accept Christ if he so desires forms the basis of our begging people to please give God a try. These invitations put God on the passive end of the situation, whereas God is in reality on the active end, drawing the men and women that He has already chosen to be saved.

Note: If man is not fully, totally, and absolutely dead then Christ did not really die! This statement is supported by the parallel that Paul makes between Christ's physical death in Chapter one and our spiritual death in Chapter two. The two deaths stand or fall together in this text. Just as the power of God raised Christ from physical death, so did the power of God raise us from our spiritual death. Consequently, if man is not spiritually dead than Christ did not physically die because both deaths are intimately connected in this text. Our Arminian friends cannot have it both ways; either death is

complete in both situations (ours and Christ's) or death is not complete. The parallel between the two in this text cannot be ignored unless one is merely willing to sustain their own view regardless of the facts.

John Piper: [Re being "*dead in trespasses and sins*"] -- If you were to ask most people why sin is a problem, and why we need a Savior from it, they would say that sin makes us guilty before God and brings us under condemnation; and so we need a Savior who can forgive our sins and take away our punishment. And that is absolutely right. But that is not the point of **Ephesians 2:1** and **5**.

The reason we need a Savior is not just that we are in the dog house with God and need to be forgiven for offending his glory. We need a Savior because we are in the morgue. In the dog house you might whimper. You might say you are sorry. You might make some good resolutions. You might decide to cast yourself on the mercy of God. But what can you do if you are in the morgue?

Clinton Arnold: '*trespasses and sins*" -- It would be inappropriate to search for some distinction between the two words. They form a **hendiadys** (one concept through two words) here and correspond with Paul's teaching in **Romans 5–6**.

B. (:2-3a) We were ENSLAVED

1. We walked according to the age of this world.

"*in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world*"

The Greek word for "world" means "principalities that govern this world system: lust, greed, fear, hate, materialism, sensuality, independence, relativism, etc."

The Greek word for "age" signifies "time viewed in relation to what takes place in a certain period of time."

So in our enslavement, we walked according to the ungodly worldly principles that were emphasized in our time. For instance, in the 20's sensuality was not as emphasized as it is today. Materialism is more of a problem today than it was in the 50's. In our unsaved state, we were enslaved by those very principles that governed the unsaved world in that specific period of time in which we lived.

Clinton Arnold: Here he uses "*world*" not in the literal sense of creation as in **Eph 1:4**, but in the theological sense of people organized in their opposition against God (see, e.g., **John 15:18–19; 1 Cor 3:19**). This could be interpreted to refer to the various non-Christian religions, ideologies, philosophies, values, and economic systems as well as to the more mundane but the equally powerful influence of peer pressure, fashion, and the media. These influences provide a script for living day-to-day life apart from God and his values.

2. We walked according to the principles of Satan.

"*according to the prince of the power of the air,*

of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience."

We walked according to the "*prince of the power of the air*." We were enslaved to Satan. This doesn't mean that we were demon possessed or demon affected, but it means we operated under some of the same principles that govern Satan's activities. Some of these activities include: lying, unbelief, pride, deceit, wickedness.

Stephen Fowl: Although the use of "*child*" can refer to a biological relationship, within the NT to call someone a child of something can often play upon the biological relationship in order to speak about a **dominant characteristic** or **affiliation** of that person (e.g., **Matt 23:15**, "*child of hell*"; **Luke 16:8**, "*children of this age*"; **Acts 4:36**, Barnabas is the "*son of encouragement*"). Thus, when Paul identifies the Ephesians as formerly walking according to the ruler of the spirit at work among the *children of disobedience*, he speaks of their fundamental disposition. This is not simply a failure to keep God's commandments. Rather, their lives reflect active and comprehensive turning away from God. As it turns out, "*children of disobedience*" are quite obedient. They simply are not obedient to God (Yoder Neufeld, Ephesians 91).

3. We walked according to the lusts of the flesh and of the mind.

"*Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind,*"

The Greek word for "lust" means "strong desire." It can be used in both a positive and negative context, but usually is negative in connotation.

Lust of the flesh -- the phrase "*of the flesh*" qualifies the lust in which we walked in our unsaved state.

There are four main definitions of flesh:

a. General: whole body of mankind; "*all flesh is as grass …*"
This refers to man in general.

b. General: the covering of our bones.

c. Particular: the whole human nature:
that nature which Scripture represents as against God. (**Gal. 5:17**)

d. Particular: sensuous part of our nature
or the desires of the physical body.

In **Ephesians 2:3** Paul refers to option "d" = **the desire of the body**. We were enslaved to these sensuous desires: eating, drinking, sex, etc. In other words, we abused these God-given blessings.

Clinton Arnold: Paul twice speaks of the "*flesh*" (σάρξ) as an **overwhelming influence** that ordered our lives before Christ and thus completes his description of the triad of powers that formerly held us in slavery. Paul says plenty about the role of the flesh in his other letters, especially in Romans and Galatians, where he explains the Christian life in terms of a conflict between the flesh and the Spirit (see **Rom 7:5–6, 14–25; 8:3–23; Gal 5:13–19, 24**). In **Gal 5:16** and **24** he uses the same language as here in speaking of the "*lusts*" (ἐπιθυμίαι) in conjunction with "*flesh*" (σάρξ).

Although Paul derives much of his anthropology from the OT, it is difficult to find the background for his dualistic and metaphorical use of "*flesh*" there. In most of the relevant OT texts, "*flesh*" (*bāśār*) is simply seen as humanity in its inherent weakness, frailty, and dependency (see, e.g., **Job 34:15; Ps 78:39 [77:39]; Isa 31:3; 40:6; Jer 17:5**). Paul implies something more when he nearly personifies it by attributing to it thoughts and desires, by portraying it as a power holding humanity in bondage, and by contrasting it with the Spirit of God.

Many scholars have seen the Jewish concept of the "evil inclination" (*yēṣer hārāʿ*) behind Paul's view of the flesh. The idea that every person struggles with **an inner propensity toward evil** was central to Jewish thinking among the rabbis at the time of Paul. This impulse resulted in a struggle with each individual's good impulse, the *yēṣer hāṭôb*. The evil impulse inclined people to engage in every manner of sin. For the rabbis, the only way to battle the evil inclination was to study Torah. For Paul, however, it is the new covenant blessing of the Holy Spirit, which is God's empowering presence to overcome this tendency.

The phrase "*of the mind*" indicates the lusts of ambition, knowledge, independence, etc.

Summary: So we were not only dead, but enslaved to the principles of the world system, to Satanic principles, and to the lust of our flesh and of our minds.

In other words, Paul pictures unsaved man a corpse wrapped around and around with strong unyielding chains making it absolutely impossible to initiate salvation.

If this were not enough, Paul adds one more element to the picture.

C. (:3b) We Were CONDEMNED BY BIRTH

"*and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.*"

This phrase looks at origins. We were depraved, polluted, corrupted, evil, sinful, by birth. The Psalmist said "*In sin did my mother conceive me …*" **Psalms 51:5**; Other passages teach the same truth -- **Romans 3:9; Gal. 3:22.**

Consequently, the Bible clearly teaches that man cannot come to God on His own. In our natural state, we were completely dead, totally enslaved by the world, the flesh and the devil, and fully and rightfully condemned.

Unless one has a clear understanding of this helpless spiritual position it is impossible to fully understand or appreciate the grace of God. "Only to the cross I cling, nothing in my hand I bring."

Stephen Fowl: Outside of Christ, humans' dispositions and inclinations are so captivated by Sin that we become subject to God's wrath (cf. **Rom 7:14–25**). By birth as humans we become Adam's heirs, inhabitants of and participants in a world dominated by the power of Sin (cf. **Rom 5:12–21**). Finally, despite our presumptions otherwise, in reality humans are captivated by Sin and thereby subject to God's wrath (cf. **John 8:31–47**).

Clinton Arnold: In Paul's thought, one of the greatest needs of humanity is to be spared from the **eschatological wrath of God**. God will pour out his wrath in full measure on the future day of judgment (**Rom 2:5**). The good news of the gospel for Paul is that all who put their faith in Christ and experience justification *"shall … be saved from God's wrath*" (**Rom 5:9**). This wrath is also explicitly in view in this passage insofar as all of humanity is destined to experience this wrath because of their sin (**2:3c**). Believers are here assured that they already possess this deliverance from God's wrath not only in the future, but also in the present in light of the fact that God is currently pouring out his wrath on the ungodly (**Rom 1:18**).

(:4) TRANSITION – MERCY INSTEAD OF WRATH

"*But God, being rich in mercy,*
because of His great love with which He loved us,"

Stephen Fowl: **Verse 4** begins with the assertion that God simply is *rich in mercy*. We then learn of the **motive** that leads to the particular demonstration of mercy described in **vv. 5–6**. It is "*because of his great love, with which he loved us*."

Clinton Arnold: After painting this horribly bleak picture of sin, death, bondage, and God's impending wrath, a bright ray of hope shines through in **2:4a** when he says, "*but God*." God is the subject of the principal verb, "*he made alive*." Yet before he gets to the verb, Paul elaborates on the **merciful and loving character of God** and then repeats the plight faced by all, although this time changing the person from second person plural to first person plural to include himself and all other Christians in the indictment ("*we were dead*"; ὄντας ἡμᾶς νεκρούς). Paul then expresses the **purpose** behind God's action of making us alive in **2:7** (using ἵνα with a subjunctive), which involves the display of God's grace.

II. (:5-7) GOD'S POWER PROVIDES A NEW POSITION (LIFE)

A. (:5) We were MADE ALIVE

"*even when we were dead in our transgressions,*
made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),"

The Greek word here is a combination of three words meaning "to make," "life" and "with." God made us alive with Christ. Note that the work was done by God -- not us. We were made alive with Christ.

The basis of this new life is grace and the instrument through which it was accomplished was faith.

B. (:6a) We were RAISED UP WITH CHRIST

"*and raised us up with Him,*"

This means that we partook of his resurrection life. When Christ was raised physically, we were raised spiritually.

Clinton Arnold: Our **union with Christ** through faith and expressed in baptism entails a solidarity with Christ in his death, which renders us free from our slavery to sin. But it also involves participation with him in his resurrection, which leads to a new life: "*just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life*" (**Rom 6:4**). It is difficult to fully comprehend and thus to describe the precise nature of this participation.

C. (:6) We were SEATED WITH CHRIST IN THE HEAVENS

"*and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus,*"

We have positionally experienced the victory that Christ now enjoys in heaven. Total victory in Him; total victory is also ours.

Since sin is associated with out old position of death -- the contrast -- holiness is associated with our new position of life.

D. (:7) Goal = Demonstration of the Grace and Kindness of God

"*in order that in the ages to come He might show*
the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."

III. GOD'S POWER HAS CHANGED OUR OLD PRACTICE (SINFUL BEHAVIOR)

The Old Practice Characterized by the Ungodly Principles of:

A. Death:

1. Trespasses: active rebellion, sins of commission.

2. Sins: passive sins, sins of omission.

B. World:

Materialism, sensuality, independence, greed, lust, etc.

C. Devil:
Pride, deceit, hate, fear, lying, evil acts

D. Flesh:
Abuse of eating, drinking, sex, etc.

E. Mind:
Ambition, pride, independence, etc.

IV. (:8-10) GOD'S POWER AND GRACE HAVE GIVEN US NEW LIFE LEADING TO NEW PRACTICE CHARACTERIZED BY GOOD WORKS

A. (:8-9) God's Power and Grace Producing New Life

"*For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works, that no one should boast.*"

Holiness is associated with resurrection life. The very fact that we are identified with Christ in his resurrection and ascension into heaven associates us with holiness or freedom from sin.

B. (:10) New Practice of Good Works that Glorify God

"*For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*"

Clinton Arnold: Paul has just repudiated the role of good works for earning salvation (**2:8–9**), but he now extols their role as a necessary outgrowth of that salvation. . .

Paul's mention of believers "*walking*" in these good works ties the conclusion of this passage back to the beginning ("in which you once walked") and forms an **inclusio**. Whereas before coming into a relationship with Christ, believers were controlled by powerful evil forces, now they have been set free and empowered to live in the way God has designed for them. There is not only the hope of breaking out of sinful patterns of behavior (e.g., anger, sexual immorality, greed; **Eph 4:31; 5:3, 5**); there is also the expectation that we will do so because this is the purpose for which God has created us for the sake of his glory.

- We are God's workmanship
- We were created in Christ Jesus by God; we did not create ourselves

The Greek word "*workmanship*" means the product of a person's hand. In the Old Testament the same concept referred particularly to the creation of a poem. If we are God's workmanship, we are the product of his hands or his poem.

Note that we were created "*unto good works which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them*."

This verse more specifically defines God's concept of our holy walk; the type of holiness in which we as believers are supposed to walk in is good works.

Exactly what are some of the good works in which God has ordained us to walk?

A close examination of the terminology "*good works*" in other contexts helps us to clarify what is meant here.

1. Acts of Responsibility to those over us
   - **Romans 13:3** "*Rulers are not a terror to good works*."
   - **Titus 3:1** "*Obey magistrates, be ready to every good work*."
   - **Ephesians 6:8** Relationship of servant/employees to their employers

2. Any Practical Deed done to benefit others
   - **Galatians 6:10** "*Let us do good to all men as we have opportunity*."
   - **Acts 9:36** "*Dorcas, full of good works and almsdeeds*."
     (she made coats and garments for others)
   - **1 Timothy 5:10** "*Hospitality -- washed saints feet, relieved the afflicted*"
   - **2 Corinthians 9:8** "*Giving money to those in need*"

3. Our Ordinary Family Responsibilities
   - **1 Timothy 5:10** "*Followed every good work: brought up children*"
   - **1 Timothy 2:10** Reference to good works followed immediately by admonition to submission

4. The Practical Use of our Gifts and Abilities or Talents in Active Ministry Towards Others
   - **2 Timothy 2:21** "*If a man, therefore, purge himself from these he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and fit for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work*."

   - **2 Timothy 3:16-17** "*All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect thoroughly furnished unto all good works*."

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) What type of compassion do we have for those around us who are "*dead in trespasses and sins*"? How does understanding our former bondage and their present

conformity to "*the course of this world*" help us to show them the type of mercy and kindness that God has shown to us?

2) Where do we face the strongest temptations in terms of falling back into "*indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind*"? How can we better focus on our new position in Christ in order to be more consistent in practicing this new life of holiness and good works?

3) Are we faithfully testifying to the *grace of God* as the instrument of our salvation so that others can see that our boasting is totally in the power of God and the work of Christ on our behalf?

4) What are some specific *good works* that have characterized our life this past week? Do we have a sense of God's magnificent foreordained plan for our life so that we will be eternal trophies of His grace?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Foulkes: Man's trouble is not merely that he is out of harmony with his environment and with his fellows. He is *'alienated from the life of God'* (**v. 1b**), that is, with respect to his true spiritual nature he is dead in trespasses and sins. There is probably no essential difference between the two nouns; the root meaning of the first is 'missing the mark' and of the second 'slipping' or 'falling from the way', and thus both express man's failure to live as he could and ought. Men were made in God's image to live as children in His family, aware of His presence, rejoicing in His direction. Freedom was given, but with it a warning that it involved the possibility of disobedience, and that disobedience would lead to death (**Gn. ii. 17**). This death is not primarily physical death, but the loss of the spiritual life given, life in fellowship with God and the consequent capacity for spiritual activity and development. Thus the description here is not merely metaphorical, nor does it refer only to the future state of the sinner. It describes his present condition, and the Bible indeed often thus speaks of man in a state of spiritual death because of sin (e.g. **Ezk. xxxvii. 1-14; Rom. vi. 23, vii. 10. 24; Col. ii. 13**), and needing nothing less than new life from God (cf. **Eph. v. 14; Jn. iii. 3, v. 24**).

John Stott: So both words '*age'* and '*world'* express a whole social value-system which is alien to God. It permeates, indeed dominates, non-Christian society and holds people in captivity. Wherever human beings are being dehumanized -- by political oppression or bureaucratic tyranny, by an outlook that is secular (repudiating God), amoral (repudiating absolutes) or materialistic (glorifying the consumer market), by poverty, hunger or unemployment, by racial discrimination, or by any form of injustice -- there we can detect the sub-human values of *'this age'* and *'this world'*. Their influence is pervasive. People tend not to have a mind of their own, but to surrender to the pop-culture of television and the glossy magazines. It is a cultural bondage. We

were all the same until Jesus liberated us. We 'drifted along the stream of this world's ideas of living' (JBP).

Wood: Yet again Paul reminds his readers (as in **v.5**) that they owe their salvation entirely to the undeserved favor of God. Grace is at once the objective, operative, and instrumental cause. He expands the previous statement by adding that the subjective medium (or apprehending cause) of salvation is faith, which is also its necessary condition. Faith, however, is not a quality, a virtue, or a faculty. It is not something man can produce. It is simply a trustful response that is itself evoked by the Holy Spirit.

Lest faith should be in any way misinterpreted as man's contribution to his own salvation, Paul immediately adds a rider to explain that nothing is of our own doing but everything is in the gift of God.

William Hendriksen: God's purpose in saving his people reaches beyond man. His own glory is his own chief aim. It is for that reason that he displays his grace in all its matchless beauty and transforming power. To some this may seem somewhat cold or even 'selfish.' Yet, on rereading the passage one will soon discover that God's overshadowing majesty and his condescending tenderness combine here, for the glory of his attributes is placed on exhibition as it reflects itself *'in kindness toward us*!' We are his sparkling jewels.

Homer Kent: Paul's thought is that the Christian is completely without grounds for boasting even in the good works which follow regeneration, for they too are God's handiwork. It was God who long ago planned the good works He wanted us to perform. Our responsibility is to follow His blueprint for our lives, responding to the impulses of His Spirit as He prompts us to perform His will.

John Stott: Paul was under no illusions about the degradation of mankind. He refused to whitewash the situation, for this might have led him to propose superficial solutions. Instead, he began this paragraph with a faithful portrayal of man as subject to three terrible powers, namely 'sin', 'death' and 'wrath'. Yet he refused also to despair, because he believed in God. True, the only hope for dead people lies in a resurrection. But then the living God is the God of resurrection. He is even more than that: he is the God of creation. Both metaphors indicate the indispensable necessity of divine grace. For resurrection is out of death, and creation is out of nothing. That is the true meaning of 'salvation'.

Piper: [Re **vs. 2]** -- This then is the witness of God concerning our condition without a Savior. It is not the witness of 'eye witness new' or national commentators or cinema or journalism. It is God's testimony. This is the way God sees the world -- ruled by an alien prince, blinding the minds of unbelievers, filling them with ungodly desires, holding them captive to do his will, and then causing them to think all is well because they are right in step with the times…

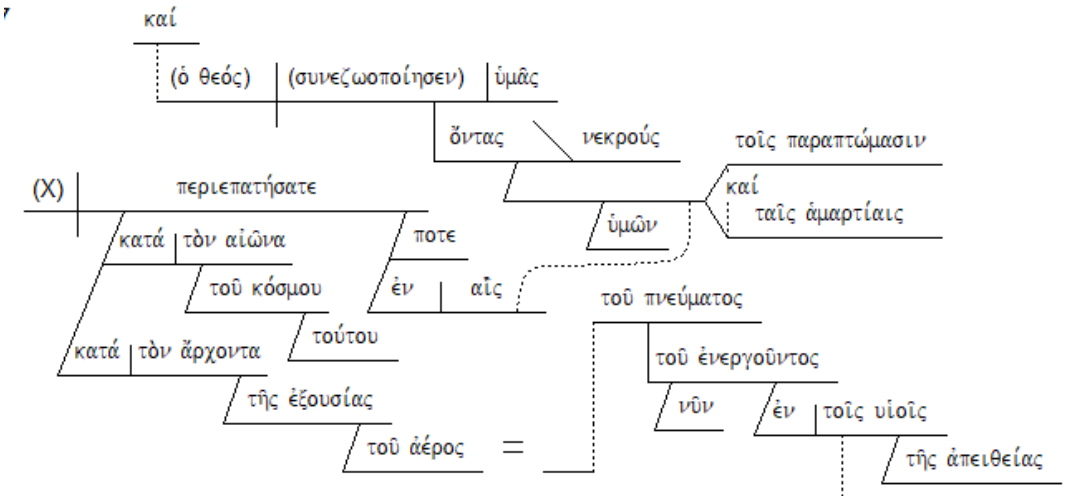
I have preached <u>three things</u> from **Ephesians 2:1-3** about our need for a Savior. There is a downward spiral:

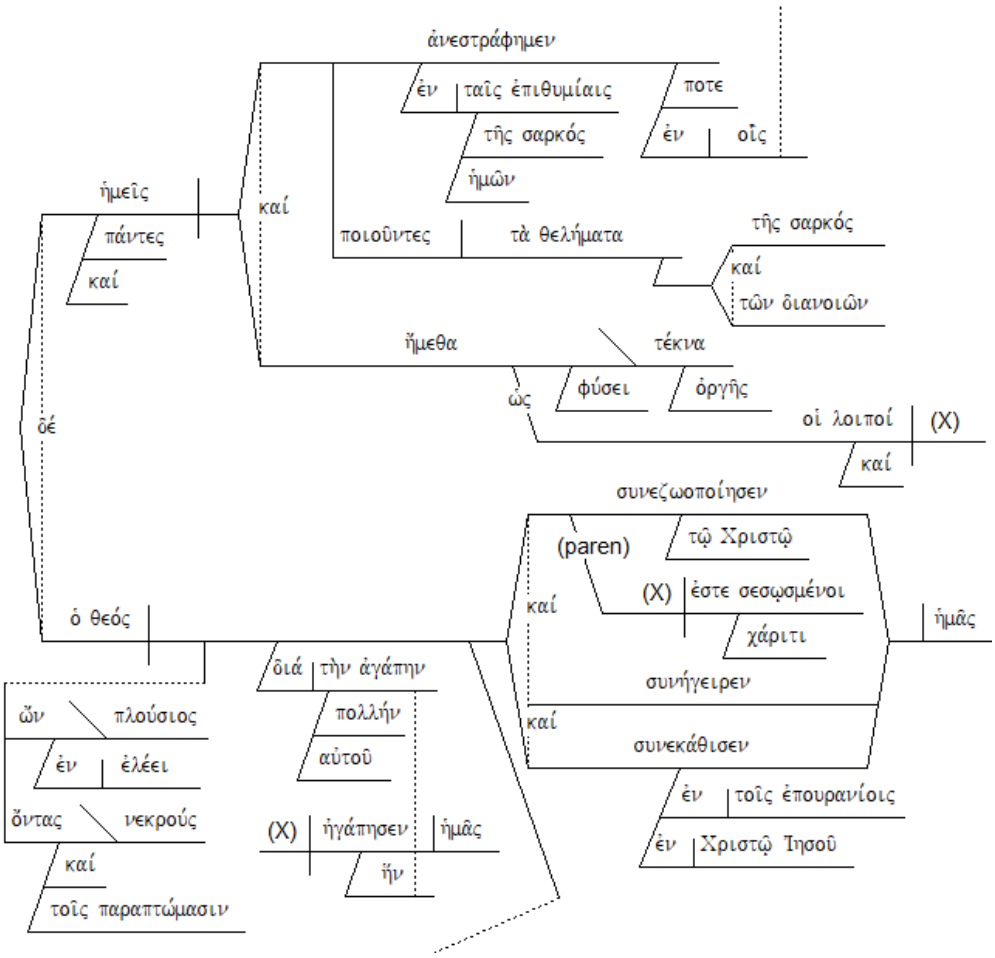
1. **Verse one**, we need a Savior because of our corruption in sin.
2. **Verse two**, we need a Savior because of our captivity to Satan.
3. **Verse three**, we need a Savior because of our condemnation to hell.

Dead in sin, captive to an alien power, children of wrath.

Clinton Arnold: The God of all creation is full of mercy, love, and grace. Given the pervasiveness of sin and the prevalence of evil among all of the peoples of the world, one could not blame God for wiping out the entirety of his creation in a furious display of his powerful wrath at sin. But this is not the full picture of the character of our God. Although angry at sin and transgression, he is also rich in mercy, full of love, abounding in grace, and possessing a heart of kindness. In Christ Jesus, he made a way of escape from the compelling influence of the forces of evil and has bestowed new life upon us. This is entirely a gift of his grace rooted in his kindness. Because of our deadness and bondage to sin, there is no initiative, merit, or effort on our part to acquire this precious gift. It is simply received by faith.

Leedy Greek Diagram:

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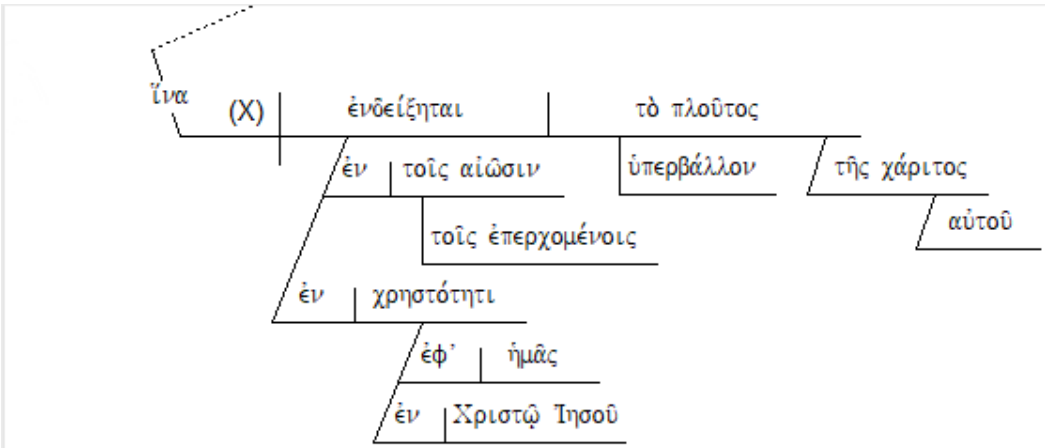
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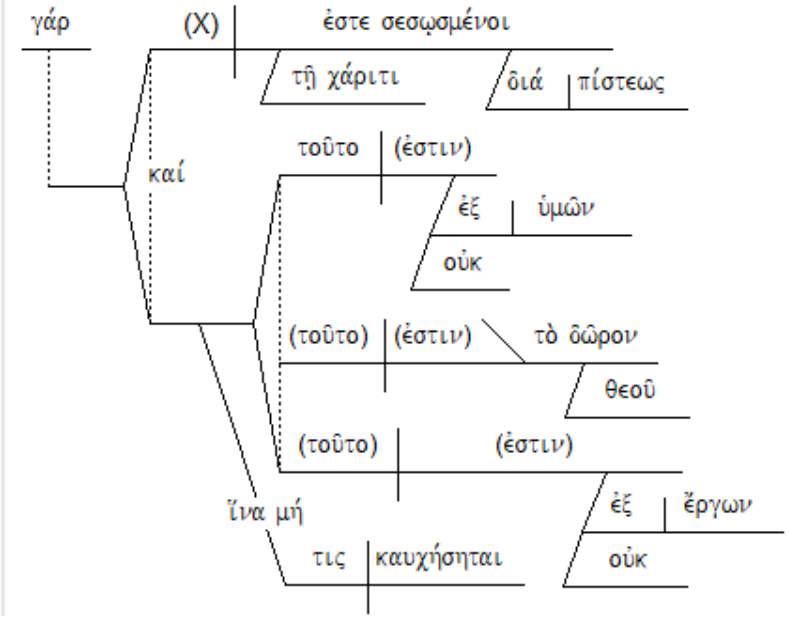
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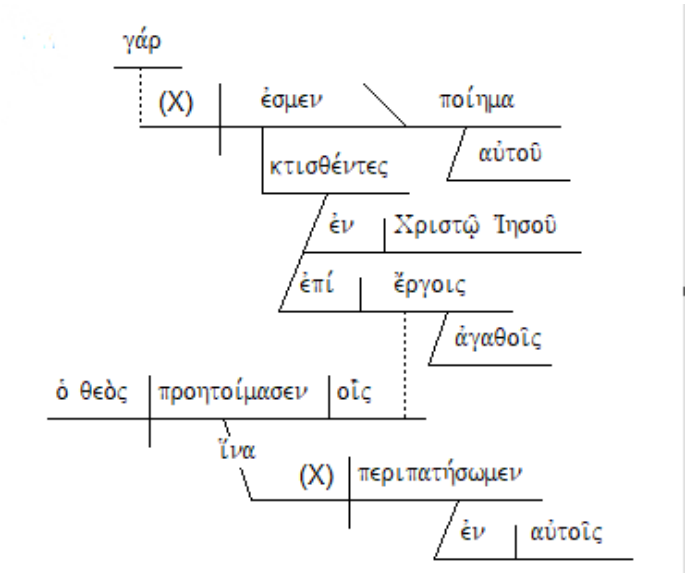
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TEXT: EPHESIANS 2:11-22

TITLE: COMPOSITION OF THE CHURCH: JEWS AND GENTILES UNITED IN ONE BODY

BIG IDEA:
GENTILES ARE NOW UNITED WITH JEWS IN THE HOUSEHOLD OF GOD ON THE BASIS OF THE RECONCILING WORK OF CHRIST

INTRODUCTION:

Frank Thielman: The focus of **2:11–22** is the social alienation between Israel and the Gentiles and Christ's role in solving this problem through his death, which set aside the Mosaic law, with its tendency to divide Jews from Gentiles. Although the death of Christ also overcomes the hostility between God and humanity, this element of the passage serves the passage's more prominent theme of the peace that now exists between Jews and Gentiles. By overcoming the hostility between God and all human beings, Christ's death breaks down the wall of hostility between Jews and Gentiles.

Andrew Lincoln: The past lack of privilege in comparison with Israel is not depicted for its own sake, but to assure the readers of the greatness and reality of their salvation by highlighting their **privileged present situation** as members of such a community as the Church is shown to be.

Clinton Arnold: This passage contrasts the former godlessness of the Gentiles and their exclusion from the people of God with their new experience of closeness to God and inclusion in his people. This change has taken place on the basis of Jesus' death on the cross, which resulted in the abrogation of the Mosaic covenant and the creation of a new people of God. This new humanity enjoys a relationship of peace with God and peace with one another, especially between Jews and Gentiles.

Grant Osborne: Salvation history narrates God's change from the old covenant centrality of the law to the new covenant reality of Christ. God's salvation and God's final kingdom have entered this world through Jesus Christ, and a new reality has taken over. This change involves the reconciliation of all peoples of the world and results in a new peace and unity between former enemies. In this a new community has been forged—the church, a new Israel, a new people of God no longer based on ethnicity but based solely on relationship with Christ. The old barriers and hostility between the groups have been eradicated in the cross, and both peace and unity are the result.

Bruce Hurt: In **Ephesians 2:11-22** Paul is painting a picture of how the body of Christ was formed in the beginning. He is unveiling the mystery of the Church, and how it began with Jews and Gentiles who were hostile to each other. He begins by emphasizing the impossible to cross magnitude of the division, and then how God through Christ's work on the Cross and the work of the Spirit supernaturally bridged the

centuries long unbridgeable spiritual chasm! He uses many pictures and phrases to essentially point out how such diverse groups were brought into one, the Church, His Body.

I. (:11-13) THE INCLUSION OF THE GENTILES IS A BIG DEAL

I am inclined to minimize things … "It's no big deal" is one of my favorite expressions.

Clinton Arnold: The call to "*remember*" (μνημονεύετε) is reminiscent of the numerous times that the people of Israel were called to remember the mighty deliverance God had secured for them following years of painful slavery in Egypt. Moses told the Israelites, "*Remember* (μνημονεύετε; NIV '*commemorate*') *this day, the day you came out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery, because the LORD brought you out of it with a mighty hand*" (**Exod 13:3**). Israel's failure to remember God's wondrous works and his powerful acts of deliverance often resulted in a failure to appreciate God, to obey him in their present situation, and to keep themselves pure (see, e.g., **Pss 78:42; 106:7**). Because God has now granted Gentile Christians redemption and a new hope, Paul wants them to recall their former plight—especially how distant they were from the one true God, the God of Israel, and the nature of their exclusion from their only source of hope.

A. (:11-12) Remember the Pain of Exclusion

1. (:11) Excluded by Derisive Designation

   a. "*Gentiles in the flesh*"

   b. "*who are called Uncircumcision by the so-called Circumcision*"

      Limitations of Physical Circumcision: (in contrast to spiritual)
      - "*which is performed in the flesh*"
      - " *by human hands*"

2. (:12) Excluded by Lack of Theological Privilege

Frank Thielman: Paul lists **five theological disadvantages** of the Gentiles, and all except the last, summative item ("without God in the world") are related to the Gentiles' lack of access to the Scriptures. Because Israel's Scriptures contain the promise of the Messiah and outline the way of life God expected his people to follow, Gentiles were left on their own, without real hope or guidance, a fate that we know from **2:1–3** placed them at the mercy of the world, the devil, and the flesh (cf. **4:17–19**).

This echo of the terrible plight of those outside of Christ according to **2:1–3** brings to a fitting close Paul's description of the desperate situation of Gentiles prior to the gospel's advent. Israel was God's people and the repository of God's Word. Prior to the coming of the gospel, only those within the boundaries of Israel had hope for salvation from the wrath that God would pour out on the disobedient. As uncircumcised Gentiles,

however, Paul's readers were by definition excluded from this people and this hope and were therefore in an especially desperate position of hopelessness.

a. "*separate from Christ*"

Grant Osborne: They were "*apart from Christ*," meaning that they knew nothing of Jesus (or of the Jewish Messiah more generally) and were completely cut off from him. Some may have been God-fearers (see above) or even converts to Judaism, but most would have known nothing of Judaism or Christianity. Not only were they cut off from the Messiah; unlike the Jews they were removed from any understanding of a messiah, a royal deliverer who would redeem them. For these Gentiles coming to know Jesus as Messiah was a double blessing.

b. "*excluded from the commonwealth of Israel*"

Grant Osborne: There had always been animosity between Israel and the nations that surrounded it, but here it is more than just a social estrangement; there is a religious dimension as well. Citizenship was very important, indicating not just belonging and membership in a community but also protection and privileges. The Ephesians were cut off from the covenant, having no access to the blessings of being the chosen people.

c. "*strangers to the covenants of promise*"

Grant Osborne: The term "*covenant*" implies a solemn divine-human treaty involving both promises and obligations, and the three main covenants in the Old Testament were the Abrahamic (**Gen 12:1–4**), the Mosaic (**Exod 24:1–8**), and the Davidic (**2 Sam 7:12–17**). The Gentiles had missed out on all this. They were foreigners not just to Israel but to God himself. It is true that the Abrahamic covenant had intended that the Jews bless "*all peoples on earth*" (**Gen 12:3; 18:18; 22:18; 26:4**), but that did not take place until the Gentile mission launched by Christ (**Matt 28:18; Acts 3:25**). Until Christ, these people (with a few exceptions like Ruth) were given no share in these promises.

d. "*having no hope*"

David Thompson: Israel had a definite hope of a promised land, a righteous king and a glorious kingdom. But we had none. Don't miss this point- apart from Jesus Christ and the grace of God we have no hope for ever having any relationship with God, and there is no hope of our status with God ever changing. You will not find any hope in yourself. If you look at yourself what you will likely find is failure. It is Jesus Christ who is our hope and it is Jesus Christ who gives us hope. Apart from Jesus Christ a person's heart is restless. Something is nagging and something is missing. Jesus Christ fulfills life and gives hope.

e. "*without God in the world*"

Clinton Arnold: What Paul means here, however, is that the Gentiles were alienated from the one true God, who is the source of life (see **4:18**). Paul has no concern about the degree of their devotion to Artemis, Hekate, Isis, Zeus, or any of the local deities; his concern is that they did not know the one God who made the heavens and the earth. Although this is the only time the term appears in either the LXX or the NT, Paul's use of this expression influenced the subsequent generation of Christians who could refer to pagans as "*godless*" (ἄθεου; see Mart. Pol. 9.2; Clement of Alexandria, Paed. 3.11.80).

B. (:13) Appreciate the Price of Inclusion

1. Accomplished by virtue of Union with Christ

"*But now in Christ Jesus*"

Clinton Arnold: The extraordinary news is that Gentiles who have been chosen by God and put their faith in Christ now experience a closeness to God and a reversal of their plight because of their participation in the benefits of the death of the Messiah. This sentence serves as a banner over the entire passage. . .

"*In Christ Jesus*" once again stands as a crucial theological expression in a pivotal text in Ephesians. Although some have taken this in an instrumental sense (i.e., "*by Christ Jesus*"), it is best to take it in the sense that predominates throughout its abundant usage in Ephesians, that is, in a **local, incorporational significance**. Paul uses it to speak of being united with Christ in a profound, dynamic relationship that not only extends to a present experience of the risen Christ, but reaches back to an objective participation with him in his death, resurrection, and exaltation (see **2:6**).

2. Former Position

"*you who formerly were far off*"

3. Present Position

"*have been brought near*"

4. Price

"*by the blood of Christ*"

Frank Thielman: In **2:11–13** Paul begins to describe specifically how God has made his great power available to the church at the corporate level. He does this both by reminding his believing Gentile readers of the plight in which they had existed as people who were separated from Israel and by reminding them of what God has done for them to remedy that plight. He begins by describing the tension-filled divide that existed between Gentiles and Jews prior to the coming of the gospel: both groups considered circumcision an insuperable barrier between them. This social barrier was matched by a theological barrier. As unbelieving Gentiles, Paul's readers were separated from the Messiah and so from all the blessings of being "in Christ." They were alienated from Israel's Scriptures, both from the way of life described there and from the promises the Scriptures contained of a coming Messiah and of the outpouring of God's Spirit. This meant that they were without hope and without God in a rebellious

world headed for the experience of God's wrath. God responded to this desperate plight, however, by incorporating Paul's Gentile readers into his people: they are now "*in Christ Jesus*" and so, although once far from God, have been brought near to him.

Clinton Arnold: This entire passage coheres around the declaration made in **2:13**: "*But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far have become near by the blood of Christ*." The idea of **nearness to God** is the central idea of the text. The prior section (**2:11–12**) illustrates the metaphorical distance between the Gentiles and God. The following verses (**2:14–16**) explain how this new status was made possible and what its implications are for Jew-Gentile relationships in the body of Christ.

II. (:14-18) THE RECONCILING WORK OF CHRIST MADE IT HAPPEN

Two types of Reconciliation intertwined here:
- between Jew and Gentile
- between man and God

Frank Thielman: The second step (**vv. 14–18**) explores precisely how Christ's death brought "*peace*" (**vv. 14, 15, 17**) to a divided humanity and to a humanity divided from God. The spotlight now falls on Christ himself rather than on God's action through Christ, and Paul shifts from speaking to his readers as a separate group ("*you Gentiles*," **v. 11**) to including himself, although a Jew, with them ("*He himself is our peace*," **v. 14**). Paul explains that the death of Christ on the cross tore down the dividing wall (the Mosaic law) that enclosed the Jews and separated them from the Gentiles. In the hands of sinful human beings, the law had become an instrument of hostility, but when Christ's death set it aside, he created in himself one new, undivided human being. Sinful human beings had also used the Mosaic law as an instrument of hostility against God (cf. **Rom. 4:15; 5:20; 7:5, 7–8, 11**), and the death of Christ also solved this problem for both Jews and Gentiles.

A. The Essence of Reconciliation is Peace

"*For He Himself is our Peace*"

"*thus establishing peace*"

Clinton Arnold: Paul ends this section by repeating the emphasis with which he began, that is, by **highlighting Christ as the source of peace**. Structurally, this forms an **inclusio** that stresses the new covenant blessing of peace. This is heightened all the more with an emphasis on peace in the center of the text:
- He is our peace (**v. 14a**)
- He makes peace (**v. 15c**)
- He proclaims peace (**v. 17b**)

B. The Result of Reconciliation (between Jew and Gentile) is Union

"*who made both groups into one*"

"*that in Himself He might make the two into one new man*"

C. The Obstacle to Reconciliation was the Enmity Associated with the Requirements of the Law

1. Christ Abolished the Enmity

"*by abolishing in His flesh the enmity*"

Clinton Arnold: One of the key ways that Christ has created unity between Jews and Gentiles is by abrogating perhaps the greatest obstacle to unity, that is, the Torah. The law was like a fence that separated the Jewish people from their Gentile neighbors. This fence, or dividing wall, was symbolically represented by a literal wall that separated the court of the Gentiles from the inner courts reserved for the Jews in the sanctuary of Jerusalem, the holy place where God mediated his presence to the people.

Grant Osborne: The verb "*set aside*" (*katargeō*) can be translated "render ineffective" or "nullify." Christ, by becoming our sacrifice ("*in his flesh*" = "*by his death*"), has nullified the need for the law and therefore set aside the enmity it had created between Jew and Gentile. By being made right with God both groups are also made right with each other. The "*commands and ordinances*" are the specific injunctions of the law. When the law is set aside, the hostility it produces disappears as well.

2. The Enmity consisted of

"*the Law of commandments contained in ordinances*"

D. The Ultimate Reconciliation for both Jew and Gentile = Free Unlimited Access to the Father

1. Same Mediator = Jesus Christ

"*through Him*"

2. Same Access for Gentiles as for Jews

"*we both have our access*"

3. Same Empowerment

"*in one Spirit*"

4. Same Family Relationship

"*to the Father*"

Frank Thielman: In **2:14–18** Paul places the spotlight directly on Christ, who, he says, is the "peace" of the believing community. He is their peace in the sense that he has united Jews and Gentiles to each other in himself and therefore overcome the hostility vividly portrayed in **2:11–12**. Paul's description of how Christ did this moves forward in three steps. These steps are not related to one another sequentially but examine the same action in increasing detail, like a microscope clicking through three levels of magnification to examine the same organism:

- Christ made the two groups one.
- Christ tore down the Mosaic law as both a "*partition*" separating Jews from Gentiles and as a "*fence*" enclosing the Jewish people and keeping them safe from Gentile influences.
- Christ tore down this "*partition*" between Jews and Gentiles by setting aside the Mosaic law's commandments, issued in the form of decrees. When the Mosaic law passed away, its use as an instrument of hostility between Jews and Gentiles also passed away.

Christ set aside the Mosaic law for two reasons. First, he did this to create in himself one new human being out of two formerly hostile factions. Paul's description of this purpose summarizes all that he has just said. The second purpose, in contrast, introduces a new thought: when Christ set aside the law, he reconciled this unified group of Jewish and Gentile believers to God.

Christ did all this, Paul says, through his death on the cross. His death made it possible for him to present to God both Jewish and Gentile believers, now united peacefully with each other as a newly created human being.

III. (:19-22) THE CHURCH (BELIEVING GENTILES UNITED WITH BELIEVING JEWS) CONTINUES TO BE BUILT TOGETHER AND INDWELT BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

Frank Thielman: This third step (**vv. 19–22**), with its progressive imagery of God's people as "*household*," "*building*," and "*dwelling place*," fully resolves the plight that Paul laid out in the first step (**vv. 11–12**). The tension and estrangement between Israel and the Gentiles and between the Gentiles and God has disappeared. Paul's Gentile readers are now part of the society of God's people, part of the household over which God presides as Father (**v. 19**), part of a firmly founded, tightly fitted building currently under construction (**vv. 20–21a**). Indeed, Paul says climactically, they help form the temple in which God's Spirit dwells (**vv. 21b–22**). In all this, they participate as "citizens together" with all the saints, whether Jewish or Gentile, because they are now part of a new people of God in which ethnic and national divisions have disappeared.

Grant Osborne: We have a new home and a new citizenship, but we also have a new family—we are "*members of the household of God*." We are no longer a part of this world but are part of the eternal family of the Triune Godhead. We are children of the heavenly Father (**Eph 3:14–15**) and joint-heirs with Christ (**Rom 8:17**). The theme of the church as the household of God is developed further in 1–2 Timothy (**1 Tim 3:15; 2 Tim 2:20, 21**). The imagery of the church as consisting of fathers, young men, and children is developed in **1 John 2:12–14**.

A. (:19) New Position of Privilege and Inclusion for the Gentiles

1. Old Position

"*you are no longer*"
"*strangers*"
"*aliens*"

2. New Position
"*fellow citizens with the saints*"
"*of God's household*"

B. (:20) New Structure for the Church -- different than the OT patriarchs

1. "*Cornerstone*"
"*Christ Jesus*"
it all starts with Him and depends upon Him

Grant Osborne: The "*chief cornerstone*" of this new building is Christ Jesus, meaning that the entire edifice rests upon him. There is some debate as to whether the image is of the foundation stone at the corner of the building or the capstone at the top of the arch. If the latter, the emphasis is on Christ's prominence and splendor in the most conspicuous part of the building. If the former, the imagery centers upon his strength and importance, with the stones of the structure resting on him. While the idea of a capstone would make sense, the evidence for this image is slightly later than the New Testament period, and the imagery in the New Testament favors the cornerstone option.

2. "*Foundation*"
"*apostles*"
"*prophets*"

Clinton Arnold: The vast majority of interpreters correctly understand Paul to be referring to the apostles and prophets of the first-century church. . . Paul's most extensive discussion of the function of prophets is in **1 Cor 14**. There we learn that one of the key roles of the prophet is to "*edify/build up the church*" (ὁ δὲ προφητεύων ἐκκλησίαν οἰκοδομεῖ; **1 Cor 14:4**)—an expression that corresponds to Paul's comments here that the church is built upon (ἐποικοδομηθέντες) the foundation of the apostles and prophets. They hear from the Lord and speak what they hear. Thus, they bring revelation and speak mysteries (**14:6, 30**), which function to comfort, encourage, and build up the church (**14:3, 31**).

C. (:21-22) Mutual Growth -- Jew and Gentile need one another

1. "*in whom the whole building, being fitted together is growing*"

2. "*in whom you also are being built together*"

D. (:21-22) Ultimate Goal

the church = God's holy dwelling place, indwelt by the Holy Spirit

1. "*into a holy temple in the Lord*"

2. "*into a dwelling of God in the Spirit*"

Frank Thielman: In **2:19–22** Paul explores the idea with which he concluded the previous section (**v. 18**), that Christ had created access for both Jews and Gentiles, as one people, to God the Father. Paul tells his readers that although they are Gentiles, they are fellow citizens with all God's people. They are members of God's household and part of the temple in which God's Spirit dwells. This temple's foundation is the witness of the apostles and prophets who first went to the Gentiles with the gospel of human reconciliation to God through the death of Christ. The temple's most important stone—the stone that guides the building's construction and tops it off when it is finished—is Christ Jesus. Paul's readers are the carefully shaped and fitted building blocks presently being added to the building. The way in which Paul describes this temple recalls the OT expectation of a rebuilt temple in which Israel and the nations would join together in the worship of God.

This paragraph brings to a close Paul's effort to explain in greater detail what he meant in **1:19–23** when he said he prayed for God to illuminate the eyes of his readers' hearts so that they might understand the magnitude of the power he has placed at their disposal in Christ. They had been mired in rebellion against God and alienated from God's revelation of himself through his people Israel. They were utterly without hope of escape from God's wrath. Then God, because he is overwhelmingly merciful, saved them and brought them into fellowship with his people, giving them a home in which he is Father, a home that turns out to be the temple where God's spiritual presence dwells.

Grant Osborne: The temple was holy because God's Shekinah glory (from the Hebrew shakan, to dwell) dwelt in it in the most holy place. The church is a temple because the Spirit is God's Shekinah dwelling in it.

* * * * * * * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) In what ways does our church set up fences or barriers that prevent the full inclusion of all believers together in one body on an equal basis? What type of prejudices affect our relationships with other believers?

2) How important is the unity of the church to its Head -- the Lord Jesus Christ? How does the reconciling work of Christ grant all believers equal access to the Father and full inclusion in the body of Christ?

3) How is it true that "the sum is greater than the parts" with respect to the unified strength of the church as it is being built up together?

4) Why would a holy God want to equip us to be His dwelling place? Do we often treat sinners as lepers that we want to stay as far away as possible from?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Clinton Arnold: **Exegetical Outline:**
Nearness to God in a New Community (2:11–22)
A. The Former Exclusion from God and His People (Once) (**2:11–12**)
    1. A call for Gentiles to remember their former plight (**2:11**)
    2. Five characteristics of their plight before the coming of Christ (**2:12**)
B. The New Closeness to God (Now) (**2:13**)
C. The Basis for This New Closeness and Inclusion in His People (**2:14–18**)
    1. Christ as the basis for peace (**2:14–16**)
        a. The unification of Jews and Gentiles (**2:14a-b**)
        b. The nullification of the Mosaic code (**2:14c–15a**)
            (1) The creation of a new humanity (**2:15b-c**)
            (2) Reconciliation to God (**2:16**)
    2. Christ's proclamation of the good news of peace (**2:17–18**)
D. Characteristics of the New Humanity (**2:19–22**)
    1. Fellow citizens and members of God's household (**2:19**)
    2. The new temple (**2:20–22**)

John MacArthur: God made Israel distinct for two reasons. First, He wanted the world to see and notice them, to realize that they did not live and act like other men. Second, He wanted them to be so distinct that they would never be amalgamated with other peoples. He gave them such strict dietary, clothing, marriage, ceremonial, and other laws that they could never fit easily into another society. Those distinctions, like the special blessings God gave them, were intended to be a tool for witness. But Israel continually perverted them into a source for pride, isolation, and self-glory.

John Stott: How can the apostle declare that Christ abolished the law when Christ himself in the Sermon on the Mount specifically declared the opposite, that he had not come to abolish it but to fulfil it? We shall see that the discrepancy is only verbal; in substance they were referring to the law in two different senses.

In the Sermon on the Mount the context shows that Jesus was referring to the moral law. He was teaching the difference betweeen Pharisaic righteousness and Christian righteousness, and urging that Christian righteousness involves a deep and radical obedience to the law. Paul's primary reference here, however, seems to be to the ceremonial law and to what NEB calls 'its rules and regulations', that is, to circumcision (the main physical distinction between Jews and Gentiles, verse 11), the material sacrifices, the dietary regulations and the rules about ritual 'cleanness' and 'uncleanness' which governed social relationships… They erected a serioius barrier between Jews and Gentiles, but Jesus set this whole ceremonial aside. And he did it in his flesh (surely a reference to his physical death) because in the cross he fulfilled all the types and shadows for the Old Testament ceremonial system.

It seems probable, however, that Paul is making another though secondary reference, this time to the moral, not the ceremonial law. Jesus certainly did not abolish the moral law as a standard of behaviour (it is still in force and binding on his followers); but he did abolish it as a way of salvation…

To sum up, Jesus abolished both the regulations of the ceremonial law and the condemnation of the moral law. Both were divisive. Both were put aside by the cross.

Homer Kent: Christ did more than simply ease the tension between Gentile and Jew. He created *'one new man*.' Thus there are three orders of man in this passage: Gentile, Jew, and Christian. As a result of Christ's work in redemption and regeneration, those who formerly were categorized as either Gentile or Jew are made Christians by new birth. In this *'new man*,' the former distinctions are irrelevant. Since Christ satisfied the Law and made it no longer operative, it is not now a question of forcing Gentiles to become proselytes and adopt Jewish practices. The Law with its distinctions was made inoperative for all believers, regardless of their ancestry. (Of course, the moral principles in the Mosaic law have always been God's will for men, and still are … But as a law code, complete with sacrifices and penalties, it was fulfilled and abolished by Christ. See Heb 7:11-19).

Wood: The aim of the process is that the church should become God's residence (*katoiketerios*). The term occurs only here and in Revelation 18:2 in the NT but is frequent in LXX to denote the divine resting place either on earth or in heaven. Formerly, God's earthly abode was thought to be on Mount Zion and in the Jerusalem temple. Now he makes his abode in the church. All this is achieved not only *by* but *in* the Spirit. He is at once the means and the element.

John Piper: There are not two saving covenants. There are not two saved peoples. And the reason is that there are not two ways of salvation. Verse 16 shows us the unifying foundation of salvation and the people of God. "[Christ] reconciled them both (Jew and gentile) in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity." Jews needed the cross and gentiles needed the cross. After centuries of animal sacrifices that pointed forward to the True Sacrifice, Jews needed to be reconciled to God and gentiles needed to be reconciled to God. There was enmity not only between Jew and gentile, but at root there was enmity between Jews and God and gentiles and God that needed to be overcome by the peace-making work of Christ.

So there was one great work of salvation on the cross when Jesus died to remove the enmity between God and Jew and between God and gentile. And he did this reconciling work not separately but in one body, the church. Jew and Gentile are reconciled to God in Christ. That is why being reconciled to God means being reconciled to each other. That is why there cannot be two peoples and two tracks to heaven. For there is one way to be reconciled to God: Christ reconciles us to God by uniting us to himself. And that means we become one body, Jew and gentile.

Clinton Arnold: Paul's mention of the **blood of Christ** as the basis for the new and marvelous experience of closeness to God (**2:13**) links this passage closely with the introductory blessing, where he affirms that believers have received redemption and forgiveness as a result of Christ's blood **(1:7**). This passage also has substantial connections to three subsequent passages in the letter.

> 1. Paul's teaching here serves as the basis for his subsequent appeal to unity in **4:1–3**. The peace that Christ brings (2:14, 15, 17) not only results in personal peace with God, but results in peace and reconciliation between members of the community, especially between Jews and Gentiles.
>
> 2. Paul's discussion of the former separation of the Gentile members of the community from God (**2:11–12**) not only highlights the blessing of their present nearness (**2:13**), but also serves as a reminder that they are now called to a lifestyle that sharply differs from the practices of the world around them (see **4:17–19**).
>
> 3. The metaphor that Paul develops of the church as a temple that God now inhabits by his Spirit (**2:19–22**) is important in helping his readers understand his subsequent appeals to "*be filled to all the fullness of God*" (**3:19**) and to "*be filled with the Spirit*" (**5:18**).

David Thompson: GOD WANTS US TO REMEMBER THAT THERE WAS A TIME WHEN WE HAD NO RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD, BUT THROUGH THE CROSSWORK AND SHED BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST WE ARE NOW RECONCILED TO AN AMAZING RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD.

Now in **verses 19-22** Paul uses a series of metaphors to describe the reality of our exalted grace status:

Metaphor #1 - **We are now heavenly citizens -- 2:19a.**
We are no longer strangers and aliens in our relationship with God; we are saintly citizens of heaven. Look at this. Because of our relationship with Jesus Christ we are fellow citizens with the saints and are of God's household. Many great saints are now in glory living in the actual household of God in heaven and we are right there with them. We are part of a heavenly franchise.

Metaphor #2 - **We are God's household -- 2:19b.**
We are part of God's Divine family. The church should be a place where people can come and hear and learn and grow. We are a family. The church should not be a strict order filled with all kinds of rules that make a family squirm.

Metaphor #3 - **We are a developing building -- 2:20.**
Now I want us to notice how a church that will stand is built upon the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, which is the Scriptures. The church that will always end up stable and standing is one that is built upon careful teaching of God's Word. That is

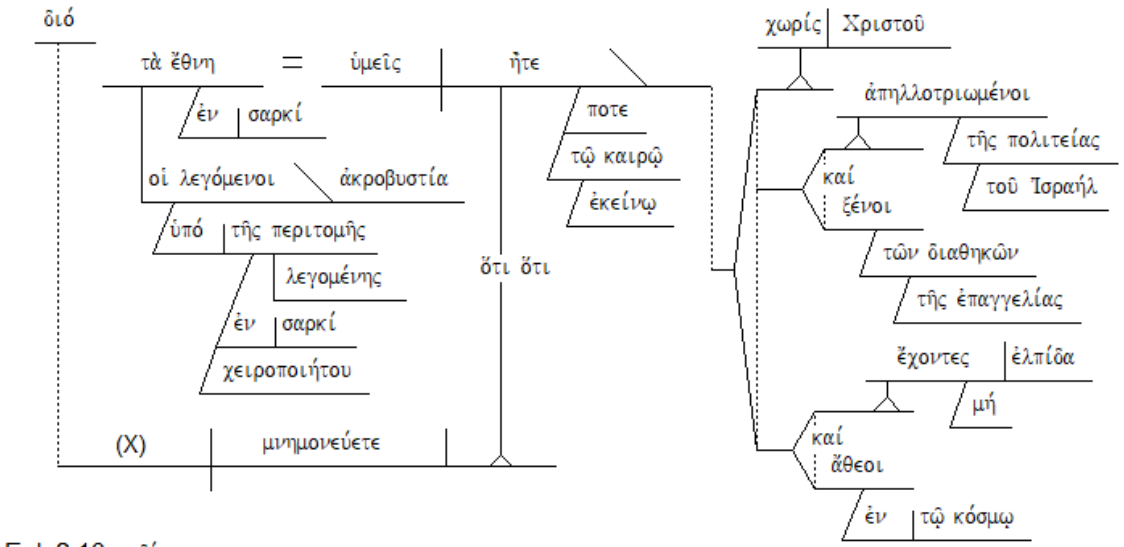
why Paul challenged Timothy in his final charge "*preach the word*." That is what builds the church strong. The household of God is built upon the foundation of the apostles and the prophets and Christ Jesus is the chief cornerstone. Now understand this. Careful understanding of the Scriptures starts with a relationship with Jesus Christ and the process of actually becoming a household of God comes through understanding the apostolic and prophetic Scriptures. This is exactly why we must preach and point people to Jesus Christ. Not the O.T. Law, not their works, not their religion. Jesus Christ is the key to a relationship with God.

Metaphor #4 - **We are a growing holy temple -- 2:21a.**
Now don't overlook the fact that the text says we are being fitted together and we are growing. What that language means is that we are not complete yet, but we are getting there. The church is not some static structure. We are people who believe in Jesus Christ and then we come and we learn and we grow and we are fitted together.

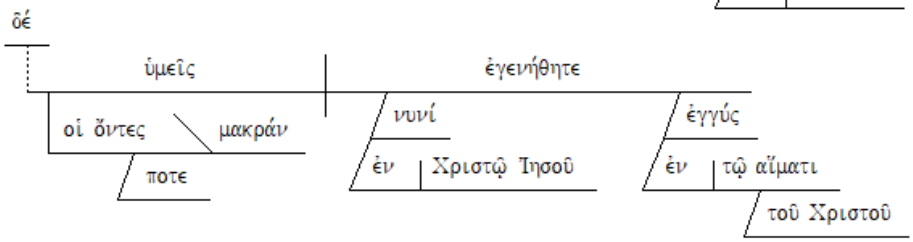
Metaphor #5 - **We are the dwelling place of God -- 2:21b-22.**
God dwells in every single believer- Jew and Gentile. What God wants and what Paul wanted is that believers realize the amazing grace that is found in Jesus Christ.

Leedy Greek Diagram:

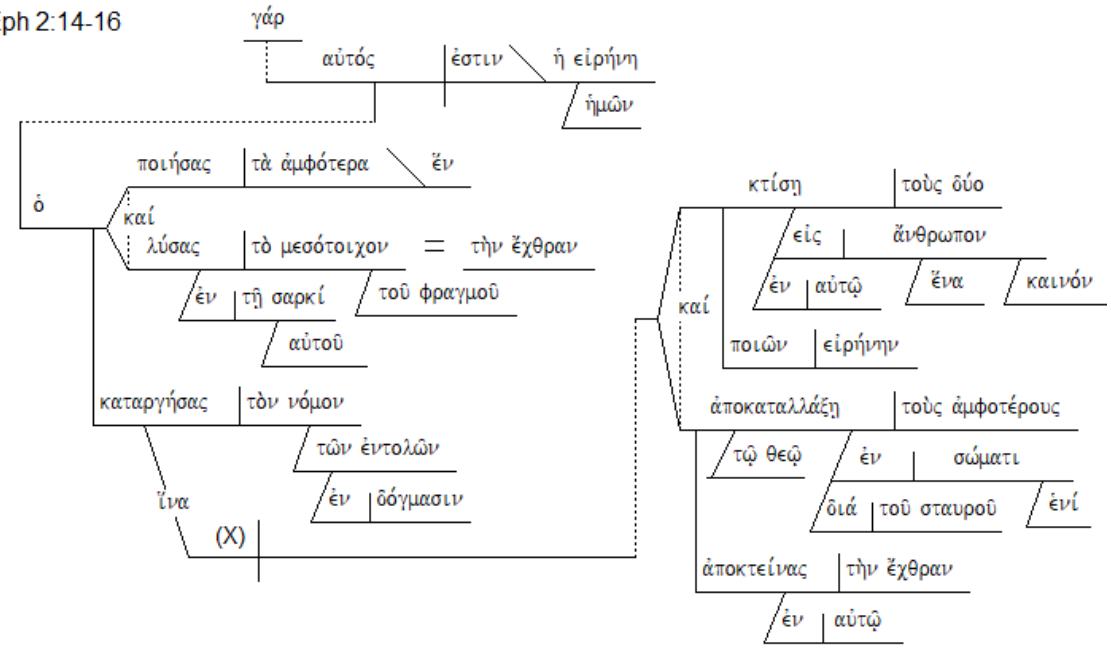
Eph 2:11-12



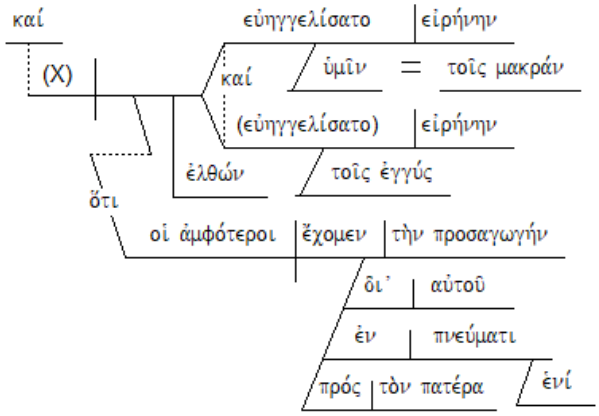
Eph 2:13



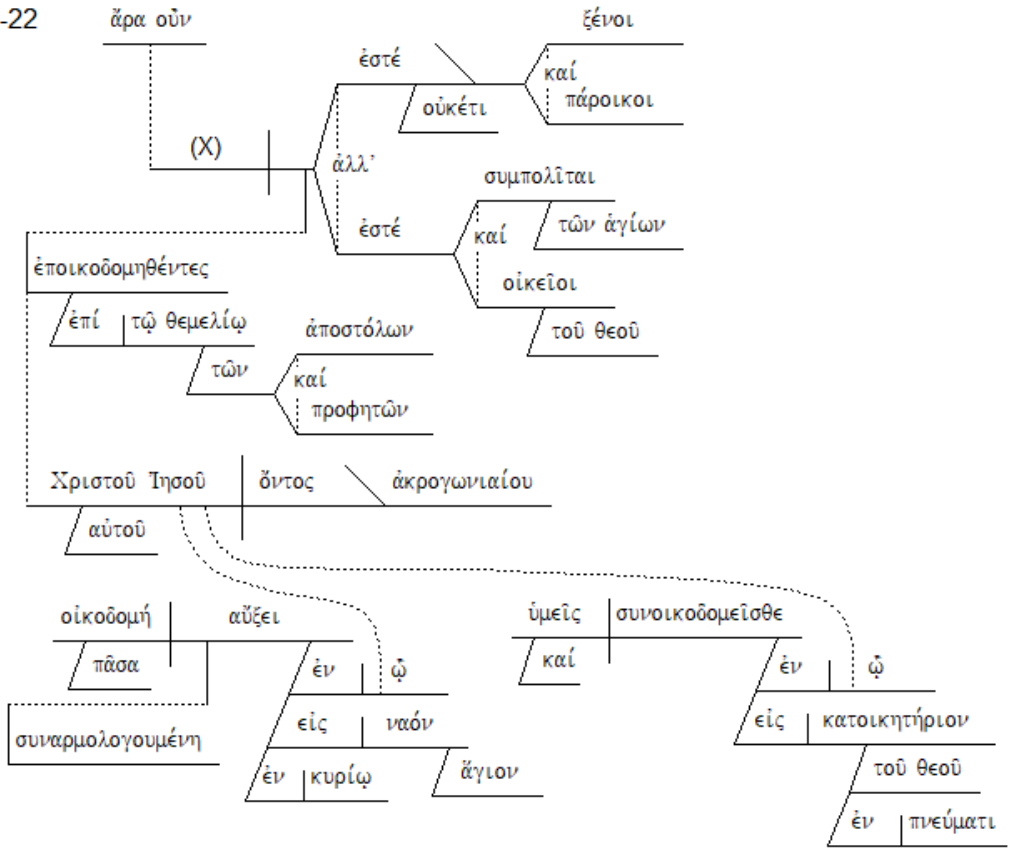
Eph 2:14-16



Eph 2:17-18



Eph 2:19-22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κατοικητήριον
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TEXT: EPHESIANS 3:1-13

TITLE: REVELATION OF THE CHURCH –
MANIFESTING THE WISDOM AND PURPOSE OF GOD

BIG IDEA:
GRANTING THE GENTILES EQUAL ACCESS AND PRIVILEGES IN THE BODY OF CHRIST MANIFESTS THE MANIFOLD WISDOM AND ETERNAL PURPOSE OF GOD

INTRODUCTION:

Andrew Lincoln: **3:1–13** is formally a digression on Paul's apostolic ministry to the Gentiles and on the mystery which had been revealed to him and was at the heart of his ministry. The original intention of the thought begun in **3:1** is not completed, because the reference in it to Paul as a prisoner for the sake of the Gentiles leads to an expatiation on this theme. **3:1**, then, is anacoluthic, and the repetition of the opening phrase τούτου χάριν, "*for this reason*," in **3:14** suggests that at that point the writer takes up again the intention with which he had started out in **3:1**, which can now be seen to be to intercede on behalf of his Gentile Christian readers.

Grant Osborne: The organization of this section is determined by grammar. An opening and a closing (**vv. 1, 13**, respectively) frame two lengthy sentences (**vv. 2–7, 8–12**), and the two parts of this material are **verses 1–7** and **8–13**. These two parts describe the what (the mystery of God revealed, **vv. 1–7**) and the how (proclaiming and illuminating the mystery, **vv. 8–12**) of Paul's ministry.

Clinton Arnold: A key function of this passage is to give Paul's readers a broader, divine perspective on his imprisonment and suffering, which he alludes to again at later intervals in the letter (**4:1; 6:20**). This divine purpose is fulfilled in Christ's work in creating the church, but the implications of his work extend through all of creation, reaching to the heavenly places and the hostile principalities and powers (**3:10**).

The function of this passage appears to go beyond a divine perspective on the role of Paul's suffering, however, to incorporate the fulfillment of his apostolic role of illuminating his readers' understanding about the nature of God's plan, which he calls "*the mystery*" in this passage (see **3:9**). In other words, by writing this letter, praying for his readers' eyes to be illuminated (**1:18**), and explaining the nature of the mystery, Paul is fulfilling his divine commission. Paul's life also serves as an inspirational example to his readers on the all-important task of proclaiming the riches of Christ (**3:8**; see also **6:15, 17; 4:10–11**). . .

God has revealed a new and definitive stage in his eternal plan that involves creating a people for himself consisting of Jews and Gentiles united to Christ and joined to one another. All who have faith in Jesus Christ become a part of this new community and

have direct and immediate access to the Father. This new plan, which Paul calls a "*mystery*," reflects the infinite wisdom of God and is a message of defeat to the evil supernatural realm. Paul explains that God has given him the ministry of proclaiming and explaining this marvelous plan.

Stephen Fowl: **Verses 2–12** remind readers of God's eternal purpose to bring together Jew and Gentile in Christ, reconciling them in one body through the cross. Moreover, such a purpose was hidden from previous generations and unimaginable apart from the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. Even so, God graciously revealed this "mystery" to Paul and to others for the establishment of the church of Jews and Gentiles, a church that is capable of bearing witness to the powers of God's manifold wisdom in Christ. Thus any suffering that comes Paul's way in the course of fulfilling this commission must be understood in the light of God's providence. This account establishes Paul's credentials as an interpreter of God's gracious activity on behalf of the Gentiles. At the same time such an account makes it clear that Paul is no more than a servant of this gospel, whose revelation and acceptance is ultimately in God's hands. In this light, Paul's imprisonment is not a crisis. Rather, it simply represents a further episode in the drama of salvation.

CONTEXT

"*for this reason*"

Bruce Hurt: refers back to **Eph 2:11-22** in which he described the building together of the saints - "*seeing that you* (Jew and Gentile) *are being built together*". Because you Gentiles are fellow citizens with God's people, and especially because you Ephesians are included in the temple of God, a dwelling of God. He is introducing his prayer for them but immediately digresses and will not pick up the prayer until **Eph 3:14** which also begins "*for this reason*."

Ray Stedman: In **Eph 3:1**. Paul says, "*For this reason I, Paul*." I want to stop right there. If you move down to **verse 14**, he uses the exact terminology: "*For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father*." Paul starts off to pray in chapter 3, but immediately he backs away. Before he prays, he wants them to understand something. **Verses 2-13** could be put in parenthesis. He starts his prayer, suddenly stops, and then starts up again in **verse 14.** Why does he do that? Well, he wants to tell them of a mystery that has been revealed to his heart. The bottom line is that he is going to pray that what has been revealed to him will be revealed to them.

William Barclay: Someone has spoken of Paul's habit of "*going off at a word*." A single word or idea can send his thoughts off at a tangent. When he speaks of himself as "**the prisoner of Christ,**" it makes him think of the universal love of God and of his part in bringing that love to the Gentiles.

I. (:1-5) THE REVELATION OF THE CHURCH (A PRECIOUS TREASURE) HAS BEEN ENTRUSTED TO FAITHFUL STEWARDS (THE EXAMPLE OF PAUL -- STEWARDSHIP OF THE GRACE OF GOD)

A. (:1) Picture of a Faithful Steward = "*Prisoner*"

Great analogy because Paul writes this epistle from prison – but he views his imprisonment as unto the Lord in a greater mission rather than unto the enemies of the cross of Christ who are trying to fight against God's program

Clinton Arnold: The reason for Paul's incarceration has nothing to do with a moral lapse, God's displeasure, or anything that should cause the readers' concern. It is possible that some of the Gentile readers were concerned about Paul's imprisonment and thereby questioned his authority over the churches and their lives. In point of fact, Paul is in Roman custody precisely because of his unswerving and sacrificial commitment to fulfill his divine commission to make the gospel known to the Gentiles (see **Acts 26:19–23**). The Gentile readers of this letter are among those who owe their salvation to Paul's obedient fulfillment of his apostolic call.

1. Serves in Submission to the Master = "*Christ Jesus*"
   - he has given up all rights and completely surrendered to the will of the Master
   - a voluntary, liberating type of bondage as opposed to the bondage of sin and death

2. Serves for the Benefit of Believing Gentiles
   - "*for the sake of you Gentiles*"
   - not serving for his own benefit

Andrew Lincoln: Paul's imprisonment was integral to his special apostolic ministry of proclaiming the gospel to the Gentiles. Historically, his advocacy of a law-free Gentile mission was what provoked the opposition which led to his arrest and imprisonment. Now it is not just Gentiles in general, but the readers in particular, who are to see themselves as indebted to the sort of apostleship which would suffer in this way, as the form of direct address, "*you Gentiles*," is continued from the previous pericope.

Clinton Arnold: In other words, what prompts Paul's digression and his discussion of the unique call of God on his life is a concern for the spiritual health and well-being of his Gentile readers.

John Phillips: The Jews were infuriated when Paul taught that believing Gentiles were full members of God's family and the fellowship of saints. The Jews' national pride was stung. Even in the church many Jewish believers thought that Gentiles should become Jews in order to be Christians, or at least they should be regarded as second-class citizens in the kingdom. Paul's emancipating gospel annoyed many Jews, even within the church. They disliked his wholehearted acceptance of Gentiles into the church, free from all Jewish laws, traditions, and customs. They resented his vocal and tireless championship of the Gentile believers' cause. They felt threatened by his zealous,

far-reaching efforts to bring more and more Gentiles into the church. The vast majority of unbelieving Jews regarded Paul with horror and considered him a dangerous heretic. Paul, however, did not criticize the Jews for opposing him. He knew where they were coming from; he had been there himself.

B. (:2) Precious Nature of the Treasure

"*God's grace*"

1. "*given to me*"

2. "*for you*"

Van Parunak: The object of the stewardship is "*the grace of God*." Throughout Paul's epistles, the focus of this grace is the unexpected and unmerited admission of Gentiles to the privileges of the people of God, and his privilege in bearing that message.

Kenneth Wuest: Paul was given the responsibility of having oversight or management over the grace of God in the sense that he was to administer it in its publicity. He was given the revelation of the grace of God and the responsibility of properly preaching and teaching it.

C. (:3a) Process of Being Entrusted with the Treasure

"*by revelation there was made known to me the mystery*"

Def. of "*mystery*" – previously unknown, but now God was revealing it

not something that Paul studied or figured out on his own;
not something that was in any way corrupted or confused

Clinton Arnold: Paul now explains the source and nature of this stewardship that God has entrusted to him. It is clearly not an insight or a plan that Paul himself has conceived. It has come directly to him by revelation from God (κατὰ ἀποκάλυψιν ἐγνωρίσθη).

D. (:3b-4) Propagation of that Insight

1. Communicated Briefly in Earlier Writings
   "*as I wrote before in brief*"

2. Elaborated on in this Epistle to Provide Fuller Understanding
   "*And by referring to this, when you read you can understand*"

3. Focus of this Insight – Transition to Point #2
   "*insight into the mystery of Christ*"
   This is the key that needs to be understood

John MacArthur: Paul's hope was that they would come to **understand** his God-given **insight into the mystery of Christ.** *Sunesis* (*insight*) literally means to bring together and metaphorically refers to comprehension and understanding, mentally bringing knowledge together in order to grasp its full meaning and significance. Spiritual insight must always precede practical application, because what is not properly understood cannot be properly applied.

Bruce Hurt: *Insight* (4907) (*sunesis* from *suniemi* = to comprehend, reason out in turn derived from sun = with + hiemi = send) literally is a sending together or a bringing together. Sunesis describes the putting together, grasping or exhibiting quick comprehension. Sunesis is the ability to understand concepts and see relationships between them and thus describes the faculty of comprehension, intelligence, acuteness, shrewdness. Sunesis suggests quickness of apprehension, the penetrating consideration which precedes action. Sunesis was originally used by Homer in the Odyssey to describe the running together or a flowing together of two rivers. In secular Greek sunesis first meant union and confluence (cf two rivers becoming one) and then comprehension, understanding and discernment. Sunesis describes "a union or bringing together of the mind with an object, and so used to denote the faculty of quick comprehension, intelligence, sagacity… that quality of mind which combines: understanding not only of facts, but of facts in their mutual relations. (Vincent)

E. (:5) Privilege of Revelation and Enlightenment

1. Not a Privilege enjoyed in the past

"*which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men*"

2. But a Privilege made possible in the present

"*as it has now been revealed*"

3. The Divinely Appointed Ministers of this Message

"*to His holy apostles and prophets*"

Combination of:

- Character
- Function

4. The Divinely Appointed Medium for this Communication

"*in the Spirit*"

II. (:6) THE CONTENT OF THE REVELATION EMPHASIZES THE EQUAL ACCESS AND PRIVILEGES AFFORDED TO THE GENTILES IN THE BODY OF CHRIST

Clinton Arnold: Paul reveals that at the heart of the mystery God has revealed is the fact that Gentiles now share equally with Jews in the blessings of the new covenant life with God. Paul brings this out with the threefold repetition of the preposition (*σύν*) as a prefix attached to the key nouns of the verse. This threefold stress on "*together*"

emphasizes the obliteration of any distinctions in God's way of bringing salvation to his people. God's people will now be identified by their togetherness in a multiethnic loving group endowed by the Spirit of God rather than by circumcision, ritual purity, and bloody sacrifices. . .

Gentiles come to participate in these blessings when they hear and respond to the gospel (διὰ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου; see **1:13–14**) and enter into a dynamic union with the living Christ (ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ). By entering a relationship with Jesus Christ, the Gentiles become children of Abraham and become heirs of the promised blessings made to him (**Gal 3:7, 26–29**). Union with Christ reverses the curse of exclusion that Paul spoke of in **Eph 2:12**.

A. Equal Access and Privileges with True Israel – "*Gentiles are*":

1. "*fellow-heirs*" – Future Inheritance

equal share

Van Parunak: The inheritance that the Spirit has sealed to us (**1:14**) is one that we hold in common with spiritual Israel. The word is used in **Heb 11:9** to describe the relation between Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; we share as closely with Israel in God's promised blessings as did the patriarchs with one another. This adjective emphasizes our membership in the family, through which the inheritance is passed, cf. **2:19**, "*members of the household of God*." It is a remarkable claim, when we consider how important inheritance rights were to Israel. Even within Israel, one family could not take over the inheritance of another in perpetuity (e.g., the restoration of land to the original family in the year of Jubilee, **Lev 25**). But now we Gentiles are made fellow-heirs with Israel. Relation to "*partakers of his promise*": we are named in the will. Leads us to expect a share.

2. "*fellow-members of the body*" – Present Fellowship / Total Inclusion

no second class citizens

S. Lewis Johnson: And that's a magnificent relationship we have it is not? Gentiles and Jews now brought together in one redeeming company, fellow heirs, fellow members of the body, this one new man, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ by the Gospel. . .

It is a new international community, too. Jews and Gentiles, all equal in Christ. They are not joined to the Jewish nation and subordinated to them in significance, but there is one new, or to use the adjective "new" in its stress, one fresh man, for that's the idea of the Greek word *kainos* which is used there instead of the word *neos*. One fresh man. Isn't that a magnificent thing, that we Gentiles are now members of the church of Jesus Christ, fellow partakers of the promise in Christ by the Gospel? We're called Children of Abraham, seed of Abraham, because we possess those promises. Something remarkable and new in the unfolding of God's program.

3. "*fellow-partakers of the promises*" – All Guaranteed by a Faithful God

Van Parunak: This is the fruit of the first two. Because we are fellow-heirs and in fact members of the same body, we enjoy the benefits that God has promised Israel.

Grant Osborne: They are also "*sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus*." The term "*sharers*" means **fellow partakers** or participants in an enterprise, and the promise refers to "*the promised Holy Spirit*" in **1:13**. Jew and Gentile in this sense are virtual business partners in the Spirit's promised new enterprise, the church. There is probably also a reflection of the Abrahamic promise that in Christ the Gentiles would be blessed. All of this takes place "*in Christ Jesus*," a key theme throughout Ephesians. It is only through the work of Christ and in him that all these wondrous new realities have come to pass.

As Paul stresses throughout this letter, the union of the disparate people groups in the church takes place only through their union with Christ. Union with him makes possible our union with one another. Only in this way can the wall of hostility between us be nullified (**2:14**).

B. Centered "*in Christ Jesus*"

C. Accomplished by the Power of the Gospel
"*through the gospel*"

III. (:7-11) THE PURPOSE OF THE REVELATION IS TO MAKE KNOWN THE RICHES OF CHRIST – UNFOLDING THE WISDOM AND PURPOSE OF GOD'S PLAN FOR THE CHURCH (WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON THE ROLE OF THE GENTILES)

A. (:7-8) Privilege of Being Made a Minister of the Gospel

Clinton Arnold: With this transitional verse, Paul brings his discussion of the content of the mystery to a conclusion and begins to explain his divinely commissioned role as a steward of the mystery.

Martin: Re "*minister*" -- Paul was made a servant by God's gift. This is the word transliterated in English as *deacon* -- one who serves or waits on tables. Paul never considered his office something high, removing him from other men. He always spoke of himself humbly."

1. Based on Grace
"*according to the gift of God's grace*"

2. Enabled by Power
"*which was given to me according to the working of His power*"

3. Not Based on Merit

"*To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given*"

Frank Thielman: Paul's reference to himself as "*the least of all the saints*" in **3:8** probably shows us the link between these two uses of the term "*grace*." God's willingness to use Paul to preach the gospel among the Gentiles was a signal demonstration of his grace (**3:7**; cf. **Gal. 1:13–16; 1 Cor. 15:9–10; 1 Tim. 1:12–16**). Just as in salvation generally, God's grace is evident in his desire to save those who are dead in trespasses and sins, so with Paul specifically, God's grace is evident in his use of a former persecutor of the church, and zealot for an exclusivist form of Jewish tradition, to preach the good news that the Gentiles are now included among God's people.

4. Method of the Mission
   "*to preach*"

5. Target Audience
   "*to the Gentiles*"

6. Inexhaustible Depth of the Message
   "*the unfathomable riches of Christ*"

Frank Thielman: If the previous section (**3:1–7**) was primarily about the link between Paul's administrative responsibility and the mystery of the Gentiles' inclusion in the church, then this section [:**8-13**] is chiefly devoted to the ways in which he has carried out that role (Schnackenburg 1991: 129; Best 1998: 292; Hoehner 2002: 453) and why the role was necessary. He has fulfilled the role that God gave him in two ways.

1. First, he has proclaimed the good news of the unsearchable riches of Christ to the Gentiles (**v. 8b**),
2. and second, he has illumined everyone, whether Jew or Gentile, about the mystery that the Creator of the universe has now revealed (**v. 9**).

B. (:9-10) Privilege of Making Known the Mystery of God's Wisdom

1. Mission of Enlightenment
   "*and to bring to light*"

2. Mystery of God's Working Behind the Scenes of Human History
   "*what is the administration of the mystery*"

Grant Osborne: Here the emphasis is not on the **what** of the mystery but on the **how**: the way God has implemented his plan of salvation for the world. As missionary to the Gentiles Paul is part of that plan, and he wants to pass on his insights to the church so they can take their place as part of that mission. In other words, the mystery is the outworking of the gospel in the mission of the church, the proclamation of the salvation brought about through the sacrificial death of Christ and the new union of all people groups that has resulted.

3. Muzzled for Ages

"*which for ages has been hidden in God, who created all things*"

4. Manifold Wisdom of God

"*in order that the manifold wisdom of God*"

Van Parunak: "*Manifold*" means literally "many-folded," and describes something that has many components, that brings many diverse things together. Cf. the exhaust manifold on an engine, which brings together the exhaust from the different cylinders. The Greek word means "many-colored, variegated," describing an embroidered garment, but the figurative sense is the same. "Manifold wisdom" or "variegated wisdom" is complex, with many parts and perspectives, apparently paradoxical, unable to be summarized simply.

5. Medium and Timing of Enlightenment

"*might now be made known through the church*"

6. Mighty Audience

"*to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places*"

Grant Osborne: Many believe that the "*rulers and authorities*" are composed of both good and bad angels, but Paul is interested here only in the forces of evil, who are focused on doing harm to the cause of God and Christ in this world. When Satan entered Judas and led Christ to the cross, he may have thought this was a great victory (though he undoubtedly knew **Isaiah 52–53** as well as we do), but **Colossians 2:15** tells us that at the very moment of his death Christ disarmed the evil powers and led them in his victory procession. The church participates in that victory every day through its mission to the world and by believers living holy lives.

E. F. Scott: The hostile powers had sought to frustrate the work of God, and believed they had succeeded when they conspired against Christ and brought about his Crucifixion. But unwittingly they had been mere instruments in God's hands. The death of Christ had been the very means He had devised for the accomplishment of His plan. So it is here declared that the hostile powers, after their brief apparent triumph, had now become aware of a divine wisdom they had never dreamed of. They saw the Church arising as the result of Christ's death and giving effect to what they could now perceive to have been the hidden purpose of God.

C. (:11) Privilege of Unfolding the Eternal Purpose of the Church

"*This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord*."

Clinton Arnold: The idea here is not that God thought up this plan, but that he had this plan in mind before he created humanity and is now bringing it to realization. Jesus Christ is the central figure in the fulfillment of God's plan. He has been exalted to the right hand of God, a position of power and authority, and will completely realize God's

plan that will lead to the summing up of everything in heaven and on earth (**1:10**). For the hostile principalities and powers, this will entail their ultimate subjugation.

IV. (:12-13) CONCLUSION: TWO APPLICATIONS

A. (:12) With Regard to Our Relationship to Christ Jesus our Lord

1. What do we have?

"*boldness*"
"*confident access*"

Clinton Arnold: Combined with "*access*", this expression explicates the new "*nearness*" (**2:13**) with God. Because of his kindness, love, and mercy coupled with the reconciliation that has taken place by the blood of Jesus Christ, believers can experience a closeness to God. As part of this relationship, God's people need feel no restraint in approaching God in prayer or worship. They can pray at any time with no fear of being turned away because of ritual impurity or some form of unworthiness. Because of the work of Christ, which constitutes the means of their reconciliation, there are no ritual performances of any kind that are necessary to approach God. Because of what Christ has accomplished, they can approach God with full confidence (πεποιθήσει). This term simply reinforces the idea of freedom of access to the Father with no fear of recrimination or rejection.

2. How?

"*through faith in Him*"

B. (:13) With Regard to Our Inner Peace of Mind and Heart

"*Therefore I ask you not to lose heart at my tribulations on your behalf, for they are your glory*."

Be Encouraged … Not Discouraged --
Paul's Imprisonment Has Been Worth the Suffering

Clinton Arnold: The fact that Paul fears that these readers might become disheartened because of his sufferings reveals that they have a sufficient personal knowledge of him and a bond of affection toward him so that his adversity could have an emotional impact on them. This strongly personal tone reflected here needs to balance the often-heard remarks by some commentators that this letter is impersonal. This statement of concern also needs to be factored into the array of reasons that has prompted Paul to write this letter.

Grant Osborne: The mention of Paul's suffering here brackets this section, along with **verse 1**, where he calls himself "*the prisoner of Christ*." Paul's own suffering prompts him to think of what the Christians in the province of Asia are going through for Christ. There was indeed intense persecution, as seen in 1 Peter and, reflecting the situation thirty years later, in Revelation; both these letters were written to churches in the area. Paul's point throughout this section is that his and their suffering is more than

worthwhile, since through them the gospel is being proclaimed and the mystery of Christ being worked out in the growth of the church. All of this takes place in the midst of, and partly because of, all they are going through. Paul has never minded afflictions as long as they are serving the cause of Christ (see **Rom 8:31–39; 1 Cor 12:21–29**).

The theme of **1 Peter** can be summed up as "Suffering is the path to glory." That is the theme of this verse as well. Paul had by this time been suffering imprisonment for about four years. He had been arrested in Jerusalem (**Acts 21:27–36**), was taken to Caesarea after the Jews threatened his life (**Acts 23:23–35**), and was incarcerated there for two years (**Acts 24:27**) before being sent to Rome. There he stayed in a rented home for which he himself paid, though he was chained to Roman guards (**Acts 28:20, 30**). He had freedom and space in his apartment to entertain visitors (**Acts 28:17, 23**) but was on trial for his life before Nero. Even two years into his imprisonment he did not know whether he would live or die, though he expected that God would spare him for his ministry's sake (**Phil 1:19–26**). Still, Paul rejoiced because God was using his imprisonment to advance the gospel (**Phil 1:12–14**). Could we handle all of this—four plus years on trial for our life, with an entire nation ostensibly seeking our death? From this perspective our own difficulties suddenly don't seem so arduous!

Therefore, Paul admonishes the Ephesians not to be discouraged at all the suffering he is enduring.

Stephen Fowl: This section concludes with a sentence that helps bring the two long expositions of God's mystery and of Paul's role in proclaiming that mystery into clearer perspective. The sentence begins with "*Therefore*." This conjunction brings to completion the conditional sentence that began in **3:2**. It summarizes the point or aim for which Paul has discussed the stewardship that God has given to Paul, about which the Ephesians have already heard. Because Paul has now discussed at some length the nature of his stewardship, the Ephesians are in a position to assent to a request. That request is that they not lose hope in Paul's tribulations on their behalf. Presumably these tribulations find their current focus in Paul's status as a prisoner (cf. **3:1**).

* * * * * * * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Would we be willing to suffer as a prisoner for the benefit of the message of salvation reaching others? Think of some present day missionary stories where different ones were taken captive and God worked out His purposes through the trial and the suffering.

2) What is the difference between "*revelation*" and receiving "*insight*" from God to understand spiritual truth?

3) Do we tend to treat any class of believers as second class citizens in the household of God?

4) Do we tend to take for granted "*the unfathomable riches of Christ*" and the bold and confident access that we have into the presence of God through Christ?

* * * * * * * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Clinton Arnold: **Paul's Stewardship of the Mystery (3:1–13)**
A. The Revelation of the Mystery to Paul (**3:1–7**)
B. The Nature of Paul's Stewardship of the Mystery (**3:8–12**)
C. Paul's Concern for the Readers (**3:13**)

John MacArthur: **Outline (:1-14)**
I. The prisoner of the mystery
II. The planning of the mystery
III. The preaching of the mystery
IV. The purposes of the mystery
V. The privileges of the mystery.

David Thompson: PAUL WANTS GRACE AGE BELIEVERS TO REALIZE THAT HE SUFFERED GREATLY IN ORDER TO PREACH THE MYSTERY OF THE GRACE GOSPEL AND THE GRACE AGE DISPENSATION OF THE CHURCH.

William Hendriksen: Re "*For this reason*" **vs 1** -- The meaning, accordingly, must be, Because blessings so great have been bestowed upon both Gentile and Jew -- reconciliation with God and with one another, and the erection of one sanctuary consisting of Jew and Gentile -- therefore, etc. In fact, in view of the equally close relation between chapters 1 and 2, and the recurrence in **3:4, 9** of the concept *mystery*, first mentioned in **1:9**, it is very probable that the connection goes back even further and includes all that has gone before in this epistle.

Lenski: Re "*the riches of Christ*" -- all the saving grace and gifts belonging to Christ, which as "riches" abound to the uttermost. Paul was the hand of God to dispense this wealth without money or without price especially to the Gentiles. The blessedness of this office is ever present to his mind. He, an abortion that as a vile thing should have been buried out of sight (**I Cor. 15:8**), was made a great instrument of God.

Kenneth Wuest: Re **vs. 2** -- The word *'dispensation*' is o*ikonomia*, made up of *oikos*, 'a house' and *nomos*, 'law,' thus, 'the law of the house.' The word speaks in general of the oversight, management, or administration one has over something. Paul was given the responsibility of having oversight or management over the grace of God in the sense that he was to administer it in its publicity. He was given the revelation of the grace of God and the responsibility of properly preaching and teaching it.

John Stott: But what neither the Old Testament nor Jesus revealed was the radical nature of God's plan, which was that the theocracy (the Jewish nation under God's rule)

would be terminated, and replaced by a new international community, the church; that this church would be 'the body of Christ', organically united to him; and that Jews and Gentiles would be incorporated into Christ and his church on equal terms without any distinction. It was this complete union of Jews, Gentiles and Christ which was radically new, and which God revealed to Paul, overcoming his entrenched Jewish prejudice.

John MacArthur: The church does not exist simply for the purpose of saving souls, though that is a marvelous and important work. The supreme purposes of the church, as Paul makes explicit here, is to glorify God by manifesting His wisdom before the angels, who can then offer greater praise to God. The purpose of the universe is to give glory to God, and that will be its ultimate reality after all evil is conquered and destroyed…. The church is not an end in itself but a means to an end, the end of glorifying God.

Homer Kent: From ages past the plan to form one new body of believers in Christ had been hidden. It was no afterthought, however, for all the time it was hidden in God, that is, in His mind and purpose. But only now in connection with the apostles' ministry was it made known to the world. God is referred to in His capacity as creator of all things. It reminds us that in view of God's creatorship of all things, even the church was in God's plan at the beginning, and thus this new development is in perfect harmony with all creation.

John Piper: And the target for the church is to demonstrate to the evil powers of the cosmos that God has been wise in sending his Son to die that we might have hope and be unified in one body, the church. Therefore, when we fail to live in hope and to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace we send this signal through the galaxies: God's purpose is failing; he was not wise, he was foolish.

I said last week that your gift, your God-given ability to disperse grace and strengthen faith, may seem small, but that as a part of God's eternal revelation of his glory it takes on stupendous proportions. Now we can see just how stupendous, for what's at stake is not merely being the light of the world but the light of the cosmos. The church is the cosmic showcase of God's mercy and if we fail to live as joyful beneficiaries of his mercy and fail to maintain the unity of the Spirit, we bring a cosmic reproach upon the wisdom of God.

Grant Osborne: God has created a new, united household in which Jew and Gentile live as an integrated family. He has chosen Paul to oversee that household and bring it together. Note how the images for the church coalesce in chapters 2 and 3: The church is a community in which disparate people groups have been reconciled, and as such they are brought together as a united family. As one, they constitute a household and also the building in which that family lives (echoing **1 Pet 2:5**). Finally, that building has become God's temple, the house in which the Godhead dwells with God's people. The images just keep piling up on one another! The next time you go to church, picture

yourself and the others in the service as God's family sitting in the most holy place celebrating his living presence!

Clinton Arnold: So God's plan of uniting Jews and Gentiles into one body on an equal basis through the work of Christ was beyond the apprehension of anyone in the OT era.

In affirming this **distinction**, however, one needs to be cautious not to overstate the **discontinuity**. It is clear in the OT that God planned to extend his blessings to the Gentile nations (see **Gen 12:3; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14**). There are also many prophetic texts that speak of Gentiles coming to worship God as well as references to Israel's vocation to be a light to the Gentiles (see **Isa 2:1–4; 11:10; 49:6; 60:1–3; Jer 3:17; Zech 8:20–23; 14:16–19**). There was also the expectation of a descendant of David who would come and reign as an anointed King (**2 Sam 7:11–16; Ps 89:20–29**). So, **in what sense is this plan of God previously unknown**, thus requiring divine revelation and insight to grasp its significance? There are at least four ways.

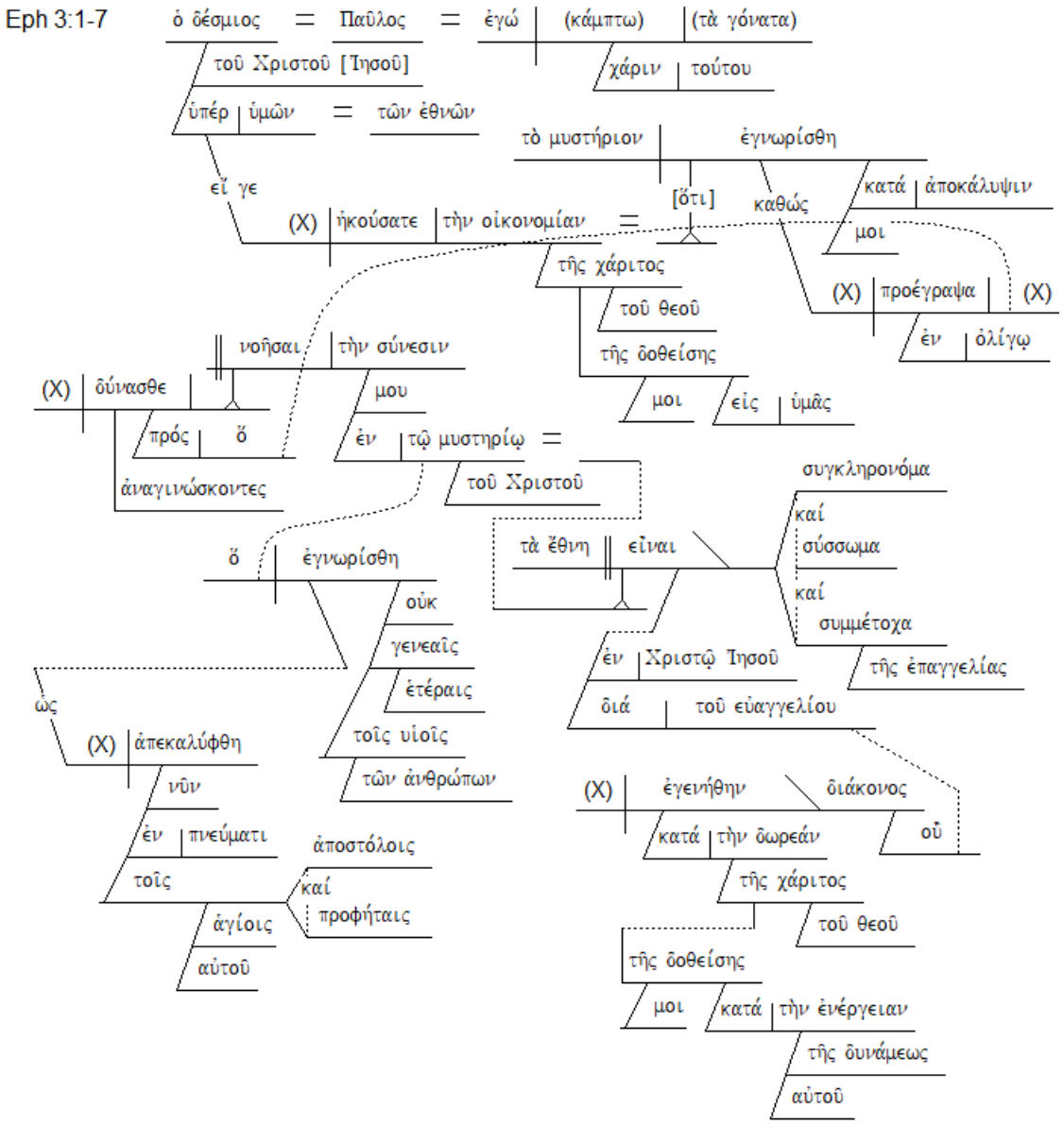
1. The means by which God's purpose would be realized was new and unexpected. The fact that the Messiah would pour out his blood (**2:13, 14, 15**) to accomplish God's redemptive purposes was unanticipated. Rather than coming as a shattering stone to destroy the human kingdoms, Jesus came to demolish the dividing wall by offering his flesh on the cross. His blood was the means by which he conquered the greatest enemy of all—the power of sin (1:7; 2:1–3).

2. A second unforeseen way by which God accomplished his redemptive purpose was through **the abrogation of the Mosaic law**. No one could have anticipated that God would lay aside the conditions imposed by the Mosaic law for entering a relationship with him and being counted as his people. Because the Mosaic code separated Gentiles from the Jews and required a Gentile essentially to become a Jew to be saved, it could not serve as the basis for a plan that gave Jew and Gentile access to God on an equal footing.

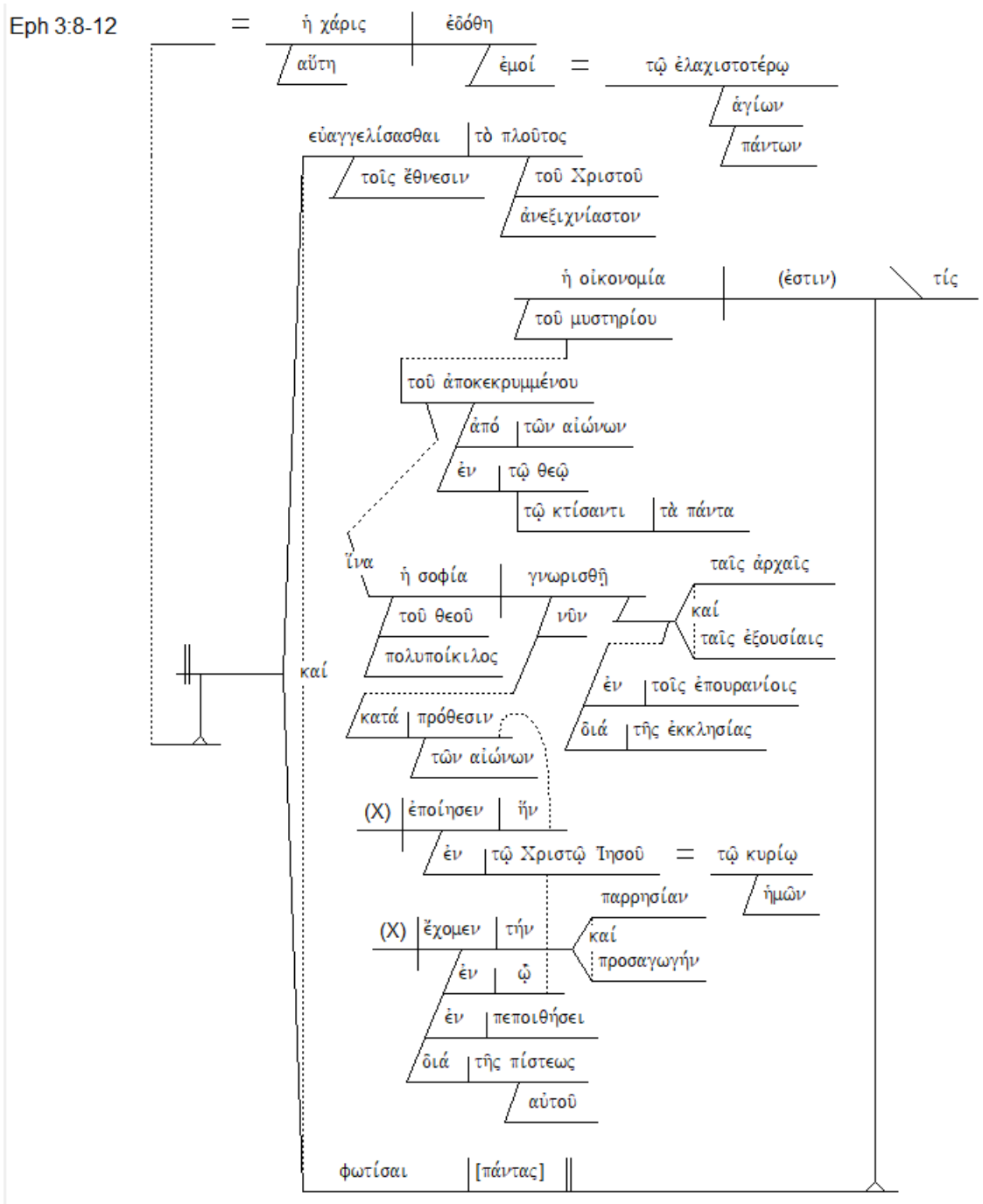
3. The manner in which God's purpose would be realized was new and unexpected. The incorporation of Jews and Gentiles into one body with equal access to God on an equal footing is entirely new (**2:14–18**). On the basis of OT revelation, one would not have been able to discern this way that God would create a new people for himself.

4. Finally, the new covenant "entails a **degree of nearness to the Lord** that exceeds the expectations of the old covenant." The concept of nearness is brought out strongly in Paul's discussion of this new dispensation in **2:11–22**, especially in the theologically central text of the passage: "*but now in Christ Jesus you who once were far have become near by the blood of Christ*" (**2:13**).

Leedy Greek Diagram:



Eph 3:8-12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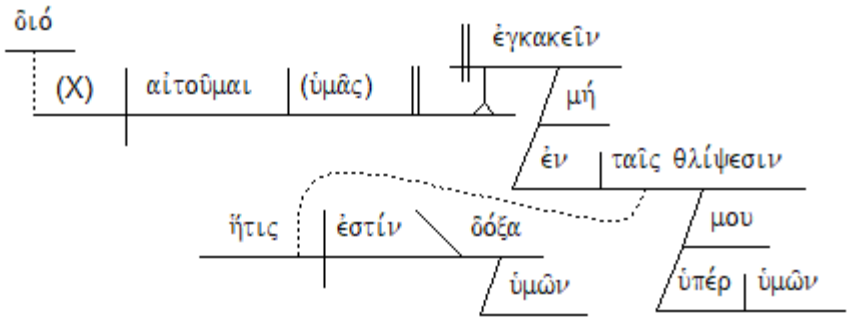
Eph 3:13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TEXT: EPHESIANS 3:14-21

TITLE: PRAYER FOR THE REALIZATION OF THE LOVE OF CHRIST BY THE POWER OF GOD

BIG IDEA:
THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT CAN CONNECT US TO THE LOVE OF CHRIST SO THAT WE CAN EXPERIENCE ALL THAT GOD HAS FOR US

INTRODUCTION:

Stephen Fowl: Formally, the passage begins with Paul situating himself relative to God (**3:14–15**). Paul then makes a series of requests to God on behalf of the Ephesians (**vv. 16–19**). There are three separate sections, each expressing a particular request and introduced by the Greek *hina.* Finally, the passage concludes with a **doxology**.

Frank Thielman: He wants his readers to know that he prays for God to strengthen them in the inner human being so that Christ might dwell in their hearts and they might become strong enough to grasp the **vast dimensions of Christ's love for them**. The ultimate goal of this prayer is that his readers might "*be filled up to all the fullness of God*" (**3:19b**), that is, that they might be all God has created them as individuals (**2:10**) and as the church (**2:15**) to be (O'Brien 1999: 266).

Clinton Arnold: This is Paul's **second intercessory prayer report** in the letter. This one differs from the first in that it ends with a stirring doxology, which also serves as a fitting conclusion to the contents of the first half of the letter. The introductory "*for this reason*" (τούτου χάριν) is a repetition of the same expression in **3:1**, where Paul had begun the prayer report, but then he **digressed** to describe the wonders of God's plan of salvation and his responsibility as a divinely commissioned steward of this good news. This expression thus links the prayer closely to the content of **2:11–22** and especially the **nearness** that believers now experience with God. Paul concluded that section by affirming that believers now constitute the new covenant temple—a holy habitation for God. Paul resumes this thought here by this prayer that Christ will dwell in their lives (**3:17**).

This prayer also has significant continuity with the first prayer (**1:15–23**) in that they both contain requests for God to reveal the **vastness of his power** to the readers. This prayer goes beyond the first, however, by appealing to God to actually impart his power to the readers. This second prayer also picks up on the theme of the love of God and seeks divine revelation into the **magnitude of Christ's love**; Paul prays that his readers will experience such love in a way that will provide a firm foundation for their lives.

This prayer also prepares the way for what follows in the rest of the letter. Paul's request for **divine enabling power** is precisely what the readers will need so they can live in accordance with the many ethical demands of the letter (**chs. 4–6**)—not only in

terms of getting rid of unhealthy, sinful practices, but also in displaying the virtues commended. He especially appeals to us to exercise love in the same unselfish and self-giving way that Christ showed love (**5:1–2**).

This supernatural empowerment is also essential because of the supernaturally powerful **opposition** that believers face (**4:27; 6:10–20**). Paul's additional petition that Christ may extend his reign in their lives (**3:17**) is particularly relevant for summarizing this transforming work that Christ undertakes within every member of the church and within the church as a corporate community (**4:11–16** and **4:17–24**).

Klyne Snodgrass: Both in terms of content and structure, similarities exist between this prayer and the one in **1:15–23** Connections also exist with the beginning doxology by a focus on love (**1:4**), glory (**1:6, 12, 14**), and the Spirit (**1:13–14**). Prominence is given to words for power, knowledge, the interior life, and fullness. Once again this passage is strongly theocentric and Trinitarian.

Andrew Lincoln: The intercessory prayer-report **[:14-19**] constitutes **one long sentence** in Greek. . . The structure of thought in the intercessory prayer-report is as follows. **Verses 14, 15** introduce the prayer and **vv 16–19** relate its content. The content falls into three main requests, each of which is introduced by ἵνα. The first main request itself begins with ἵνα δῷ ὑμῖν, "*that he might grant you . . .* ," and this is followed by two parallel infinitive clauses and a participial clause. The first infinitive clause, with κραταιωθῆναι elaborates that what the readers are to be granted is "*to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inner man*." The second, with κατοικῆσαι, provides a further equivalent, "*that Christ might dwell in your hearts through faith*." **Verse 17b**, with its two perfect passive participial forms, is best taken as a further subsidiary request, "*that you might be rooted and grounded in love*." It could be interpreted as a result clause, dependent on the two infinitives, which, in turn, provides the condition for the next request, i.e., "*so that you, having been rooted and grounded in love, might be empowered*" (so RSV, JB; also Caragounis, Mysterion, 75). But elsewhere in the NT, participles can function to express wishes or commands (cf. BDF §468[2]), and in the context of a prayer it is appropriate to understand them as having the force of a prayer-wish (so GNB; also Gaugler, 155; Gnilka, 185; Schnackenburg, 152; Bratcher and Nida, Handbook, 86). The second main request, with ἵνα, also asks for strengthening, this time using ἐξισχύσητε, "*that you might be empowered*." Again the ἵνα clause is followed by two infinitive clauses, which in all probability express parallel thoughts (see the comments on **vv 18, 19**). The empowerment is in order for the readers to grasp (καταλαβέσθαι) all the dimensions (of love) and to know (γνῶναι) the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge. By the time the third ἵνα clause has been reached, the prayer has gathered rhetorical momentum, and the final request becomes the **climactic one**—"*that you might be filled up to all the fullness of God*."

Harold Hoehner: **Prayer for Strengthened Love**

I.	(:**14-15**)	The Approach in Prayer
II.	(:**16-19**)	The Appeal in Prayer
III.	(:**20-21**)	The Ascription of Praise

(:14-15) PRELUDE -- THE DESIRE FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH SHOULD MOTIVATE US TO PRAY TO OUR SPIRITUAL FATHER

(for our own growth and here: for the growth of others)

A. Context-- Spiritual Need: "*For this reason*" -- resuming the thought of **3:1**

How are we going to accomplish the Father's goal of being built up together

- "*into a holy temple in the Lord*"
- "*into a dwelling of God in the Spirit*"

B. Spiritual Posture -- "*I bow my knees*" -- Must take the necessary action and Pray

1. Dependent Prayer
2. Worshipful Prayer
3. Submissive Prayer

Clinton Arnold: When Paul intercedes for them, he **bows his knees** in a posture of humility before the Father. Since this is a report of how he regularly intercedes for them, it is likely that Paul commonly kneels as he engages in intercessory prayer. Kneeling represents submission, respect, and humility before God (see **Isa 45:23; Rom 14:11; Phil 2:10**). It was a common posture for prayer as attested in the OT (e.g., **1 Chr 29:20; Ps 95:6**) and in Judaism (see 3 Macc 2:1; 1 Esdras 8:73 [70]). Daniel's habit was to approach God three times daily in prayer, and when he did so, he bowed his knees (**Dan 6:10**). This is not the only posture attested in the Bible for prayer. Jews often stood when they prayed (**1 Sam 1:26; 1 Kings 8:22; Matt 6:5; Mark 11:25; Luke 18:11, 13**). On one occasion, Jesus raised his eyes to heaven as he prayed, presumably while standing (**John 11:41**). Sometimes people fell on their faces before God, that is, touching their foreheads to the ground while kneeling (**Gen 17:3; Matt 26:39**).

C. Spiritual Family Relationship -- "*before the Father*"

Remember our "*bold and confident access*"

No Insecurity here

Stephen Fowl: Paul emphasizes his submission to the Father "*from whom every 'family' in heaven and on earth is named*." The central act of the Father here is "naming." This seems to refer to God's activity in creation (cf. **Ps 147:4; Isa 40:26; Eccl 6:10**). In this sense the name identifies the **Creator**, perhaps in the same way potters or smiths identify their works with a particular mark. The image here is of God's comprehensive power and control over all social formations, whether in heaven or on earth. This emphasis on God's power is fitting, given the nature of the requests that follow in **vv. 16–19**.

D. Universal and Exclusive Source of Spiritual Blessing

"*from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name*"

Same approach will work for anyone;
No other approach will work for anyone

Kenneth Wuest: The various classes of men on earth, Jew, Gentile, and others, and the various orders of angels in heaven, are related to God, the common Father, and only in virtue of that relation has any of them the name of family. But we must be careful here to note that the fatherhood of God over all created intelligences is in the sense of Creator, as in Paul's word to the Athenians, *"We are the offspring of God*," not at all in the sense of salvation where only saved individuals are children of God.

Harold Hoehner: To summarize, **God the Father** is the one who creates (**3:9**) and thus names every family in heaven and on earth. He is a God who is alive and acting in the present time, rather than a god who has died and is no longer active in history. God's ability to create and name every family in heaven and on earth stresses his sovereignty and his fatherhood. He is the one who is able to perform more than we ask or think, as expressed in the doxology in **verses 20–21**. It should be noted that the early disciples of Jesus extolled God as the sovereign Lord who created heaven, earth, and sea (**Acts 4:24**). It is to this sovereign God that Paul prays the following prayer.

I. (:16) THE REQUEST: HOLY SPIRIT POWER

A. Comes as a Gift from God

"*that He would grant you*"

B. Cannot be Measured in Human Terms

"*according to the riches of His glory*"
Not asking for some small dose of power here

Clinton Arnold: The **source of the power** that Paul asks the readers be strengthened with is "*the riches of his glory*" (τὸ πλοῦτος τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ). The glory of God is a manifestation of who he is in his brilliance, majesty, holiness, and power. In this context, the emphasis lies more on glory as a representation of God in all of his might. The superabundance of God's power is heightened by the use of the term "*riches*" (πλοῦτος) in connection with glory. The genitive may best be interpreted as a genitive of content, that is, God's wealth consisting of his glory. The idea here is that God possesses extraordinary might, which he is able and willing to impart to his people.

Andrew Lincoln: For this writer, God's giving corresponds to the inexhaustible wealth of his radiance and power available to humanity, and that alone sets the limit for his prayer. In this way the writer's formulation of his request is meant to evoke further the confidence of the readers in God's ability to grant what is asked in a fashion more than adequate for their needs.

Harold Hoehner: In essence, he asks God to grant that forthcoming request according to the wealth of his essential being. After he has made this appeal, he then proceeds to make the request.

C. Consists in Holy Spirit Power

"*to be strengthened with power through His Spirit*"

Clinton Arnold: One of the principal blessings of the new covenant is the pouring out of the Spirit in much fuller measure than the old covenant people of God experienced (e.g., **Ezek 36:26–27**). Paul is keenly aware of the empowerment available through the Spirit in his own life and the availability of the Spirit's strengthening for his readers. In the NT and especially in Paul's writings, the Spirit is made the explicit agent in the dispensing of divine power (**Acts 1:8; Rom 1:4; 15:19; 1 Cor 2:4; 1 Thess 1:5**). Paul thus prays that God will strengthen his readers "*through his Spirit*." . . .

God's power and love are not impersonal forces operating in the world that one needs to discover. Our God is a personal God, who has brought us near to himself. He has bestowed on us his Spirit, who imparts his power and shows us his love. This Spirit is closely related to the risen Christ, who now dwells in the lives of all believers and seeks to reign over the enemies—the power of sin and the forces of evil. In fact, it is God himself who has made the corporate community of new covenant people his holy habitation and fills us with his presence and the benefits of his presence—his power and his love. This Trinitarian portrayal of God's present work in the lives of believers is unmistakable in this prayer.

D. Changes and Transforms the Inner Man

"*in the inner man*"

Frank Thielman: The inner human being, then, is the interior life of the person, which God, by his Spirit, can strengthen with divine power. If Paul's readers were discouraged (ἐγκακεῖν, *enkakein*) because of the suffering that the apostle was experiencing in the course of his ministry to the Gentiles (**Eph. 3:13**), and perhaps because they too were suffering, then Paul prays that God might give them the inner strength that in **2 Corinthians** he says he himself experienced under similar circumstances.

Andrew Lincoln: The prayer, however, is clearly one which asks God through the Spirit to vitalize and strengthen believers in that part of them which is not accessible to sight but which is open to his energizing influence.

II. (:17-19a) THE REASON: CONNECTION TO THE LOVE OF CHRIST

A. Goal of Deepened Intimacy with Christ -- Requires Faith

"*so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith*"

Stephen Fowl: From a Trinitarian perspective it is striking that an increase in the Spirit's powerful work in the lives of believers entails Christ's deeper dwelling in the hearts of believers. The actions of Spirit and Son are intimately tied here in **3:16–17**. When this is coupled with the claims in **Eph 1** that locate Christ within the identity of the Father, the Spirit is thus also drawn into the identity of the one God.

Clinton Arnold: He indicates that the means of Christ's dwelling in their hearts is through the **exercise of faith** (διὰ τῆς πίστεως). The passage seems to suggest a growing experience of nearness to the Lord, but more than that, a growing experience of Christ's exercising his lordship and reign over every area of their lives. Prior to coming to know Christ, the hearts of Paul's readers were darkened, hard, and alienated from God (**4:19**). Paul has already prayed that their hearts might become enlightened (**1:18**). Now he prays that Christ will dwell in their hearts in a fuller measure. This prayer is thus an important prelude to the ethical admonitions of **Eph 4–6**. Paul prays for a deeper experience of the empowering Christ so that the lordship of Christ may be exhibited in their lives in ever-increasing ways.

Grant Osborne: At first glance Paul's asking Christ to dwell in the hearts of the Ephesians may seem strange, since Christ comes into the heart of every believer at conversion. Paul's request here is similar to "*be filled with the Spirit*" in **5:18**. How can Christ take up residence and the Spirit fill Christians when they are already "in Christ" and in the Spirit? The key is that Paul is referring not to the initial indwelling but to the continuing Christian life. Paul has in mind the **process of spiritual growth**, so his prayer here is that each of the readers might experience more and more of Christ's indwelling presence and the increased power this produces. When our thought life is continually strengthened with the presence of Christ and the Spirit, spiritual growth will be the natural result.

Andrew Lincoln: "Christ in the heart" is a popular notion in certain traditions of piety. It is interesting to note, therefore, that it is found in this particular formulation only here in the NT. What is its significance in the writer's prayer for his readers? Its force is that the character of Christ, the pattern of the Christ-event, should increasingly dominate and shape the whole orientation of their lives.

B. Goal of Deepened Roots and Foundation of Love

"*that you, being rooted and grounded in love*"

2 metaphors: tree and building – both botanical and architectural images

Stephen Fowl: Being rooted in God's love provides a stability or security from which to grow. Thus growth in love of God and love of neighbor is both the vehicle and the end of the Christian life.

Clinton Arnold: Both of these metaphors and the content of the prayer may anticipate Paul's concern that his readers be sufficiently well established so that when the storm of trials and testing comes, they will not be "*tossed around by the waves and carried about by every wind of teaching*" (**4:14**). Being rooted and established in this love goes beyond the emotional experience and assurance that comes from being near to God, although this is an integral part of what it entails.

Harold Hoehner: In the present context Paul states that believers are **firmly rooted and grounded in love**. This root and foundation of love refers to God having chosen them, predestined them, bestowed them in the beloved, redeemed them, made them a heritage, sealed them with the Holy Spirit, made them alive, raised and seated them in the heavenlies, and placed them equally in one new person in the body of Christ. Therefore, for the believer, the origin of this love is God's love. Having established this root and foundation, Paul makes his next appeal.

C. Goal of Deepened Comprehension of the Love of Christ

"*may be able to comprehend with all the saints*
what is the breadth and length and height and depth,
and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge"

Abbott: The four words seem intended to indicate, not so much the thoroughness of the comprehension as the **vastness** of the thing to be comprehended.

Klyne Snodgrass: The first half of **3:19** is a good example of an **oxymoron** (a combination of words that appears contradictory): Paul prays that they may know the love that is beyond knowing. This is language from someone who has been surprised and overwhelmed with Christ's love.

Stephen Fowl: Here several things should be said about the immeasurable, infinite love of Christ, which "*surpasses knowledge*."

- First, although immeasurable and infinite, Christ's love can provide the root and foundation of the Christian life. This foundation is necessary but is not the end or goal of the Christian life. Further, as the end of the Christian life, this love must remain infinite, beyond measure. Otherwise one can imagine some point at which one would fully comprehend and be inhabited by that love. Growing in the knowledge and experience of God's love never reaches an end. This love has no limit; we cannot exhaust it.

- Second, because knowledge of this love "*surpasses knowledge*," our comprehension of it can only be given as a gift from God. It must be revealed. Hence it is important to recall that this discussion is cast in terms of Paul's request to God on behalf of the Ephesians. Paul does not admonish the Ephesians to sharpen their faculties so that they may comprehend what a talented, ordered, and properly trained mind might comprehend on its own. Rather, he asks God to give it to the Ephesians.

- Finally, it is clear that the phrase "*love of Christ*" here must refer to Christ's love and not human love directed to Christ. Yet it would be extremely odd if growth in knowledge of Christ's love did not deepen and enhance believers' love of God, love of neighbor, and following Chrysostom, love of enemy.

Clinton Arnold: Paul thus prays that the readers will be able to grow in their comprehension of the divine power and love. He wants them to know that they now serve an omnipotent God, who is sufficiently capable of keeping all of his people under the umbrella of his vast love regardless of the strength and number of supernatural powers working to sever believers from that love. The tremendous love of Christ will also provide incentive and motivation for the readers to manifest love toward one another.

Grant Osborne: The verb "*grasp*" (*katalambanō*) is a military term used **for attaining and capturing a goal**. It refers to the complex process of overcoming obstacles to reach an objective and achieve victory. There is a four-dimensional objective Paul wants the Ephesians to grasp. The four dimensions function together to describe a single attribute of God that is quite ambiguous. They could refer to:

> (1) the incredible power of God, which would be in keeping with **1:18–20**, as well as this context;
>
> (2) the multifaceted wisdom of God (**3:10**), so strongly emphasized in Ephesians and Colossians2 and the source of the revelation of the mysteries;
>
> (3) the love of Christ (and of God), as in **Romans 8:39** ("*neither height nor depth … will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ*"); and/or
>
> (4) the mystery as God's plan of salvation, which would fit the emphasis in **3:2, 9** on Paul's stewardship of the mystery of God's plan.

All of these explanations are viable, but none is ultimately verifiable. The text does mention **divine love**, as in option three, but Paul actually separates the four dimensions from love as two separate points. In the Greek there are two concepts to grasp, not one (as in the NIV). This verse literally says "*to grasp what is the width and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ*."

Perhaps it is best to see all four of these dimensions as summing up this chapter. If this is the case they may be said to refer to a combination of the last three possibilities—the revealing of the mystery as a result of the love and wisdom of God. Paul is then asking for the multidimensional plan of God to work itself out in the church and the world, manifesting God's wisdom and Christ's love as one person after another is converted to Christ.

Harold Hoehner: It seems simplest to consider that to comprehend the love of Christ is beyond the capability of any human being. The very fact that Christ's love expressed itself in his willingness to die on behalf of sinners is in itself beyond one's comprehension. The reality of Christ's love is overwhelming to all believers, from the point of conversion and continuing as growth in the knowledge of Christ progresses. No matter how much knowledge we have of Christ and his work, his love surpasses that

knowledge. The more we know of his love, the more we are amazed by it. Paul is not denegrating knowledge, for it is greatly emphasized in this epistle (**1:9, 17, 18; 3:3–5, 9; 4:13; 5:17**). He even requests it in this very prayer (**vv. 18, 19a**), but here he wishes to stress Christ's love as that which is beyond human comprehension.

III. (19b) THE RESULT: EXPERIENCING ALL THAT GOD HAS FOR YOU

"*that you may be filled up to all the fulness of God*"

Clinton Arnold: Paul has used the expression "*all the fullness*" (πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα) on two other occasions, both in his letter to the Colossians. In his poetic praise to Christ, Paul declares that "*all the fullness*" was pleased to dwell in Christ (**Col 1:19**). The "fullness" (πλήρωμα) refers to the **glory and presence of God** analogous to the way that God filled the temple with his presence in the Old Testament (see comment on **1:23**). Under the new covenant, the "*fullness*" becomes coextensive with the presence and power of the Holy Spirit because this is the principal way that God manifests his presence. Paul elsewhere connects the ministry of the Spirit with glory (e.g., **2 Cor 3:8, 18**; see also **1 Pet 4:14**). . .

By praying for the readers to be filled with the fullness of God, Paul is asking that they experience a greater measure of the divine presence in their lives. This is conceptually consistent with his central affirmation of **2:11–22**: "*the Lord is near*" (cf. **2:13**), which is alluded to when Paul begins the prayer with "*for this reason*." Paul prays that they may experience that nearness to a far greater degree. Later, Paul will use "filling" language with respect to the Holy Spirit when he appeals to them to "*be filled* (πληροῦσθε) *with the Spirit*" (**5:18**). We have already observed that when Paul speaks of "*fullness*" (πλήρωμα), he has in mind the presence and work of the Spirit as mediating the divine presence to God's people.

Paul thus wants Christ to dwell in their lives to a greater degree. He wants the Spirit to impart divine strength to them and desires for them to know and be rooted in the love of Christ (which the Spirit pours into the hearts of believers, **Rom 5:5**). Paul's characterization of the church as the new temple (**Eph 2:19–22**) may have prompted him to use the language of fullness/filling here. Just as the glory of the Lord filled the temple under the old covenant, he earnestly prays that the divine glory will fill the new covenant temple.

Grant Osborne: In a very real sense being filled with God's fullness is a reference to our being **indwelt by the Holy Spirit**, who is the presence of God living with us and within us (**John 14:17**). Moreover, since we experience this fullness "*in Christ*" (**Col 2:10**), this prayer-wish is mediated to us by the **Triune Godhead**. The fullness of God fills us both through the Spirit taking up residence within us and by Christ himself indwelling us (**John 14:23; Eph 3:17**). This is the meaning of **spiritual growth—it is a process by which the fullness of the Godhead burrows deeper and deeper into our lives as we yield ourselves ever more fully to his presence and power.**

Andrew Lincoln: As believers are strengthened through the Spirit in the inner person, as they allow Christ to dwell in their hearts through faith, and as they know more of the love of Christ, so the process of being filled up to all the fullness of the life and power of God will take place.

Stan Mast: That, in turn, will give you an experience of "*the fullness of God*." This is the third *hina* clause, and with it Paul has reached the **heights of prayer**. This is the **highest blessing** we could ever pray for. It is the **goal of all human life**. It is what we were made for. Though all religions aim for this, it is utterly impossible for sinful human beings to attain it, except by the grace of God. And that is precisely what Paul prays for here. By the grace of God through the power of the Holy Spirit, those who have Christ dwelling in their hearts through faith can grasp the love of Christ in their experience. Then, and only then, can we be filled to the measure of the fullness of God. That last phrase surely cannot mean that we can contain God in ourselves, for that is impossible. The finite cannot contain the infinite anymore than a teacup can contain the ocean. It must mean that God will fill us with the fullness he intended in the beginning, the full humanity that has been ruined by sin, the fullness of life Christ came to bring, "*the whole measure of the fullness of Christ*." (**Ephesians 4**) The world has ever seen only one fully human being, in Christ. God's ultimate intent is to restore us all to the full glory of the image of God. That's what Paul prays for here. https://cepreaching.org/commentary/2015-07-20/ephesians-314-21-2/

(:20-21) DOXOLOGY: "*TO HIM BE THE GLORY IN THE CHURCH*"

Clinton Arnold: This doxology follows the typical threefold form of doxologies in the NT:

(1) the dative case is used to indicate God as the recipient of the praise;
(2) there is an ascription of praise; and
(3) the doxology is concluded with an expression of the eternality of the praise.

This doxology differs from others in that it significantly expands on God as **all-powerful** in the first element.

A. (:20) Reason for Hope and Optimism – Praising the God who exceeds all of our expectations

> "*Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us*"

Kenneth Wuest: Paul says that God is able to do super-abundantly above and beyond what we ask or think, and then some on top of that.

Stephen Fowl: God is both sufficiently powerful to bring these things about and disposed to grant this petition because of God's care for us. The verse goes further to indicate that God is disposed to grant even more than humans can ask or think.

Klyne Snodgrass: This doxology sums up the intent of the first half of the letter. We should praise God for his astounding work in Christ Jesus. Paul's point is not merely that God is able to do beyond what we expect. Rather, this power is already at work in us (cf. the similar language in **Col. 1:29**, which describes God's work in Paul's ministry). God does not fit the limitations of our expectations. The language is reminiscent of **Isaiah 55:8–9**: God's ways and thoughts are exceedingly beyond our ways and thoughts. God is at work and eager to work in us to achieve his purposes for salvation.

B. (:21) Ultimate Goal –
Praising the God who deserves eternal glory

> "*to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen*."

Grant Osborne: "*Glory*" here refers to the recognition of God's majesty, splendor, and worthiness to be worshipped by the saints. It is not that God needs us to glorify him; it is that we desperately need to acknowledge and celebrate his glory. We are the bride of Christ, and there can be no true marriage without our regularly telling our spouse that we love them.

Andrew Lincoln: In the second half of the letter he will exhort his readers to carry out their **distinctive calling** to be the Church in the world. He knows, however, that nothing short of an experience of the generous love of Christ, which roots and grounds them in love, will enable them to walk in the love to which he will exhort them (cf. **4:2, 15, 16; 5:2, 25, 28, 33**; cf. also **6:23, 24**). He knows also that nothing short of an experience of the greatness of the power of God at work within them and nothing short of a vision of the glory that belongs to God will sustain them in fulfilling the task to which God himself has called them. In other words, he has written to them in this particular way because he is aware that, ultimately, the profundity of their theological appreciation, appropriated in worship, will be far more effective in helping them to be what they were meant to be than merely piling moral exhortation upon moral exhortation.

* * * * * * * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Is Christ truly at home in your heart? Do you have that type of abiding faith that causes that intimate relationship to deepen?

2) How has our interaction in the body of Christ taught us practical lessons about the love of Christ and demonstrated that love in practical ways?

3) Do we ask God for BIG blessings that are in line with the "*riches of His glory*" and the depth of His love for us and His desire to abundantly come through for us and His incredible "*power that works within us*" … Or do we have some type of false humility that thinks we should just ask God for little blessings?

4) Do we think that God's ultimate agenda should revolve around making us happy and comfortable or do we see the glorifying of Him as the ultimate purpose for the growth of the church?

* * * * * * * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Harold Hoehner: Briefly, Paul's prayer for the Ephesians is that God would strengthen them in the inner person, resulting in Christ effectively dwelling in them for the purpose that they, having been rooted and grounded in love, might be able to comprehend with all the saints the wonders of Christ's love, resulting in their experiential knowledge of Christ's love that surpasses all knowledge for the final purpose of being filled up with God's moral character which reflects God's character.

Paul's first prayer for the Ephesians (**1:15–23**) was offered in order that they might know God and his power. His second prayer, in the present context, is a plea for them to comprehend Christ's love which, in turn, would cause them to love their fellow saints. This prayer is the climax of his discussion on the unification of Jews and Gentiles in Christ, thus, becoming one new person. Paul desired that what was true positionally would be true experientally in the lives of the Ephesian believers. This experiential knowledge of Christ's love is not only for individual believers but it is to be applied to the corporate unity.

William Hendriksen: The lofty ideal is to get to know thoroughly Christ's deep affection, self-sacrificing tenderness, passionate sympathy, and marvelous outgoingness. All of these are included in love but do not exhaust it.

John MacArthur: The inner strengthening of the Holy Spirit leads to the indwelling of Christ, which leads to abundant love, which leads to God's fullness in us. To be *filled up to all the fulness of God* is indeed incomprehensible, even to God's own children. It is incredible and indescribable. There is no way, this side of heaven, we can fathom that truth. We can only believe it and praise God for it… *Pleroo* means to make full, or fill to the full, and is used many times in the New Testament. It speaks of total dominance. A person filled with rage is totally dominated by hatred. A person filled with happiness is totally dominated by joy. To *be filled up to all the fullness of God* therefore means to be totally dominated by Him, with nothing left of self or any part of the old man. By definition, then, to be filled with God is to be emptied of self. It is not to have much of God and little of self, but all of God and none of self.

Foulkes: The Church is the sphere of the outworking of God's purpose on earth, and even in heaven it will have the task of proclaiming the manifold wisdom of God (**iii. 10**). It is never to take glory to itself (cf. **Ps. cxv. 1**); its goal is to give praise and glory to Him (**i. 6, 12, 14**).

John Stott: To express how fundamental Paul longs for their love to be, he joins two metaphors (one botanical, the other architectural), both of which emphasize depth as opposed to superficiality. These Christians are to be rooted and grounded, or to have "deep roots and firm foundations" (NEB). Thus Paul likens them first to a well-rooted tree, and then to a well-built house. In both cases the unseen cause of their stability will be the same: love. Love is to be the foundation on which their life is built. One might say that their love is to be of both a "radical" and a "fundamental" nature in their experience, for these English words refer to our roots and our foundations.

John Piper: Do you see the parallel with the power of God in **verse 20**? In **verse 19** he says that the love of Christ for the church goes beyond what you can know, and in **verse 20** he says that the power of God over the church goes beyond what you can think. When the massive weather front of God's love meets the massive weather front of God's power in the heart of a believer it produces a hurricane of confidence called "Gloria"-- a powerful doxology: "*To him be GLORY in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations for ever and ever. Amen*."

Klyne Snodgrass: This is the **language of discipleship**. To be permeated by Christ is to be stamped by his character, to be clothed with him (**Rom. 13:14**). Such imagery underscores the way Christ shapes our lives. The thought that we can believe in Christ without being like him is absurd. If Christ's indwelling does not transform, we must question strenuously whether Christ is present. The application of the text of Ephesians requires us to test the validity of our faith (see **2 Cor. 13:5**). Christians worry about the assurance of their salvation, and other Christians seek to remove all doubt. Maybe we should let doubt do its work. Maybe we should be more concerned about the validity of faith than the assurance of salvation. Honest doubt can be healthy. . .

The **exalted ecclesiology of Ephesians** has important **practical consequences**. The church is not an optional part of Christianity. Rather, it is the place now and throughout eternity where God is given honor and glory. Just as Christ is the evidence of God's redeeming love, the church is the evidence of God's transforming and uniting power (cf. **2:7**). An exalted ecclesiology is not the same as a glorified and exalted church. God is glorified, not the church, except in being the recipient of God's love. Church history is marred by too many times and places where the church thought it was exalted. Whenever the church felt it had power, it was most in danger. This is still true. **The church exists for worship and service** and must perform those acts with the same **humility** as her Lord. **Then God is given honor and glory**.

In writing this commentary, one of the most difficult tasks has been in dealing with the contrast between what Ephesians describes and the reality I and most Christians experience. So often the church demonstrates more evidence of human depravity than of God's transforming and uniting power. **A common problem for Christians is finding a suitable church.** So many people become so disillusioned in that search that they retreat to a controllable, privatistic faith.

No quick fix exists for the failure of the church other than the theology of Ephesians and the rest of the New Testament, but two points must be made.

(1) Failure to meet with other Christians for worship and instruction is not a legitimate option. Individualistic Christianity does not exist. We need other people to help us understand God.

(2) The current failure of the church cannot be tolerated.

The church does not have to look like any of our present conceptions, but Christians must develop a better understanding of God, of faith in Christ, and of unity, and then put that understanding into practice. No doubt the biggest obstacle is the human ego, but should that obstacle be so determinative for Christians who gather around an empty cross? Christians in the pews as well as the pulpits need to protest the arrogance, superficiality, and division that mark our churches. We do not have to agree on all points to respect each other, to be driven by God's love, to recover the meaning of faith, to exhibit life in Christ, and to worship God.

Clinton Arnold: **Pray that Christ Will Rule in Us**

When Paul wrote to the Corinthian believers, he assured them of their new identity as "*the temple of the living God*" (**2 Cor 6:16**). There is no room for idolatry because there is no agreement between the temple of God and idols. Paul understood, however, the human penchant toward sin and the tendency of the people of God to bring "idolatry" into the new temple. He appealed to the Corinthians to remove the idolatry from the temple: "*Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God*" (**2 Cor 7:1**). Just as Josiah purified the temple under the old covenant by removing the idolatry that had been carted into it, so new covenant believers are called to remove every contaminating influence from their bodies and souls.

This new covenant temple is the **dwelling place of Christ**. He wants to dwell in every area of our lives and exert his reign over every spiritual enemy. The indwelling Christ wants to help us clean out the garbage that soils our temples. He is moved by love for us and he has the power to help us purify his holy habitation.

Robert Munger has written a delightful booklet entitled *My Heart, Christ's Home*, which captures this aspect of the passage. The book is an extensive allegory of Christ entering a believer's heart (at conversion) and then systematically going through each room of the house, cleaning and redecorating. Munger brings out the struggle that believers face in allowing Christ to penetrate certain secret areas of their lives where there are sinful attitudes and practices that need to be dealt with. As Christ exercises his power to clean up even the foulest and most rancid rooms, the believer finds greater peace and encouragement in allowing Christ to reign.

S. Lewis Johnson: **Prayer for Realization of God**

I. (:16-17) Prayer for Empowerment

II. (:18-19a) Prayer for Enablement

III. (:19b) Prayer for Enrichment – "*that ye may be filled with fullness of God*"

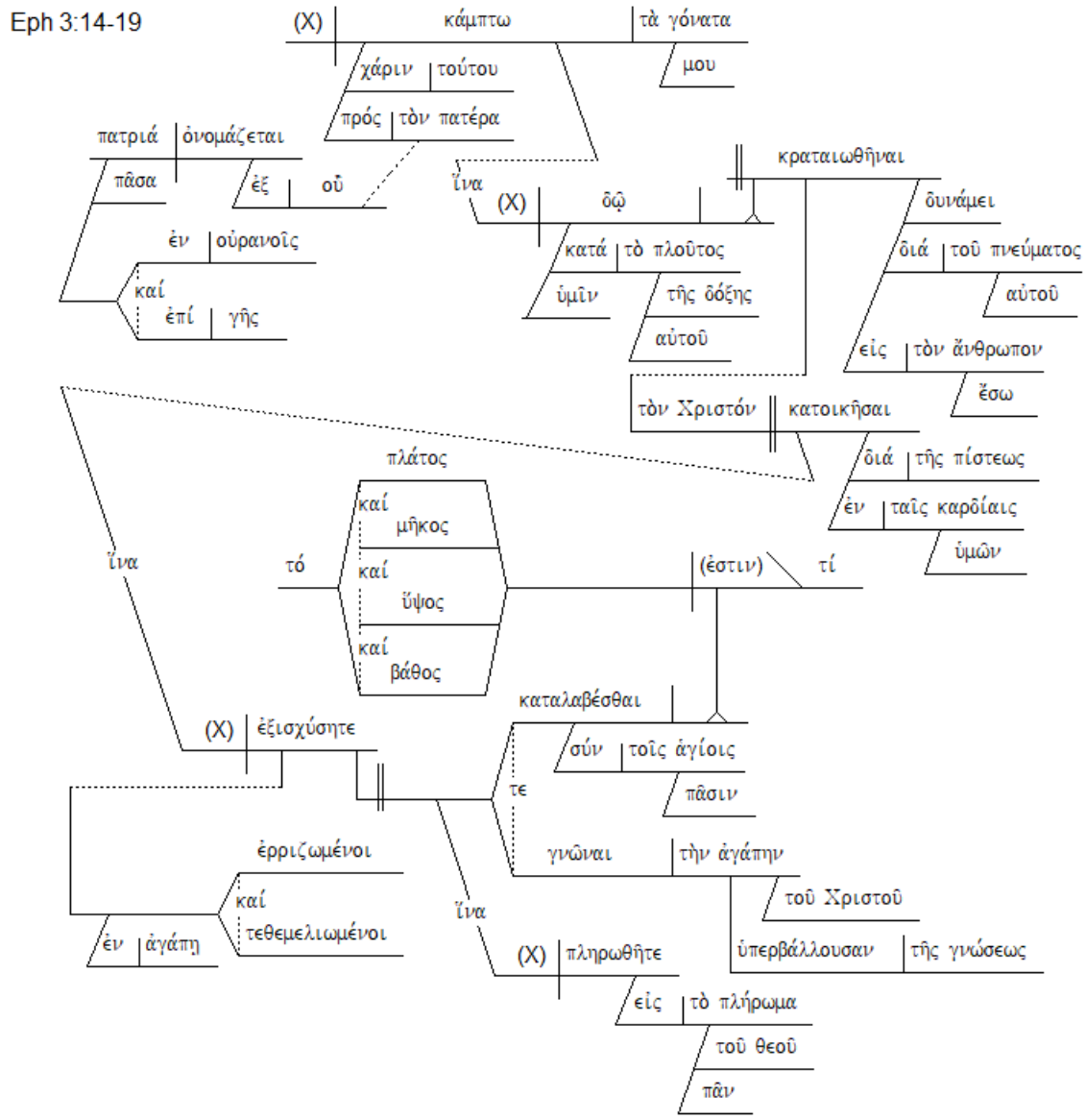
Emmaus Reformed Baptist Church: **3 Petitions followed by a Dox**ology --

1. (:16-18) That you would be strengthened in the inner being
2. (:18-19a) That you would comprehend the love of Christ
3. (:19b) That you would be filled with all the fullness of God

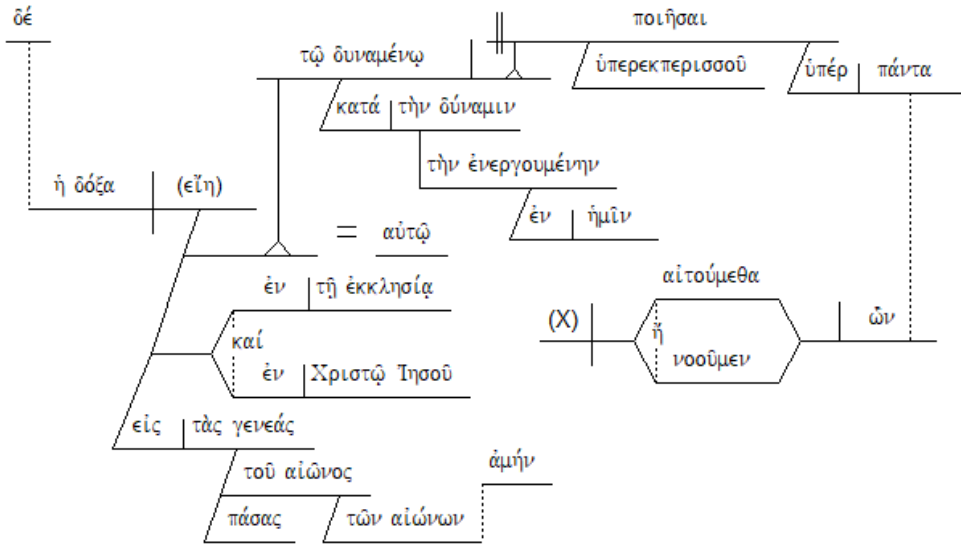
(:20-21) Doxology

https://emmausrbc.org/2020/05/10/sermon-ephesians-314-21-that-you-may-know-the-love-of-christ/

Leedy Greek Diagram:



Eph 3:20-21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ἀμήν

TEXT: EPHESIANS 4:1-16

TITLE: WALK IN UNITY, DIVERSITY AND MATURITY

BIG IDEA:
IN HUMILITY AND LOVE, PROMOTE UNITY IN A CONTEXT OF DIVERSITY WITH THE GOAL OF MATURITY

INTRODUCTION:

Harold Hoehner: The revelation of the unification of Jewish and Gentile believers positionally as "*one new person*" (**2:15**), the body of Christ, and the prayer that this unity would result in a mutual experience of Christ's love (**3:16–19**) leads Paul to demonstrate the manner of walk expected of this unified body. This can only be accomplished by God's own power through the ministry of gifted believers who Christ gives to the church. The purpose is to bring all the members of the body to the unity of faith and to the full stature of Christ with the result that they will be a stable and growing body in living union with Christ the head.

Klyne Snodgrass: The present passage focuses on life, order, unity, and the purpose of the church, as well as its diversity and difficulties. All five words summarizing Christianity appear here. In other words, ecclesiology and ethics cannot be separated.4 As we have noted, Christology is soteriology is ecclesiology is ethics,5 and this understanding continues throughout the letter. . . The NIV provides a paragraph division at **4:14**, which hides the fact that **4:11–16** is one sentence in the Greek text.

Andrew Lincoln: **The Church's Calling to Maintenance of the Unity It Already Possesses** – This pericope begins the section of the letter which is one of the most extended pieces of paraenesis in any of the letters of the Pauline corpus. As has been noted in the Introduction, in Ephesians the paraenesis forms an *exhortatio*, which replaces the *argumentatio* found in most persuasive discourses. The various elements in the build-up of the rhetoric to this point—the *exordium*, the *narratio*, the *digressio*, and the *transitus*, which is a renewed *exordium*—all perform their own function in reminding the readers of who they are as the Church in Christ, but they also prepare most effectively for the *exhortatio* which now follows. They secure the audience's goodwill, inspire them, convince them of the rightness of the writer's perspective on their situation, and dispose them to carry out the specific injunctions of this *exhortatio*.

Grant Osborne: Now Paul turns to the ethical exhortation of his letter. This section comprises **chapters 4–6** and includes a series of challenges for his readers to live the Christian life God's way. This opening section is brilliantly conceived, stressing first that the unity of the church reflects the unity of the Godhead (**4:1–6**) and then that this unity must be lived out in diversity, with every member of the body taking their place and working together to enable the church to grow (**vv. 7–16**). As stated in **Ephesians 2:11–18**, the conflict among cultures in the church is insufficient to fracture it, for as

each believer is united with Christ they are also united with each other. Christ's reconciliation via the cross has broken down racial and ethnic divisions, and all the diverse peoples form a new humanity in Christ. . .

All of Paul's passages dealing with spiritual gifts and the body of Christ (for example, **Rom 12:4–8; 1 Cor 12:12–31**) emphasize the **diversity** of the church in the midst of its unity as one body. The body consists of many members, all of whom must function together in order for the body to grow. Each member discovers her role in the body by taking the grace-gifts Christ has given her and using them for the benefit of the body. The gifts bestowed in **4:7–8** enable the body to grow (**vv. 15–16**).

MAJOR TRANSITION:
(:1) THEME OF CHAPS. 4-6 -- THE DUTY OF THE CHURCH -- HOW WE SHOULD WALK IN CHRIST

- Paul has spent **Chaps. 1-3** describing our high calling;
- Now he "*entreats*" the believers to Walk Worthy in **Chaps. 4-6**

A. Example of the Apostle Paul

"*I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord*"

Harold Hoehner: It is not uncommon for Paul to use this conjunction along with παρακαλέω (**Rom 12:1; 1 Thess 4:1; 1 Tim 2:1**; cf. also **1 Pet 5:1**) after long doctrinal sections in order to draw inferences from the preceding discussion. Therefore, this conjunction is drawing an inference from all the preceding chapters of Ephesians.

B. Entreaty of the Apostle Paul

1. Tone

"*entreat you*"

Harold Hoehner: Although the verb can have more than one English meaning, it seems the context demands the primary idea of **exhortation**. This conclusion is viable even though Paul is addressing fellow believers because friendship does not exclude **authoritative exhortation**. In fact, his close relationship to the readers makes the exhortation all the more effective.

2. Substance = Walk Worthy

"*walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called*"

Klyne Snodgrass: Note that "*calling*" is used of the salvation and responsibility of every Christian, not of the "professional ministry" or an elite group. This one call is for all Christians to live in accord with what God has done.

Andrew Lincoln: The use of the **language of calling** in the context of his ethical appeal indicates that for this writer God's sovereign initiative and human responsibility for

living appropriately go hand in hand, so that he would not for one moment have expected his earlier stress on predestination and election (**1:3, 4**), and even on God's preparation of believers' good works ahead of time (**2:10**), to undermine the seriousness with which his exhortation was to be taken. The appeal to live worthily of God's calling presupposes that God's gracious initiative requires a continuous human response and that his call bestows both high privilege and high responsibility.

I. (:2-6) UNITY -- PROMOTE AND PRESERVE THE UNITY OF THE ONE BODY OF CHRIST

Frank Thielman: In **4:1–6** Paul introduces his practical admonitions on how the church can grow into this ultimate unity. He does this in two parts. The first part offers a general exhortation focused on loving deference to one another (**4:1–3**), and the second part grounds this general exhortation in the unity of God ("*one Spirit . . . one Lord . . . one God and Father*"), of God's people ("*one body*"), and of the response of God's people to God ("*one hope . . . one faith, one baptism*"; **4:4–6**).

The two parts have a **similar structure**. Each part contains a list of items, with the last and longest item in each part bringing its part to a **climax**. The admonitions to exercise humility, gentleness, patience, and to bear with one another lead to the lengthy exhortation to be "*eager to keep the unity of the Spirit by the fastener of peace*" (**4:3**). In the same way, the affirmations of various unities conclude with the lengthy description of "*one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all*" (**4:6**).

This final affirmation of God's unity prepares the way for Paul's discussion of how he has given "*each one*" of his readers a measure of grace to use in aiding the church on its way to unity (**4:7–16**).

A. (:2-3) HOW?

1. Practicing the Fruit of the Holy Spirit in our Attitudes and Relationships

a. "*with all humility and gentleness*"

Klyne Snodgrass: "*Gentleness*" (*prautes*), a forgotten virtue, shows up with regularity in Paul's ethical lists, which demonstrates the value he placed on it (cf. **Phil. 4:5**, which uses *epieikes* but is concerned with the same ethic). In **2 Corinthians 10:1** Paul uses both these words for gentleness to describe his own demeanor—a gentleness he says is characteristic of Christ.

b. "*with patience, showing forbearance to one an*other"

Harold Hoehner: For the believer, **patience** is that cautious endurance that does not abandon hope. It pertains to waiting patiently without immediate results, like the farmer who waits for his harvest and the OT prophets who waited for God's action (**Jas 5:7–11**). It includes patient endurance while awaiting the inheritance of the promises even as Abraham had (**Heb 6:12–15**). God is the greatest example of all. He stayed his

wrath when he was wronged by human sin (**Rom 2:4**). Thus must the believer stay his or her impatience or vengeance when wronged by another believer, exhibiting patience one toward another, especially in the light of the union of believing Jews and Gentiles into one body. It is clear that patience is not only a virtue but a necessary ingredient for the life of Jewish and Gentile believers who comprise the body of Christ.

Klyne Snodgrass: "*Love*" and "*putting up with each other*" are intertwined and mutually explanatory. Both are ways of valuing the other person.

c. "*in love*"

Harold Hoehner: In conclusion, there was undoubtedly some tension between Jewish and Gentile believers even though they were now united into one body. Therefore, Paul has explained how their walk must be exemplified by humility, gentleness, and patience, forbearing one another in love, and thus excluding resentment. Such qualities could only be accomplished by the power of the Spirit in their lives, individually (**3:16**) and corporately (**2:22**).

2. Working Hard at Preserving the Unity of the Body

"*being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*"

Harold Hoehner: Believers are to make every effort to preserve the unity which has its origin in the Holy Spirit. This unity is portrayed by the bond between Jews and Gentiles who have become one new person in Christ. The bond consisting of peace is possible because Christ brought peace between these two former entities (**2:14–16**). Hence, there is no exhortation to establish peace because it has been done in Christ. Nor is there an exhortation to organize unity because this has been accomplished by the Holy Spirit. Instead, Paul's concern is to preserve, maintain, or protect that unity.

Clinton Arnold: It is essential to work on developing Christlike virtues that enhance unity. In this passage Paul speaks of the importance of cultivating humility, gentleness, patience, tolerance, love, and peace. Developing these virtues is an important aspect of what it means to "*make every effort*" to maintain unity within the church. Conversely, we must rid ourselves of those characteristics that hurt our brothers and sisters, make them defensive, or create a spirit of tension within the community. Practically, we should carefully examine our lives in light of the following considerations:

- If we are quick to get angry, we need to work on patience.
- If we have a tendency to be proud, arrogant, egocentric, and boastful (and who doesn't struggle with these?), we need to work on humility.
- If we are insensitive, bullish at times, rough, bossy, or quick to impose on others, we need to work on gentleness.
- If we struggle with being intolerant with the shortcomings of other people, we need to work on bearing with one another in love.
- If unity among fellow believers in our own local churches is not a priority for us, we need to make it a priority.

- If the ardent pursuit of unity between churches in our cities is not a priority, we also need to make this a priority.

B. WHY? -- God Has Called us to a Unity of Oneness (outline here from Wood)

1. Realization of Unity in the Spirit
   a. "*One body*"
   b. "*one Spirit*"
   c. "*one hope of your calling*"

2. Focus of Unity in the Son
   a. "*one Lord*"
   b. "*one faith*"
   c. "*one baptism*"

Clinton Arnold: This probably refers to the **practice of water baptism** and not solely to the experience of baptism in the Spirit. Water baptism was the common practice of the early church following a person's confession of faith in Christ (see **Acts 2:38, 41; 8:12, 13, 36, 38; 10:47–48; 16:15, 33; 18:8; 19:5**), which Paul himself experienced (**Acts 9:18; 22:16**). In Paul's teaching, the ritual symbolized identification with Jesus in his death and resurrection (**Rom 6:1–11; Col 2:12**). Paul also uses the term baptism to refer to the work of the Spirit in joining every individual believer to the body of Christ (**1 Cor 12:13**). Paul's confession of "*one baptism*" here probably indicates the rite as well as all that it symbolizes.

Harold Hoehner: 3 options:
1) Rite of Water Baptism
2) Spirit's Baptism
3) A third option that needs to be considered is that it refers metaphorically to the believer's **baptism into Christ's death**, speaking of the believer's union with Christ in his death and resurrection. Baptism signifies **identification** as seen in the baptism of Israel into Moses as they went through the Red Sea (**1 Cor 10:2**) and the baptism of the disciples with reference to Christ's death (**Mark 10:38**). Both of these examples make no reference to water or to the Holy Spirit. This same concept is seen in other NT passages (**Rom 6:1–11; Gal 3:27; Col 2:12**). Furthermore, it fits well with the context, for the believer's baptism into Christ signifies union with Christ (**Rom 6:5**) and it occurs at the time of conversion (**Rom 6:2–4**). This **inward reality** is all too often missed. It serves as the basis of the outward ritual. Hence, the "*one baptism*" most likely refers to the internal reality of having been baptized into (identified with) the "*one Lord*" by means of the "*one faith*" mentioned in this verse.

3. Souce of Unity in the Father --
   "*one God and Father of all*"

Harold Hoehner: God is further described as the God and Father "*of all*," which refers not to all humans but to **all believers** (**John 1:12; Gal 3:26**). This is substantiated in the present context because Paul is exhorting Christians, and not all humans, to preserve the unity.

Significance -- 3 Different Modes of Action:

a. "*who is over all*"

Harold Hoehner: First, he is over (ἐπί) all, indicating his sovereign position over all believers. This has reference not only to his spiritual authority over us but also in every aspect of the life of the believer. God is "supreme and transcendent." If believers take God's sovereignty seriously, the result is unity and contentment and joy for believers, even in the midst of trials. The believer will trust God in his wisdom and care for all things that transpire in life.

b. "*and through all*"

Harold Hoehner: Second, not only is God sovereign in all believers' lives, he also works through (διά) all of them. Here the emphasis is on God's **immanence**. He accomplishes his purposes through the instruments of believers. This is in keeping with **2:10** where the believer is God's workmanship created for good works which God prepared beforehand in order that he or she should walk in them. However, since God provides the power for good works, he is to receive all the glory. Such a wonderful provision shows that he is alive and active in the world today.

c. "*and in all*"

Harold Hoehner: This signifies the **indwelling Spirit** (**John 14:16–17; Rom 8:9; 1 Cor 2:12; 6:19–20; Gal 3:2; 4:6; 1 John 2:27; 3:24; 4:13**), his intimate presence. In **3:17** Paul prayed that Christ might be at home in their hearts. Although Christ was already in them, Paul wanted him to be the very center of their lives. Believers have the joy of knowing that God not only is over them and working through them, but he is also residing in them. Whereas Paul spoke about God dwelling in the person of the Holy Spirit in the corporate body of the church (**2:22**), he now is talking about the personal dwelling of God in believers.

II. (:7-12) DIVERSITY -- PROMOTE AND APPRECIATE THE DIVERSITY OF THE VARYING SPIRITUAL GIFTS FOR THE EQUIPPING OF THE BODY

Harold Hoehner: Having discussed the need to preserve unity (**vv. 1–3**) and the elements of unity which serve as a model for Christian unity (**vv. 4–6**), Paul now analyzes the **means of preserving that unity** of the body, namely, by the use of various gifts given to the church (**vv. 7–16**).

Frank Thielman: As with **4:1–6**, this paragraph [**4:7-16**] can be divided into two subsections. The first subsection (**4:7–10**) focuses on the gift-giver, Christ, and on his status as the one who has conquered the forces of evil. The second subsection (**4:11–16**) is one long sentence. It shifts the emphasis slightly from the gifts given to each person in the body to the gifts of five groups of people to the body of Christ so that they might in turn equip the "*saints*" for the work of ministry (**4:11–12**). With mention of the "*work*" of the "*saints*," however, the emphasis quickly moves back to the contribution that "*all*" make to the body's maturity (**v. 13**). This body of Christ, we now learn, is growing and maturing away from infancy (with its tendency to be swayed by various kinds of false teaching) toward full adulthood, and every "*connection*" in the body assists this growth by his or her loving witness to the truth of the gospel (**vv. 14–16**).

A. (:7) Christ has Gifted Each Member of the Body in a Unique Way

"*But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift*"

Grant Osborne: The emphasis here is on the **source** of these graces: Christ. There is no haphazard, random distribution of gifts. Every gift is carefully chosen and apportioned according to the sovereign will of God. In our narcissistic world we too often are dissatisfied with what Christ has given us and want more. That is to deny God's grace and will for the sake of self. God gives us exactly what he wants us to have and what is best for us. It is our privilege to unquestioningly accept and use his gracious gifts. The joint ministry we have in the church is the result of the particular gifts each of us has received.

B. (:8-10) This Gift Giving was in Fulfillment of Prophecy in Conjunction with the Victory of His Ascension

1. (:8) Prophecy of the Spoils of Victory

"*When He ascended on high, He led captive a host of captives, and He gave gifts to men.*"

Harold Hoehner: The point that Paul is trying to make is the fact that Christ, who ascended as victor, has the right to give gifts. For if Christ had been defeated, he would yet be in his grave and spiritual gifts would be useless to those whom he could not redeem.

Grant Osborne: **Psalm 68** pictures Yahweh as a Divine Warrior descending from Mount Sinai, striding across the earth winning victory after victory for his people, and then ascending Mount Zion surrounded by an entourage of the heavenly host in order to establish his throne room (temple) there. It is the prayer of the psalm that this power of God be exercised once again to deliver his people.

The first line of **Psalm 68:18** pictures the Divine Warrior ascending the heights of Mount Zion. He has won the victory and now ascends to his newly established throne on Zion to receive the accolades of his grateful people. The second line summarizes the

triumphs of the Divine Warrior over the enemies of Israel (**Ps 68:1–2, 6, 12–14, 23, 30–31**) when he "*took many captives*" from the opposing armies. These captured armies are pictured bound and marching behind the victory chariot of Yahweh as it proceeds up Mount Zion. The third line depicts the conquering Lord "*receiving gifts*" from a grateful Israel. In this psalm David provides a panoramic view of the entire history of Israel from the exodus to the establishment of the temple on Mount Zion. God the Divine Warrior is the Savior and redeemer of his people, the only One worthy of worship. . .

It is more likely that Paul himself made the wording change from "*received gifts*" to "*gave gifts*." This fits the movement in his thinking from "*grace has been given*" in **verse 7** to "*Christ himself gave*" in **verse 11**. In **Psalm 68** it is Yahweh who ascends to his newly established throne on Mount Zion to receive gifts from his people and their defeated enemies. Here it is Christ the Divine Warrior who ascends into heaven after defeating the cosmic enemies and then distributes his gifts to his delivered followers. The defeat of the hostile powers is central to Ephesians (**1:20–22; 3:10; 6:10–20**) and part of the imagery here. The switch to "*gave gifts*" is not a casual change. Paul is reading **Psalm 68:18** in light of the whole of the psalm, which details the victories God gave Israel. Using Jewish exegesis, Paul is taking the gifts of Yahweh to the people of Israel in the psalm and applying it to the gifts of the ascended Christ to the people of the new Israel.

2. (:9-10) Aside: Reality of Ascension with its Majestic Glory contrasted with Corresponding Reality of "Descension"

Andrew Lincoln: The incarnation provides what is on the surface the most obvious reference for the descent; but the descent in the Spirit, although it is still the minority view, may well be preferable if, as seems to be the case, the midrash is making a more complex point. It would explain why the inference of a descent from an ascent is necessary in the flow of the writer's argument and better fits the probable background and associations of the psalm citation. Whichever interpretation one takes, however, the real stress in the progress of thought is on **the ascent**. The concept of a descent, though it inevitably attracts so much discussion in an exegesis of the passage, was only brought in by the writer to help make his point about Christ's ascent **in the context of his giving of gifts**.

Grant Osborne: This [descent] refers to **Jesus' incarnation**, seen as the descent into this world of the preexistent God-man. The "*lower parts*" then refer to the lower part of God's cosmos, the earth. This would fit **Psalm 68**, where Yahweh descended from Sinai to deliver his people and then ascended to Zion to rule over the redeemed nation. **John 3:31** provides a close parallel: "*No one has ascended into heaven … except the one who descended from heaven*." This then would be a reference to the glorified Christ as the One who descended to earth at his incarnation and later ascended to heaven at his resurrection. This is similar to the picture in **Revelation 12:4–5**, where the woman gives birth to the "*male child*" (incarnation), who is then snatched up to heaven (exaltation), thereby defeating the dragon.

C. (:11) Distribution of the Leadership-Related Gifts

"*He gave some as*"

Harold Hoehner: Inexplicably, many commentators mix gift and office, yet they are not confused in the NT. Certainly, there is nothing in the present context about an office. It is true that those who have offices will have gifts because all believers have gifts. However, the opposite is not true, that is, a gifted person may not necessarily have an office since only a handful of people will occupy the offices of elder and/or deacon. Maintaining the distinction of the gifts and offices would help to avoid much confusion.

1. "*apostles*"

2. "*prophets*"

3. "*evangelists*"

4. "*pastors - teachers*"

Harold Hoehner: After a study of the grammatical structure of one article followed by two plural nouns separated by a καὶ (as here), Wallace suggests that the first is the subset of the second and thus "all pastors are to be teachers, though not all teachers are to be pastors." Hence, while there is a distinction between the two, the distinction is not total. . .

Certainly, Jesus recognized that he was both shepherd and teacher and as such was and is a model for all others with like gifts. Shepherding includes instruction but probably is mostly concerned with administration and various ministries to the flock. Teaching includes instruction in doctrine and its application to daily life but the teacher may not have all the administrative and shepherding responsibilities of the pastor.

D. (:12) Purpose of Christ Gifting Such Leaders

1. Immediate Goal

"*for the equipping of the saints for the work of service*"

The vision is Not for the leaders to do the bulk of the ministry

2. Ultimate Goal

"*to the building up of the body of Christ*"

Harold Hoehner: Christ gave **foundational gifts** to the church for the immediate purpose of preparing all the saints for the goal of service and in turn this service is for the final goal of building up the entire body of Christ. As each believer functions with the gift given to each, Christ's body, the church, will be built up. The gifts are never for self-edification but for the edification of the whole body of believers. The concept that the ministry belongs to clergy is foreign to this context because every saint is given a

gift (**v. 7**) and every saint is involved in the ministry. The gifted people listed are not to be considered as officers of the church but rather gifted individuals who are foundational. Apostles and evangelists need to proclaim the message and establish churches. Prophets and pastor-teachers need to inform and instruct believers. But the work of the ministry does not stop there—it continues as these gifted individuals prepare all the saints for the work of the ministry with the ultimate goal of building up the body of Christ.

III. (:13-16) MATURITY -- KEEP FOCUSED ON THE GOAL OF THE MATURITY OF THE ENTIRE BODY (WHICH REQUIRES MUTUAL LOVE IN WORD AND DEED THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE PROCESS)

A. (:13) 3 Marks of Maturity

"*to a mature man*"

1. Unity

"*until we all attain to the unity of the faith*"

2. Knowing Christ

"*and of the knowledge of the Son of God*"

3. Christ-likeness

"*to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ*"

B. (:14) Resulting Doctrinal Stability

"*As a result, we are no longer to be children*"

1. Descriptions of Instability

a. "*tossed here and there by waves*"

b. "*and carried about by every wind of doctrine*"

Grant Osborne: To make explicit the picture of **helplessness** Paul adds two further images: those of a small boat at the mercy of the storm-tossed sea and of a small bird at the mercy of a hurricane. Neither has the strength or maturity to enable it to cope with these insurmountable forces. The steep waves and howling winds have rendered them unstable. As in **James 1:6** they are "*blown and tossed by the wind*." In Jesus' parable of the sower the forces that cause disarray and spiritual failure are adversity and worldly desires (**Mark 4:17, 19**); here they are the wayward winds of false teaching. As a result these weak Christians drift onto the rocks (**Heb 2:1**).

2. Strategies of Instability

a. "*the trickery of men*"

b. "*craftiness in deceitful scheming*"

C. (:15-16) Mutual Love Centered In Christ Makes for a Healthy, Growing Body

Clinton Arnold: In contrast to the instability and immaturity to which wrong beliefs lead, Paul wants these Christians to reach a maturity that comes with a full knowledge of Christ. This involves maintaining a corporate confession of the faith, but doing so with a heart of love for brothers and sisters within the believing community.

1. Mutual Love in Ongoing Communication of the Truth

"*but speaking the truth in love,*"

Clinton Arnold: "*Confessing the truth*" is a better translation than "*speaking the truth*" since the latter can be read as simply an exhortation to truthfulness in speech. In this context, however, it conveys the more specific sense of accepting the truth of the gospel, speaking it out loud in the corporate gatherings of worship, talking about it with fellow believers, and upholding it firmly. . .

Paul's **emphasis on love** for one another in the community will also be the note on which he ends the passage as well (**4:16**, "*the building up of itself in love*"). Stott perceptively comments, "Thank God there are those in the contemporary church who are determined at all costs to defend and uphold God's revealed truth. But sometimes they are conspicuously lacking in love. When they think they smell heresy, their nose begins to twitch, their muscles ripple, and the light of battle enters their eye. They seem to enjoy nothing more than a fight." The truth of the gospel needs to be proclaimed and upheld within the community of believers. But it needs to be done with a heart that is tender and concerned about the feelings, growth, and well-being of fellow believers.

Andrew Lincoln: The writer returns to the positive side of his portrayal of the Church's movement toward its goals. He describes growth instead of immaturity, a growth which takes place as believers speak the truth in love instead of being taken in by those who propagate error through their unscrupulous craftiness. This contrast between the first part of **v 15** and the last part of **v 14** can be seen to have a **chiastic structure** with ἀληθεύοντες, "*speaking the truth*," in opposition to τῆς πλάνης, "*of error*," and ἐν ἀγάπῃ, "*in love*," in opposition to ἐν πανουργίᾳ, "*by craftiness*" (cf. also Schnackenburg, 190).

John MacArthur: Authentic, mature believers whose lives are marked by love will not be victims of false teaching (**Eph 4:14**) but will be living authentically and proclaiming the true gospel to a deceived and deceiving world. The work of the church goes full swing, from evangelism to edification to evangelism, and so on and on until the Lord returns. The evangelized are edified, and they, in turn, evangelize and edify others.

2. Mutual Growth of the Body Centered in Christ

"*we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ,*"

Clinton Arnold: As "*head*" (κεφαλή), Christ is both the leader of the church and the one who nourishes and supplies all that the body needs for its growth. Christ is not simply the originator of the church (i.e., the "source" of the church absolutely). He is actively involved in stimulating and directing the ministry of the church as well as providing the church all that it needs to develop and reach maturity.

John Eadie: The growth is to Him, and the growth is from Him—Himself its origin and Himself its end. The life that springs from Him as the source of its existence, is ever seeking and flowing back to Him as the source of its enjoyment.

3. Corporate Maturity Achieved by Mutual Love and Mutual Growth

a. Basis for Body Growth

"*from whom the whole body,*
being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies,"

Martin Lloyd-Jones: The expression means '**parts fitted closely to each other**' in a kind of harmony. The word the Apostle actually uses means 'several parts bound together', fitting into one another. Speaking then of us as members of the Church, he says that the Head of the body is Christ and that we are members in particular; and as members we are articulated and fit into one another. Everything should be in the right position, ball and socket are to be articulated, fitly joined together. All these terms carry exactly the same meaning. The idea is of a number of parts not simply bound together, anyhow, somehow, but bound together as the various parts of our bodies are joined together. At this point a certain amount of knowledge of anatomy is helpful. In the case of a joint in the body there is a kind of cup on one bone and into that cup there fits a kind of ball at the end of another bone. The surfaces of both are smooth so that there is no friction, and everything works easily and harmoniously and in an effective manner. According to the Apostle's teaching this should be true of the members of the Church. It is the way in which they are to grow up into Him in all things. The ideal condition of the Christian Church is that in which every member is what he is meant to be, fitting in with every other member and so preserving 'the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace'. There is to be no creaking, as it were, in the joints, no angularities; everything is to be 'fitly joined together'. But the Apostle is not even content with that; he adds another term, 'compacted', which means '**closely knit**', in order to drive home his point. It means 'brought and held together'. It is a term which is often used in a figurative sense to suggest a kind of mental unity, sympathy of understanding, concord. In other words the Apostle is changing his emphasis slightly from the purely mechanical which we have in 'fitly joined together', to the notion of minds fitting in together, compacted, closely knit. This is essential, of course, for a true organic unity, and for proper functioning. Christ is the Head, and we as parts of the body are to be fitly joined together, and compacted.

b. Functioning of the Body to Achieve Growth

"*according to the proper working of each individual part,*"

c. Goal of Body Growth

"*causes the growth of the body*
for the building up of itself in love."

Clinton Arnold: It is ever so important to recognize that love is a social virtue and cannot be seen or manifested by living in isolation from other believers. God designed the church so that believers will live together as a family in community. While there has been a strong emphasis in contemporary Christianity on personal, individual spiritual growth, this can be easily overemphasized at the expense of the corporate emphasis of this passage. Many years ago, Calvin astutely commented, "That man is mistaken who desires his own separate spiritual growth. For what would it profit a leg or an arm if it grew to an enormous size?" Paul not only envisions a body of proportional growth, but a body that cannot grow properly without all believers receiving gifted input from all other members of the body.

Andrew Lincoln: If any corporate growth or building up is to take place, love is the indispensable means. The climactic stress on this performs a function here similar to that of Paul's hymn to love in the midst of his discussion of the proper working of the body of Christ in **1 Cor 12–14**. **Love is the lifeblood of this body**, and therefore, the ultimate criterion for the assessment of the Church's growth will be how far it is characterized by love.

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) How have "unworthy" walks on the part of prominent Christians hurt the testimony of the church? How does a fuller doctrinal understanding of the riches of God's grace in our high calling help motivate us to "*walk worthy*"? How does such knowledge just "puff up" if our response is not to practice love towards one another?

2) How do we explain the existence of so many different denominations with the emphasis here of "*one Lord, one faith, one baptism*"? Is organizational unity a much different concept than the experience of unity in our personal relationships with others?

3) How do we view the gifted leaders mentioned here ("*apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers*") in terms of their role in the present day church? Were apostles and prophets just "foundational gifts" for the early NT church or are these gifts still exercised in areas of the world where the church is just being established….?? Do we believe that God is still providing new revelation through the function of a prophet??

4) Are our leaders doing an effective job of "*equipping the saints for the work of service*" or have we changed the paradigm so that our expectation is that our leaders will do the bulk of the actual ministry?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Wood: **Re vv.4-6** -- The reasons why those who belong to Christ should be eager to preserve their unity are now supplied in a crescendo of nouns. In three groups of three items each, Paul's thought ascends from the realization of unity in the Spirit to the focus of unity in the Son and thence to the source of unity in the Father.

"*One body*" depicts the church as a single visible community. It is not simply a mystical concept. Its unity is recognizable in that Jews and Gentiles are now seen to be receonciled in Christ. In the pagan world there were many religious cults to choose from. Christians, on the other hand, were all members of one body.

"*One Spirit*" indwells the body of Christ. By him, the body lives and moves (**1 Cor. 12:13**). The Spirit is its soul; apart from him it cannot exist. The same Spirit fell on the Jews at Pentecost and on the Gentiles in the house of Cornelius. The *'one Spirit'* who has already spanned this widest of all gulfs will bring together all other diverse groups within the church.

The Holy Spirit is the pledge of our inheritance (**Eph 1:14**) and so he is the guarantee of the "*one hope*" to which we are called … It is, of course, the hope of sharing Christ's glory at the end of the age (**1 John 3:2**). There is no differentiation between Jewish and Gentile Christians…

The second trio of unities is related to the "*one Lord*" or master to whom all Christians owe their allegiance…

The last in the ascending scale (though the first in terms of cause) is the Father… The triple note, which is still to be found, merely divides up his modes of action.

John MacArthur: Re **vs 7** -- It is important to note that the term **but**, with which this verse begins, is used here as an adversative rather than as a simple conjunction. It could be translated "in spite of that" or "on the other hand," contrasting the previous subject matter with what is about to be said.

This interpretation of *but* brings together the emphasis of unity that has been the echoing theme of **verses 3-6** with the parallel emphasis of diversity, which is the theme of **verses 7-11**. It sets the individual (each one) over against the "all" (**vs. 6**) in regard to unity in the Body of Christ. The reading of **but** as adversative is strengthened by the emphatic use of *hekastos* (*each one*). Unity is not uniformity and is perfectly consistent with diversity of gifts. God's gracious relation to "all" is also a personal relation to each one (cf. **1 Cor. 12:7, 11**) and a personal ministry through each one. Thus Paul moves from the unity of believers to the uniqueness of believers.

Homer Kent: The great danger to immature faith is false doctrine; it is here compared to strong winds which toss about an unguided boat. Such false doctrine is always being

promoted by crafty men who by trickery and scheming lead their victims into spiritual disaster…In contrast to the dangerous actions just described, believers are to strive for the goal of full spiritual maturity in Christ. This involves being truthful in all of our speech and dealings… The chief danger to spiritual babies (**4:14**) is the falsity and deceit employed by those who would entice them toward either heretical doctrine or unworthy conduct. Absolute truthfulness should characterize the speech and conduct of the one who shares the life of Christ. All truth, however, should be expressed "*in love*." Orthodoxy has not always been noted for this virtue. Paul is not saying that truth may on occasion be sacrificed in the interests of love, but he does insist that it must always be maintained in a spirit of love.

Grant Osborne: I have often called **4:7–16** "the perfect body-building kit." We have everything here that we need for a healthy, growing church and for the eternal benefit of each member. The exalted Christ stands at the head as ruler and Lord. But unlike earthly rulers who remain aloof, he is wholly focused on his followers who function as his body. As the head he nourishes and empowers them, giving to the members of the body gifts of grace that enable them to maintain their connectedness and thereby grow to maturity. Together they work out the unity God intends for his people, yet they do so through the diversity of gifts and ministries, as Christ has apportioned them. The leaders are gifted in a special way, but their purpose is to train and equip the saints, not to conduct all ministry functions themselves. Rather, they provide guidance for all the members of the body for mutual, reciprocal ministry to one another (**2 Tim 2:2**). One could say that their task is to work themselves out of a job as they pass along what God has given them so that all of the other members can function as vital components of a healthy, growing body.

Bryan Chapell: This passage should also be read as a list of warnings against the **ego sins of leaders** that are common in Christ's church—leaders who, because of their gifts, may forget that Christ is the Lord of all.

1. The first such sin is believing or acting as though we do not have to accept different kinds of persons in our church. For this reason we are reminded of the unity Christ requires and the fact that we are all one in him (**Eph. 4:2–6**).
2. The second sin is believing or acting as though everyone has to be like us. For this reason we are reminded that our Lord has gifted us differently (**Eph. 4:7–11**).
3. The third sin is believing or acting as though we by ourselves are adequate to do what needs to be done. For this reason leaders are reminded that our task is to equip others for the work of ministry that we cannot complete on our own (**Eph. 4:12–15**).
4. The fourth sin is believing or acting as though we can do what Christ needs done without Christ. So we are reminded of our dependence on him (**Eph. 4:16a**).
5. One more sin remains: the belief that other people have the gifts that Christ needs for his church, so there is nothing for us personally to do. For this reason, Paul reminds us that not only are we dependent on the work of Christ; we have an additional dependency on others.

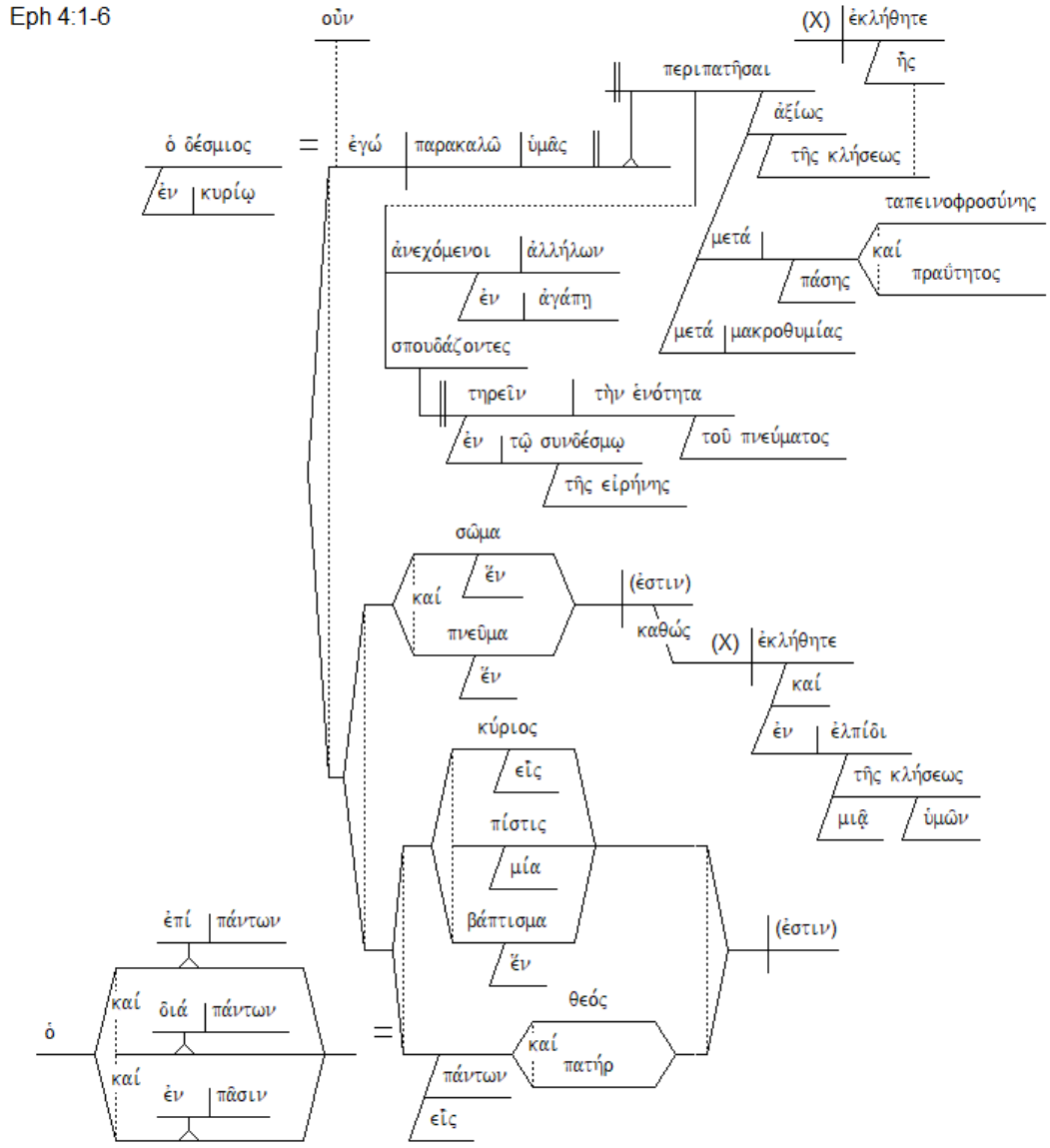
William Hendriksen: **Seed Thoughts of Ephesians 4:1-16** (one thought for each verse)

1. The best missionary method is the truly consecrated life.
2. The qualities which Christ demands of us are those which he himself exemplified.
3. Though peace is indeed a precious gift imparted by the Holy Spirit, it is at the same time the product of human effort.
4. The church is not a man-made institution but the product of the Holy Spirit whose call to repent and to follow Christ in service we should obey. Obedience to that call imparts hope.
5. The one Lord Jesus Christ in whom all Christians believe and in whose name they have all been baptized welds together into one body God's children, those still on earth and those already in heaven.
6. Although the first person of the Holy Trinity, as Father he is 'over all,' for he exercises control over all. He is, however, also 'through all,' for he blesses us all through Christ our Mediator. And he is 'in all,' for he draws us all close to his heart in the Spirit. Thus we perceive that we worship one God, not three gods. It is folly therefore to say, 'God is dead, but Jesus is still alive.' The three are One.
7. A talent is a gift, and to no one has Christ imparted every gift. The fact that a person's ability in any direction is a gift should keep him humble, for what has he that he has not received? It should also encourage him, for the way to the Giver and his inexhaustible gifts is known.
8. Not only Christ's suffering, death, burial, and resurrection were in our interest; so was also his ascension. He ascended not only to receive glory for himself but also to bestow gifts upon men.
9. The doctrine of Christ's descent into hell on Calvary should be retained. If our Savior did not suffer the torments of hell for us, is he then our Substitute?
10. Did the descended Jesus love us with a love so deep and intimate that nothing on earth can compare with it? The ascended Christ loves us no less!
11. An apostle was a gift of Christ to the church. This was true also with respect to the prophet; and also with respect to an evangelist. Today, too, the man to whom Christ has assigned the task of being 'a pastor and teacher' should be so regarded. If, when he truly represents the will of his Sender, he is rejected, those who are guilty of this sin are rejecting the Master himself.
12. It is the duty of the pastor to impress upon everyone under his care the duty and privilege of lay-ministry. Only when every member does his part is the body of Christ being built up as it should be.
13. Not only unity but also growth is demanded of us. The Church's Organic Unity and Growth is the theme of this chapter. 'Excelsior!' should be our motto. Reaching 'the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ,' our aim.
14. The church should emphasize teaching right doctrine.
15. Over against the deceitfulness of the opponent the church should practice truthfulness; always, however, in a context of love.
16. Just as the human body when held together by every supporting joint grows strong, so also the church when it receives the active support of every member, each co-operating according to his ability, will be built up in love.

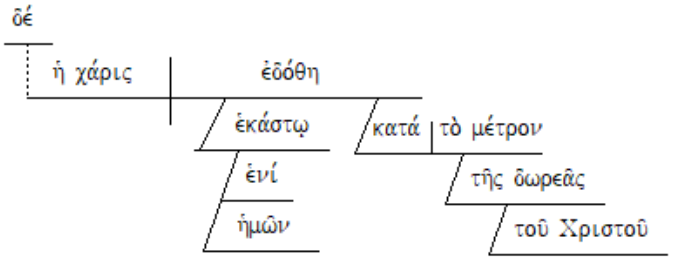
John Piper: In other words, the uniqueness of Christ--the fact that there is only one Christ, and only one God, and only one faith--is the foundation for mission outside the church and the foundation of unity inside the church. . .

The aim of the ministry is not just that individuals be built up, but that the body take on a personality like Christ's and a strength like Christ's and a love like Christ's and a spirit like Christ's. We have much to learn here. We are, as Americans, utterly devoted to personal individual fulfillment and satisfaction that the idea of devoting our lives and ministries to building a body of Christ that as a whole looks Christ-like and as a whole has strong faith and as a whole has unified knowledge and as a whole looks and acts like the mature man, Christ Jesus--the idea of devoting ourselves to that, is very difficult to grasp.

Leedy Greek Diagram:



Eph 4:7



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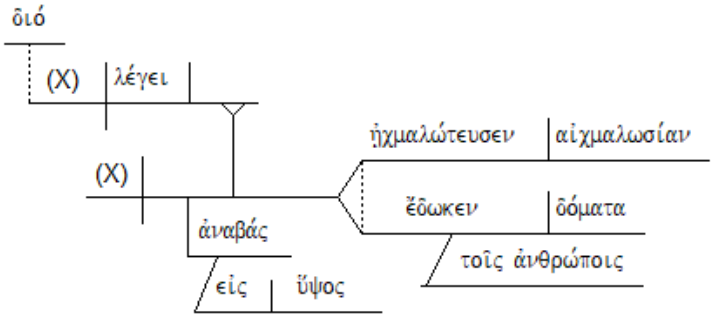

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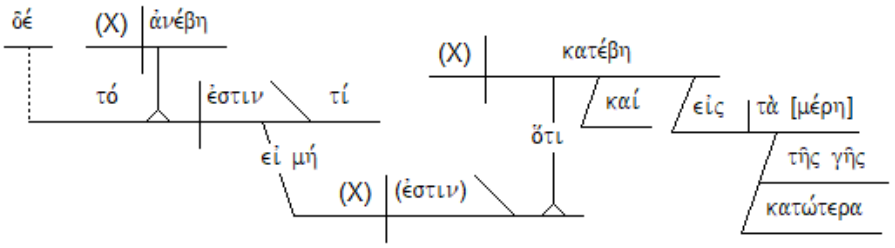

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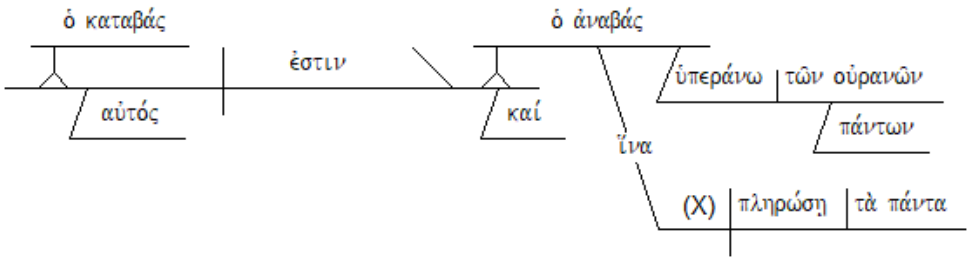
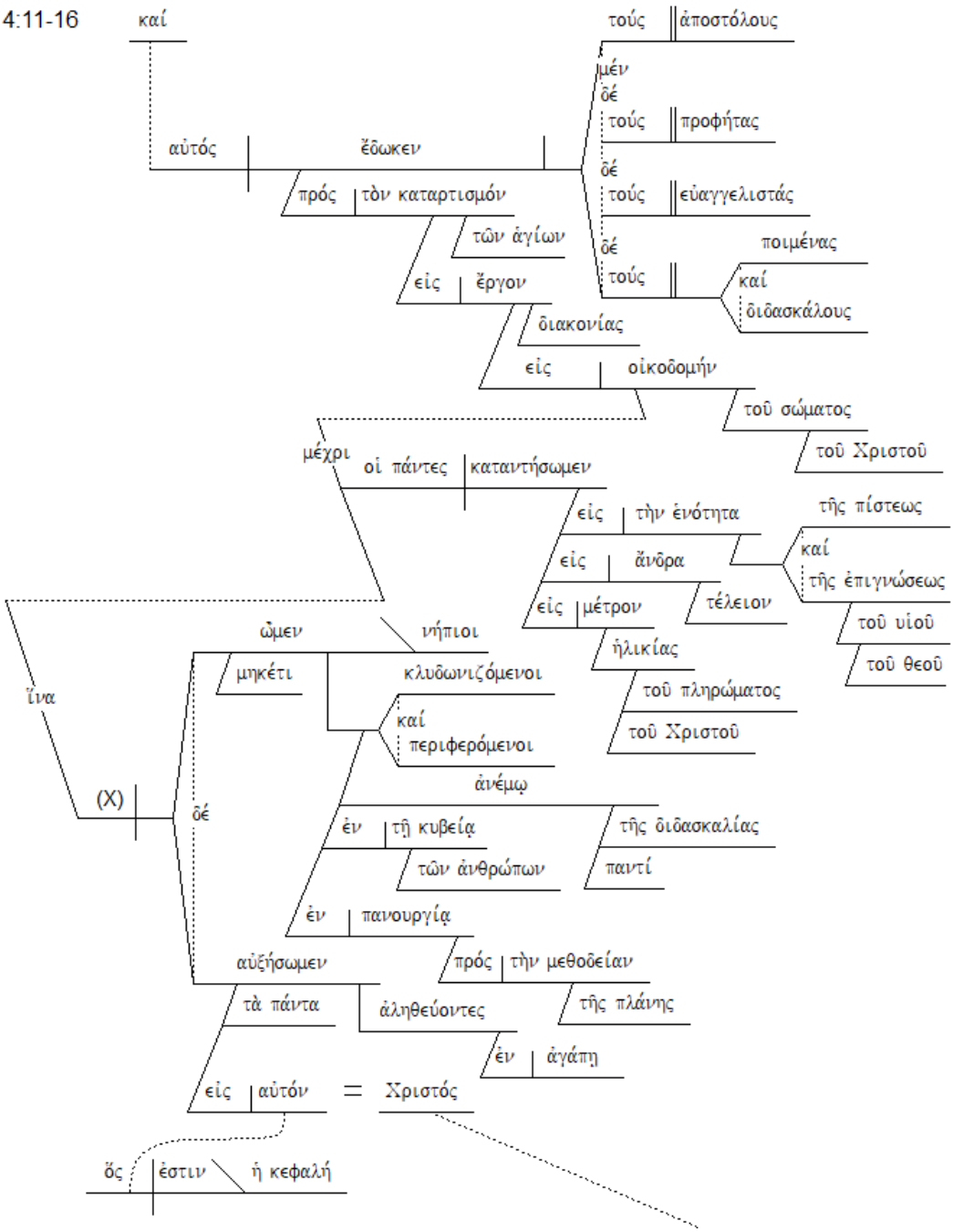


Eph 4:11-16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Eph 4:11-16
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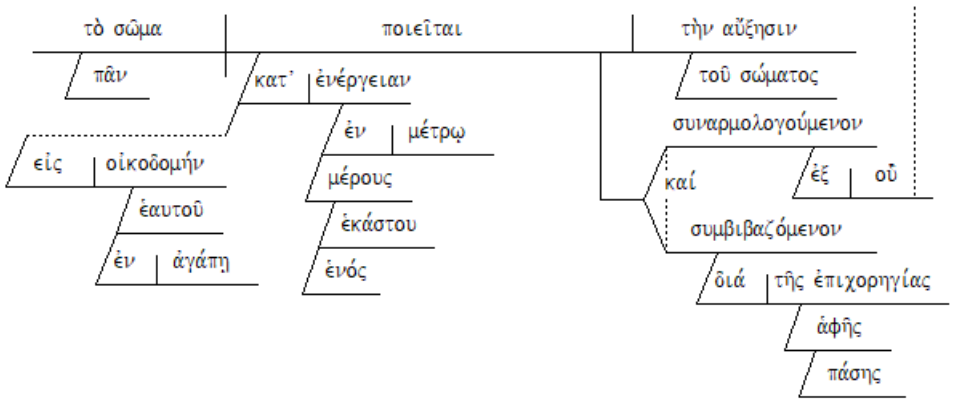

TEXT: EPHESIANS 4:17-24

TITLE: WALK DIFFERENTLY

BIG IDEA:
THE CHRISTIAN WALK MUST BE RADICALLY DIFFERENT --
- THAN THE UNSAVED
- THAN OUR OLD SELF

INTRODUCTION:

Andrew Lincoln: In terms of its structure and sequence this pericope has two parts—the exhortation not to live like the Gentiles (**vv 17–19**) and a more positive counterpart setting out the type of life that is in accord with the Christian tradition (**vv 21–24**). Each part can be further divided into two subsections. The basic exhortation, no longer to live as the Gentiles, is expressed in a formulation indicating the importance, urgency, and authority the writer attaches to his exhortation (**v 17ab**). This is followed by an extended negative depiction of Gentile thinking and conduct, in which the writer, in characteristic fashion, strings together participial clauses, prepositional phrases, and a relative clause (**vv 17c–19**). Distinctively Christian thinking and conduct is first encouraged by contrast and in terms of tradition—"*But that is not the way you learned Christ*"—where Christ stands for the Christian tradition in which the readers were taught (**vv 20, 21**). That tradition in its ethical aspects is then spelled out through the use of three infinitives, the first again emphasizing the difference from the readers' previous way of life and involving putting off the old person, the second and third finally expressing the writer's positive expectations and involving being renewed and putting on the new person characterized by righteousness and holiness (**vv 22–24**).

Stephen Fowl: Now in **4:17–24** Paul emphasizes the importance of walking in a way that avoids various practices conventionally associated (at least by Jews) with Gentiles. In this respect walking in a manner worthy of their calling will require the Ephesians to live in a way that clearly distinguishes them from their pagan Gentile neighbors. **Verses 17–19** in particular describe the non-Christian Gentiles' fundamental and comprehensive alienation from God in a manner that recalls **2:1–5**. Here in **4:17–19**, however, Paul focuses on the behaviors that flow from such an alienated position. From this description Paul in **vv. 20–24** proceeds to articulate the importance of being renewed in Christ, putting off the old person and putting on the new.

Clinton Arnold: **Living Out the New Identity in Christ (4:17–24)**
A. Exhortation to Live Differently than Non-Christians (**4:17**)
B. Description of the Condition and Lifestyle of Non-Christian Gentiles (**4:18–19**)
C. The New Identity in Christ and Exhortation to the New Lifestyle (**4:20–24**)

Christians are called to live their daily lives in a way that is sharply differentiated from the world around them and from the lifestyle that characterized their pre-Christian past. Paul wants the Ephesians' lives to be determined by their relationship with Jesus Christ and the new identity they have in him. This will involve allowing the Holy Spirit to change their way of thinking and to bring their lifestyles into conformity with their new identity.

Frank Thielman: The movement into these practical matters is slow. In an opening section, Paul first lays a theological foundation by reminding his readers again of their conversion (**4:17–24**; cf. **2:1–10, 11–22**). Here, however, the focus is not on what God has done for them, as in **2:1–10**, or on their unity with each other across ethnic lines, as in **2:11–22**, but on the practical, day-to-day ramifications of their movement from futility, darkness, estrangement from God, dullness, and despair to the experience of constant spiritual renewal and re-creation in the image of God (**4:24**; cf. **2:10, 15**).

This opening section (**4:17–24**) can be divided into <u>two parts</u>. <u>First</u>, Paul exhorts his readers no longer to "*walk*" in the way that used to characterize their lives as unbelieving Gentiles, and then he provides a motivation for this exhortation by describing in bleak terms the existence of those who continue to live this way (**4:17–19**; cf. **2:1–3**). <u>Second</u>, he reminds his readers of the traditional ethical instruction that he assumes they received after they believed the gospel (**4:20–24**). He describes the change in behavior that their conversion has entailed with a metaphor for conversion in use in ancient philosophical and religious circles, a metaphor of taking off one set of clothing and replacing it with a new set. He couples this imagery with a second metaphor, which speaks of the change from existence as an old human being to existence as a new human being. At the end of the section, he identifies "*the new human being*" his readers have become as "*created after the pattern of God*" (ὁ καινὸς ἄνθρωπος ὁ κατὰ θεὸν κτισθείς, *ho kainos anthrōpos ho kata theon ktistheis*; **4:24**), an allusion to **Gen. 1:26**. . .

<u>Summary</u>: In **4:17–24**, Paul says that the lives of his readers should reflect the **dramatic transformation** that has taken place in them at their conversion. They should no longer live in a way that speaks of the confusion, demonic control, and despair that characterize those who are estranged from the life God provides. They should instead live in ways that show their thinking is continually being renewed spiritually and that reveal their re-creation in the image of a God who is righteous and holy.

I. (:17-19) WALK DIFFERENTLY FROM THE UNSAVED

"*This I say therefore, and affirm together with the Lord*"

<u>Importance of this issue</u>:
Paul and the Lord are on the same page on this important issue.

Klyne Snodgrass: The Greek word translated "*I … insist on it*" (**v. 17**) is literally "*I testify*" or "*I declare*." In contexts like this it has the connotation "*urge*" (cf. **1 Thess.**

2:12). Paul expresses his appeal to his readers with increasing strength as the letter progresses. "*In the Lord*" adds **authority** to his appeal and virtually suggests his teaching comes from the Lord. The letter reaches a climax here. Paul's readers cannot go further without making an ethical decision. Here the die is cast. The rest of the letter will only take care of details.

Paul asks his Gentile readers not to live like Gentiles!

A. General Proposition of Prohibition

"*walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk*"

Andrew Lincoln: The picture of the Gentiles style of life is painted in the blackest colors. The writer is not interested in a balanced analysis that would point out positive features of Gentile life, nor is his purpose to enable his readers to feel superior. Instead he wants to provide decisive reasons why they should be distinctively Christian, and the more drastic the contrast, the more effective is his exhortation likely to be.

R. C. Sproul: Having really attained a mature understanding of the things of God, then, a believer is not going to live like the Gentiles, who are ignorant of the things of God and who don't have God in their thinking. Their thinking is not informed by divine revelation and they don't have the perspective of eternity that is given to Christians in the word of God. The pagan mind is never theocentric (God-centered); the Christian mind must be theocentric. God must be at the center, informing the understanding and shaping opinions about everything.

B. Specific Characteristics of the Unsaved to Avoid

1. Intellectual Bankruptcy
   a. Futility
      "*in the futility of their mind*"
      cf. the message of futility in the Book of Ecclesiastes

Klyne Snodgrass: The word translated "*futility*" (*mataiotes*) expresses meaninglessness, uselessness, worthlessness, or emptiness. The majority of the occurrences of this word in the LXX are in Ecclesiastes to express the meaninglessness of life. In the New Testament the word occurs elsewhere only in **Romans 8:20** (NIV, "*frustration*") and **2 Peter 2:18** ("*empty*"). As M. Barth expressed dramatically, "With one single word Paul describes the majority of the inhabitants of the Greco-Roman empire … as aiming with silly methods at a meaningless goal."

Four elements in **verse 18** trace the problem back to its source.

(1) The Gentile way of life is meaningless because the Gentiles have no light to give them life and guidance. They are intellectually blacked out. In the ancient world light was a universal symbol for understanding. In Judaism (cf. **Ps. 36:9**) and the New Testament light is used of life-giving relation with God (cf. **Eph. 1:18; 5:8–14**).

(2) Darkness engulfs the Gentile mind because they are "*separated from the life*" God gives, who is the source of the light.

(3) The Gentiles are separated from God because of deliberate "*ignorance*," which has taken up residence in their souls.

(4) The Gentiles are ignorant because of their *hardness of heart*. The heart is the source of all loyalties. In this case, hardness of heart has prevented all loyalty to God. In sum, hearts made insensitive to God have set off a chain reaction that turned out the light and led to meaninglessness.

Grant Osborne: The term mataiotēs means "meaningless" or "empty," devoid of anything worthwhile and entirely the product of a vain mind. If we apply this to our own situation, we can see that the American way of narcissistic hedonism has no redeeming value whatsoever and is a complete waste. The end product is vacuity, a complete absence of any true satisfaction, and a lifestyle that can never produce anything of benefit. The only viable Christian reaction is a refusal to participate in such errant thinking and actions. Our mindset determines our actions, so if our thinking is empty our lives will be as well.

b. Ignorance
"*being darkened in their understanding*"

2. Spiritual Death
"*excluded from the life of God*" -- talk about being left out!

Andrew Lincoln: "The life of God is that life which answers to the nature of God and which he communicates to his children" (Westcott, 66). "*Separated from the life of God*" is, of course, equivalent to the earlier description of the readers' former condition as "*dead*" (**2:1, 5**) and "*without God*" (**2:12**). Loss of light can now be seen to amount to the same thing as loss of life (cf. also **John 1:4; 8:12**).

WHY?
a. Due to Mind Deficiencies
"*because of the ignorance that is in them*"
Points backwards to the point already made

b. Due to Heart Deficiencies
"*because of the hardness of their heart*"
Points forward to the next point
It is more of a moral and heart issue than it is an intellectual issue.

Andrew Lincoln: At the center of their thinking, feeling, and volition, they have hardened themselves to God and to the knowledge of him that was available to them.

3. Calloused Conscience

"*and they having become callous*"

Grant Osborne: They have lost all sensitivity (**4:19**). Ignorance leads to hardness, which in turn leads to callousness, the inability to feel pain—here it refers to the inability to feel shame or guilt in the presence of abiding evil. Repetition anchors a practice in one's muscle memory. Great athletes have the touch because they have practiced moves thousands of times. In a similar way, when we sin repeatedly the muscle of our mind learns to practice evil with a sense of impunity. That is the definition of a psychopath: one who feels no remorse for their terrible evils. In a sense we can become psychopathic sinners. **First Peter 4:4** says it well: the world expects us to "*join them in their reckless, wild living*" (literally, "to plunge with them into a flood of wild sin"). This pictures us jumping into a Niagara Falls of sin with them. Such an action would be injudicious beyond all measure, but we willingly do the equivalent when we have completely lost our moral compass.

4. Fleshly Sensuality

"*have given themselves over to sensuality*"

a. Manifold Impurity

"*for the practice of every kind of impurity*"

Clinton Arnold: This self-indulgence manifests itself in the accomplishment of all kinds of impure (ἀκαθαρσία) actions. This term has a long history of usage in the OT, where it is used to describe anything that is ritually unclean. It is used extensively in the LXX of Leviticus to refer to the various items deemed unclean, such as dead bodies, a variety of different animals (pigs, reptiles, etc.), and menstrual blood. It is parallel to the word "*common*" (κοινός), which is used of anything that is ceremonially impure. These ritual laws are no longer valid under the new covenant. Jesus revealed that the real problem lies in the hearts of individuals and that what comes out of the heart is what defiles people (**Matt 12:34; Mark 7:20**). Thus, Paul speaks of the lusts of the heart as leading to impurity (**Rom 1:24**). Impurity is also one of the fruits of the evil inclination, that is, the flesh (**Gal 5:19**; see also **Col 3:5**). Impurity is the opposite of the holiness that God seeks in the lives of people (**1 Thess 4:7**).

b. Majoring in Greed

"*with greediness*"

Not just indulging in impurity, but never satisfied and always craving more.
Or talking about greed in a more general sense in terms of craving for money and material possessions.

Klyne Snodgrass: The word translated *"continual lust*" *(pleonexia*) means literally "*the desire to have more*." **Ephesians 5:5** and **Colossians 3:5** equate greed and idolatry, a theme that is implicit here in **4:17–19**. These verses reflect a Jewish understanding of idolatry as the root of all sin, and greed as the sin encompassing all sins (cf. Wisdom of

Solomon **15:5–6**). Impure activity is rooted in greedy desire. This word joined with "*deceitful desires*" in **verse 22** and the "*hardening of … hearts*" in **verse 18** make a strong accusation about the self-centered character of sin.

Harold Hoehner: In reviewing these two verses a series of causes and effects becomes apparent. The scenario could be reconstructed by reversing the direction of the statements. The hardness of their hearts toward God caused their ignorance. Their ignorance concerning God and his will caused them to be alienated from the life of God. Their alienation caused their minds to be darkened, and their darkened minds caused them to walk in the futility of mind. It must be remembered that this series of causes and effects has a Gentile frame of reference. Its system is diametrically opposed to those who are believers. It is understandable why Paul exhorted the Ephesian believers not to walk as Gentiles do.

S. Lewis Johnson: **Putting on the New Man**
Now when we turn to **verse 17** through **verse 24**, having looked at the unity and the diversity that exists in the body of Christ, it may surprise some of us to see how the Apostle lays stress upon the **intellectual factor** that is involved in the Christian life. In fact, the intellectual factor is the thing that the Apostle stresses here as he details the Christian life. Now we, as I've been saying so often through the years, have tended to listen too much to people who tell us that the intellectual factor is unimportant in Christianity. Now let me read **verses 17** through **24** in which the Apostle begins to speak about the details of the Christian life, and I just want you to pay attention to the intellectual factors that the Apostle mentions and see what you think, what emphasis you think the Apostle places on the mind in the Christian life. . .

So, the Apostle has looked at this with the intellectual factor in mind. Man is morally obtuse, he's blinded, he has spiritual ignorance as a result of that. He's alienated from God, he walks in the vanity of his mind. His mind is darkened. His heart is stubborn towards God. To use the terms of theology: man is totally depraved. That's what **total depravity** means. . .

When we say that man is totally depraved, we mean that all of their faculties are touched by sin: their mind, their wills, their emotions. Those features that make up their faculties, they're all twisted and warped by sin. They're even capable of certain thoughts that even the world approves of as benevolent thoughts, very good thoughts. But all parts of them are touched by sin; that's what total depravity means.

It also means, and this is extremely important, it means that a man cannot, of himself, please God. It means that a man cannot, of himself, turn to the Lord. A man cannot, of himself, believe. If he could, of himself, believe, if he could, of himself, turn to the Lord, he could do the greatest thing of all. And thus, he would not be, as the Apostle says, ignorant, alienated, blinded, hardened, because he would have that capacity. So the Bible speaks of total depravity in the sense of total inability to respond to the things of God.

II. (:20-24) WALK DIFFERENTLY FROM YOUR PRE-CONVERSION DAYS (YOUR OLD SELF)

A. (:20-21) General Proposition of Imitation: Follow the Lifestyle of Christ = The One that Corresponds to Truth

"*But you did not learn Christ in this way, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus*"

Good Definition of True Discipleship = learning Christ

Clinton Arnold: Paul makes the rather unusual statement that they "*learned Christ*." One normally learns a content (e.g., the law, statues, and ordinances, etc.) or a certain pattern of behavior (e.g., to obey God or to do good), but not a person. This unique expression most likely heightens the element of personal relationship with Christ that is central to the Christian faith and emphasized in Ephesians. Jesus has risen from the dead and has been exalted to the right hand of the Father. He is the living head of the church. Paul expresses a similar idea to "*learning him*" when he says to the Philippians, "*I want to know Christ*" (**Phil 3:10**). The expression should also be understood in light of **Col 2:6–7**: "*just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught*." In addition to the personal dimension, "*learning Christ*" also means to learn about him by becoming well acquainted with the oral Jesus tradition (now written in the four gospels) and the apostolic teaching about Christ, which is passed on as "the faith." O'Brien sums it up well when he says: "Learning Christ means welcoming him as a living person and being shaped by his teaching."

Frank Thielman: In **4:20–21**, then, Paul begins to set Christian teaching in contrast to a Gentile worldview. To guide their lives, Christians have both a relationship with the living Christ and concrete instruction, derived from the life and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth. The shape of their lives, thus guided, stands utterly apart from the hopeless and socially destructive behavior of their unbelieving Gentile neighbors.

Van Parunak: The early church focused its attention on the person and work of the Lord Jesus. The central meeting of the church, the breaking of bread, was "*in remembrance of*" him. More generally, everything they did was focused on him. Let this be our emphasis as well.

B. (:22-24) Specific Characteristics to Embrace: Three Key Steps:

Clinton Arnold: The solution lies in seeing these two texts as accurately displaying the tension between the indicative and imperative in Paul's writings, or, as some have referred to it, the eschatological tension of the "already" and "not yet." This is a fundamental structure in Paul's thought. He balances the "indicative" of the work of Christ on our behalf and the resultant change in our identity with the "imperative" that calls for us to actualize in our day-to-day lives what is already true of us in Christ.

Thus, Paul can regularly call believers "*saints*" (ἅγιοι), yet admonish them to pursue sanctification (ἁγιασμός; **1 Thess 4:3, 4, 7**; cf. **Rom 6:19, 22**). Similarly, in Colossians, Paul can stress that believers "*have been filled*" with the fullness of God (**2:9–10**) and yet pray in Ephesians that the believers might be filled with the fullness of God (**Eph 3:19**).

The key to interpreting these statements is understanding the proper relationship of what has already happened in Christ with what Christ is yet calling his people to do. A real change has already taken place by virtue of one's incorporation into Christ and participation in his death, resurrection, and ascension. Yet until Christ returns, these will not be fully realized characteristics in the daily experience of believers.

Thus, there is no contradiction when Paul says to the Colossians that "*you have taken off your old self*" (**Col 3:9**) and then tells the Ephesians that they still need to take off the old self (4:22). **Both are true**. The former statement affirms the new identity of believers in terms of their participation in the death of Christ. Because of their incorporation into Christ, their old self was crucified with Christ (**Rom 6:6**). Yet now believers need to align their day-to-day lives with the reality of who they are in Christ. Dunn is correct in saying that "Paul can hardly have intended to imply that 'the old nature' (**Rom 6:6**) had been totally destroyed, that there was nothing in the believer for sin to exert its influence over, that the old age was wholly past." The "*old self*" still lingers as does "*the flesh*," in spite of the fact that Paul says it, too, has been crucified (**Gal 5:24**). Paul then appeals to the believers in and around Ephesus to rid themselves of everything related to the old self.

But what is "the old self" (ὁ παλαιὸς ἄνθρωπος)? It is more than an old mind-set or lifestyle. It is a way of referring to believers in terms of their **solidarity with Adam in his sin**. He was the representative of humanity in its disobedience, sinfulness, and rebellion against God. Conversely, Christ is now the representative of the new humanity, the new creation "*in Christ*." "*The old self*" is an expression of community identity—all were once fallen and dead in their transgressions and sins (**Eph 2:1–2**), but it also refers to the vestiges of that identity that remain in each individual. These sinful traits need to be stripped off; their influence needs to be defeated.

1. (:22) Put Off the Old Man

> "*that, in reference to your former manner of life,*
> *you lay aside the old self*"

Problem with the Old Man: "*which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit*"

Frank Thielman: That old way of life could result only in personal disintegration, the kind of existence Paul has just described in **4:19**—an existence that is guided by demons, hopeless, and so focused on greed that it leads to bizarre and antisocial behavior. It is also behavior that, in the end, is consumed by the wrath of God.

Grant Osborne: The reason the old way of life must be jettisoned is that it "*is being corrupted by its deceitful desires*." In the Romans and Colossians passages the old self is pictured as having existed only in the past, but here it is still alive, corrupting and deceiving its enslaved captives. We may be followers of Christ and still be burdened by the old nature. We have been redeemed and made part of the body of Christ, but the process is not yet complete. The old has been nullified and rendered powerless—has been "*crucified with Christ*" (**Rom 6:6**)—but while it is no longer an internal force controlling us it is still an external force tempting and deceiving us. It operates through the flesh, the sin nature that is still a part of us. It has been defeated but not destroyed, cast out of our new being but still operative as a threatening outside force. The battle still rages, and our victory must begin with a studied repudiation of the old nature and its ways.

Corruption is a process, a rotting of the senses that occurs in stages when sin goes unchecked. Sin is a gangrenous disease that atrophies and then eats away the limbs, and it can be stopped only by cutting away the offending flesh. It cannot be toyed with or tolerated but must be removed and disposed of. The process of temptation takes place through our "*deceitful desires*," those self-centered impulses that seem so good in the beginning but are in reality a pack of lies that would destroy us. This runs the whole gamut from greedy accumulation of possessions to sexual cravings to a desire for power and status over others. None of these will ever truly satisfy, but they tempt us because they all seem so right, so desirable, so fraught with pleasure.

Van Parunak: "*The old man*".—Contrasted with the "*new man*" in **Col 3:9,10**.

- What does it mean? Other terms:
  - Commonly referred to as "*old nature*," but this is not a biblical term.
  - Contrasted with the "*new man*" in **v.24; Col 3:9,10**; cf. **Gal 3:27; Rom 13:14**. The origin of this is **Rom 5:12-21**, the realization that there are ultimately only two men in the world, Adam and Christ, and we are either in one or in the other. (But note that this "*new man*" is "*created*." It is not just Christ, but **the application of Christ to the believer**. Cf. also **2:15**; it involves the unification of Jew and Gentile into one "*new man*," with whom the believer is united.
  - "*The body of sin*," **Col 2:11; Rom 6:6**; cf. "*members*" in **Col 3:5** and "*flesh*" **Rom 13:14**. Our current body, inherited from Adam, is fallen and liable to sin. Thus the importance of the transformation promised in **Phil 3:21**, when we shall "*be fashioned like unto his glorious body*."

- When does this happen? In **Col 3:9,10; Rom 6:6; Gal 3:27** the change is positional, in the past. But there is a practical aspect as well, seen in **Rom 13:14**. Note also that sinful deeds are gone positionally in **Col 3:9**, but must be dealt with in practice in **3:5,8**.

2. (:23) Be Renewed in Your Mind

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

Clinton Arnold: The mind (ὁ νοῦς), then, is the focus of the Spirit's renewing work. Technically, since the infinitive is in the passive voice, the genitive case of "the mind" should be understood as a subjective genitive; that is, it serves as the subject of the passive verb with the Spirit being understood as the agent of the renewing work: "*the mind is being renewed by the Spirit*." The idea is similar to what Paul says in **Rom 12:2**: "*be transformed by the renewing of your mind* (τῇ ἀνακαινώσει τοῦ νοός)."

Van Parunak: This renewal is not the result of our fleshly effort; we open ourselves to it, and it happens. But how do we open ourselves to it? By focusing our minds on the things of God, through the regular reading of Scripture, memorization, prayer, and exhortation with the people of God.

3. (:24) Put on the New Man
"*and put on the new self*"

Potential of the New Man: "*which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth*."

Clinton Arnold: This "*new self*" (καινὸς ἄνθρωπος) is a new identity that these believers have already acquired at the time of their conversion (**Col 3:10**) when they were sealed with the Spirit (**Eph 1:13**) and were joined to Christ in his death, resurrection, and ascension (**2:5–6**). The new self is who believers now are in terms of their solidarity with Christ. Nevertheless, Paul calls them to put on this new identity. This amounts to a daily and growing recognition of the truth of who they are now in Christ Jesus. It also involves an actualization of this identity in their daily experience through a transformed way of thinking (**4:23**) and bringing their lives into conformity with the defining characteristics of this new identity—righteousness and holiness.

The new self is not simply a renewal of the old self; it is a **new creation**. The passive participle "created" should probably be taken as a divine passive; that is, God is the creative force behind it. The same God who created the heavens and the earth (**Gen 1**) is now responsible for the creation of this new identity of believers. He is creating a people for himself who will conform to his own image or likeness. This corresponds to the thought of **Col 3:10**, where the new self is shaped in the likeness of the image of Creator God (κατ' εἰκόνα τοῦ κτίσαντος αὐτόν). This corresponds with Paul's thought in **2 Cor 5:17**, that "*if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation*" (καινὴ κτίσις). In that context, Paul clarifies that "*the Spirit gives life*" (**2 Cor 3:6**). Similarly here, Paul stresses that the renewal of the mind can be attributed to the work of the Holy Spirit. As Moyer Hubbard explains, new creation should be understood in terms of "pneumatological restoration." Thus, the presence of the Spirit is a key factor in the new identity of believers that constitutes the "new self."

The distinguishing features of the new self that Paul identifies here are "*righteousness and holiness* (δικαιοσύνη and ὁσιότης)." These two terms appear together commonly to

summarize a virtuous life that is obedient to the commands of God (see, e.g., **Deut 9:5; Luke 1:75**).

Andrew Lincoln: The change of clothing imagery signifies an exchange of identities, and the concepts of the old and the new persons reinforce this. These old and new persons are not simply Adam and Christ as representatives of the old and new orders (pace Barth, 539), nor more specifically Adam in the inner person and Christ in the inner person (pace Jervell, Imago Dei, 240–48). They are individuals, as those individuals are identified either with the old or with the new order of existence. The old person is the person living under the dominion of the present evil age and its powers, and this previous identity has to be dealt with decisively. . .

Putting off the old person has already taken place through baptism, which transferred believers to the new order. This injunction is not an exhortation to believers to repeat that event but to continue to live out its significance by giving up on that old person that they no longer are. They are new people who must become in practice what God has already made them, and that involves the resolve to put off the old way of life as it attempts to impinge. This is made clear by the qualifying phrase which precedes the mention of the old person—"*as regards your former way of life*." The use of ἀναστροφή, "*way of life*," recalls the use of the cognate verb in the earlier depiction of the Gentile readers' past in **2:3**. It should now be plain to them that learning Christ means giving up that Gentile past and its practices.

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Do we truly appreciate the light of the glorious knowledge of the gospel and of Christ which God has shined upon us? Can we remember the pre-conversion days of spiritual ignorance and futility?

2) Do we find that our Christian instruction is teaching us truths about Christ or actually teaching us Christ himself so that our life becomes more like our Master? Is He not only the substance of our learning, but our teacher and the medium in which we are learning?

3) What are the practical applications to our approach to evangelism once we truly understand the condition of lost unbelievers (the condition of their mind, of their heart, etc.)?

4) How do we make sure that this process of renewing is continuing to take place in our inner man?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Andrew Lincoln: Obviously, hortatory material is intended to effect a particular pattern of life in those to whom it is addressed. Here, the denunciation of Gentile lifestyle, the appeal to Christian catechetical tradition, and the antithetical formulations which characterize the passage are all meant to reinforce the new identity of believers, which is foundational to their new lifestyle, and to guard against their becoming conformed to the ethos of the surrounding society. The use of traditional material means that instruction about the distinctive ethical implications of the new identity can take place by way of reminder of what the readers should already know. This passage lays the essential groundwork on which the more detailed and specific ethical exhortations that follow in the next section, **4:25 - 5:2**, depend. Only from these will it become clear how far and in what ways the conduct advocated by this writer really is new and distinctive in relation to ethical attitudes and behavior in the surrounding society.

Homer Kent: What is characteristic of individuals apart from God is the "*vanity of their mind*." "*Vanity*" here does not refer to pride, but to purposelessness, aimlessness, uselessness. "*Mind*" involves more than just intellect in this passage, for volition and aim are included. The mind of the unconverted man may be filled with many things, and may be highly developed in its intellectual attainments, but spiritually it is wholly unable to apprehend the life of God. Those who are apart from God are in a state of darkness in their spiritual understanding. Even though the evidence of God lies all about them in creation, as well as by direct revelation in Scripture, their understanding is darkened so that it cannot perceive the light which is available to them. Therefore, they are alienated from the life of God.

Kenneth Wuest (quoting Vincent who quotes Eadie!): The change is not in the mind psychologically, either in its essence or in its operation; and neither is it in the mind as if it were a superficial change of opinion on points of doctrine or practice: but it is in the spirit of the mind; in that which gives mind both its bend and its material of thought. It is not simply in the spirit as if it lay there in dim and mystic quietude; but it is in the spirit of the mind; in the power which, when changed itself, radically alters the entire sphere and business of the inner mechanism.

John Piper: As I have meditated on these three verses I have seen <u>six levels of evil</u> in my own heart that stand in opposition to Christ and the work he is doing.

<u>First</u>, the deepest problem is hardness (**v. 18** at the end): *'due to their hardness of heart*.' My deepest problem in life is that apart from the free and sovereign grace of God my heart is hardened against God. I am like a stone toward all that is spiritual. It does not move me, attract me, delight me. This is a far deeper problem than ignorance. It is the cause of ignorance, and the guilt of ignorance…

<u>Second,</u> there is in me a deep darkness that swallows up my understanding, and keeps me from seeing the glory of the gospel or the excellency of Christ (**v. 18** at the very beginning): *'they are darkened in their understanding*.' Notice **5:8**: *'Once your were*

darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of the light.' Before the Lord shined in my heart I was darkness (**2 Cor. 4:4-6**). There was no light in me. And Jesus said in **John 3:20** that I would not come to the light because I hated the light. And this is true whether I am a college professor or an illiterate native.

Third, the result of this darkness is a deep ignorance of reality (**v. 18**): *'alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them*.' I say it is a DEEP ignorance, for there is a superficial knowledge in the darkened mind of man. Apart from spiritual light I can know ten thousand things, but I can't know the true meaning of anything -- not one thing. Because to know the meaning of a thing is to know why it exists. But **Colossians 1:16** says, *'All things were created through Christ and for Christ*.' So until I know in my heart that every molecule in this universe exists for the sake of Jesus Christ, I don't know the final meaning of anything. I misunderstand everything, until the darkness of my mind is taken away.

Fourth, the hardness and darkness and ignorance of my heart results in licentiousness. **Verse 19**: *'They have become callous* (which is the same as "*hard*,") *and have given themselves up to licentiousness*.' The sense of the passage seems to be that when a person is ignorant of the true meaning of things, and the true values of life as God sees them, that person will make his goal in life something other than God. It may be the gratification of his body in sex or drink or drugs or food. Or it may be the gratification of his ego with more refined intellectual and cultural pursuits. Anything but God, and everything apart from God. The heart that is hard and dark and ignorant of God will also be a licentious and covetous heart.

Fifth, inevitably the hardness and darkness and ignorance and licentiousness spill over into practices of uncleanness. Notice how **verse 19** ends: *'greedy to practice every kind of uncleanness*.' Literally, their coveteousness drives them to pursue practices that in God's eyes are impure…

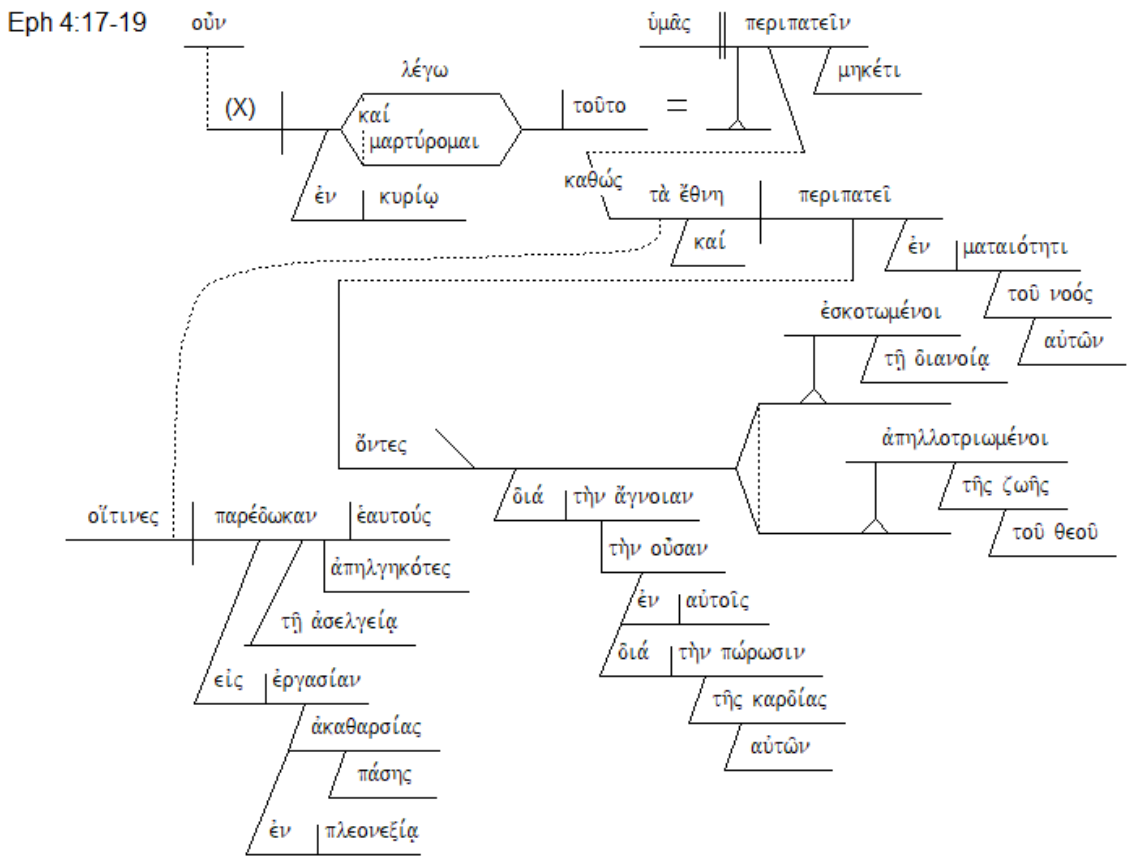
But that leads to the sixth level of evil in my disease that I haven't mentioned yet. **Verse 18** says I am *'alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in me, due to my hardness of heart*.' Hardness and darkness and ignorance and licenteousness and the practice of uncleanness cut me off from the one thing that could save me -- the *'life of God*,' and leave me dead (**2:l, 5**).

Van Parunak: People sometimes accuse God of complicity in their sin: "If he really didn't want me to do it, why doesn't he stop me?" Without inquiring into the divine motives, the fact is clear from these examples, and the principle is laid down in **Ps 81:8-12** in reference to, "*I gave them up* [God's part] *unto their own hearts' lust* [their part]." How dreadful a thing this is, when God withdraws his restraining hand and abandons men to their own sinful desires. This is why we must not have any patience with sin in our own lives, but **diligently flee from it**:

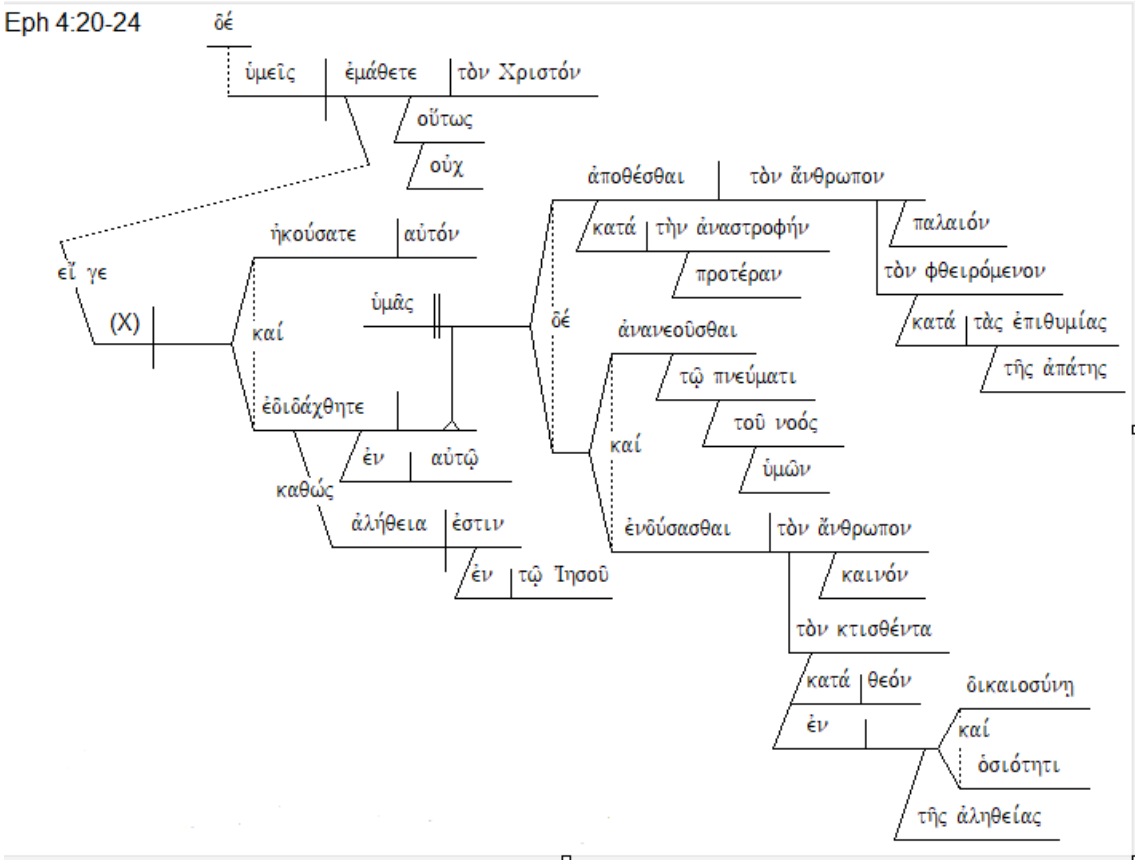
- **1 Cor 6:18**, "*flee fornication*"

- **1 Cor 10:14**, "*flee from idolatry*"
- **1 Tim 6:11**, "*flee these things*," viz., "*envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings*" (**vv.4-5**) and *covetousness* (**vv.6-10**)
- **2 Tim 2:22**, "*flee youthful lusts*"
- **Rom 13:14**, "*make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof*"

Leedy Greek Diagram:



Eph 4:20-24


ὁέ
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ἐν
τῷ Ἰησοῦ
ὁέ
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τὸν ἄνθρωπον
κατά
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προτέραν
παλαιόν
τὸν φθειρόμενον
κατά
τὰς ἐπιθυμίας
τῆς ἀπάτης
καί
ἀνανεοῦσθαι
τῷ πνεύματι
τοῦ νοός
ὑμῶν
ἐνδύσασθαι
τὸν ἄνθρωπον
καινόν
τὸν κτισθέντα
κατά
θεόν
ἐν
ὁικαιοσύνῃ
καί
ὁσιότητι
τῆς ἀληθείας

TEXT: EPHESIANS 4:25 – 5:2

TITLE: WALK IN LOVE AS A NEW PERSON IN CHRIST

BIG IDEA:
THE CHRISTIAN MUST REJECT HARMFUL BEHAVIOR (WHICH DESTROYS COMMUNITY) AND IMITATE THE LOVE OF GOD (WHICH BUILDS COMMUNITY)

INTRODUCTION:

Harold Hoehner: To review, Paul has exhorted the Ephesians not to walk as the Gentiles do. He described the lifestyle of the Gentiles as walking in the futility of the mind resulting from darkened minds and alienation from the life of God. Consequently, they have lost all moral sensitivity and have given themselves over to impurity based on selfishness (**vv. 17–19**). He then explained that they were taught they had put off the old person and had put on the new person (**vv. 20–24**). Now he is going to give **practical applications** of how the new person in Christ lives day to day (**vv. 25–32**). The structure of **4:17–32** is as follows:

(1) description of the lifestyle of the old person (**4:17–19**);
(2) statement regarding having put off the old person and having put on the new person (**4:20–24**); and
(3) exhortation on living a new lifestyle in accordance with being a new person (**4:25–32**).

Klyne Snodgrass: The concern in this section, as in much of the New Testament ethical teaching, is to **reject what destroys community and promote what builds community**.

Grant Osborne: Paul has just established the way in which the new, corporate body of Christ becomes part of Christ's new creation, continuing the challenge he gave the **Ephesians in 4:1** to **walk worthily of their calling**. Now he presents specific ethical advice on how they are to move from the "old Adam"/"old self" to the "new Adam"/"new self." This is Christian behavior in its essentials, presenting concrete vices to avoid and virtues to emulate. This list is obviously not exhaustive but representative of the ways in which we forge proper relationships within the new community, both with God and with our fellow saints. The pattern of **verses 25–30** is paraenetic (ethical exhortation) at the core, providing three aspects of each vice: the prohibition against the dangerous practice (lies, anger, stealing, filthy talk) followed by a corresponding virtue that will negate the vice and a motivation clause that tells us why we should follow this exhortation. This passage continues with lists of five vices to avoid and three virtues to follow (**4:31–32**) before concluding with a discussion of the primary virtue—love—through which we imitate God, with Christ as the model (**5:1–2**).

Frank Thielman: The specific, practical admonitions in **4:25–32** are sandwiched between the reference to believers as created in God's image and the summary statement that they should be imitators of God's love. They illustrate the meaning, then, of living out one's new existence as a re-created human being in relationship with others.

Clinton Arnold: Because God has created the church to be a community of believers growing together to maturity, the development of social virtues is of paramount importance. Therefore, Paul exhorts believers to rid themselves of vices that are detrimental to community life and to cultivate virtues that build up the community. The most important and summarizing virtue is love—defined by the Father's love in giving his Son and by Christ's love in sacrificing himself.

I. (4:25-27) REJECT LYING AND SINFUL ANGER

A. (:25) The Christian's Commitment to Integrity – Members of One Body

1. Negative Exhortation

"*Therefore, laying aside falsehood*"

Grant Osborne: The issues of truth and falsehood were central in **4:14–15** with respect to the danger posed by the false teachers, and now Paul presents the issue generally for all Christians, exhorting us to speak truthfully at all times.

Harold Hoehner: Having established the believer's position as a new person, the inferential conjunction διό points to the desired application of this position. The lifestyle of the old person is integrally tied to the person and so the lifestyle and the position of the new should be integrally bound together. Once the new person had been put on at conversion, one's subsequent life should reflect what he or she is. This inference is seen not only in the conjunction but also in the aorist middle participle (ἀποθέμενοι), which is the same word, tense, and voice as the infinitive in **verse 22** that describes the laying aside of the old person. This is an excellent demonstration of how conduct is closely connected with position.

2. Positive Command

"*speak truth, each one of you with his neighbor*"

Note: It is never enough to just cease the negative; you must replace it with the corresponding positive trait.

Clinton Arnold: Although this is a community responsibility, it must begin with each individual member. Thus Paul uses the distributive pronoun (ἕκαστος) to bring out **individual responsibility**. He characterizes the members of the community as one's "*neighbor*" (πλησίον). This is determined, in part, by the fact that this entire clause is a quotation from **Zech 8:16**, which calls for the remnant of God's people to speak the truth "*to [one's] neighbor*." This is a prophetic text that looks forward to the time when God will dwell with the remnant of his people. In this eschatological setting, Jerusalem

will be called "*the City of Truth*" (**8:3**) after God has saved his people (**8:13**) and manifests his presence with them (**8:23**).

3. Why?

"*for we are members of one another*"

Harold Hoehner: Certainly in this context it is talking about members in the body of Christ. He uses this figure to portray the close-knit relationship with other members of the body. It is interesting to observe that this word μέλος is never used of members of an organization but always of **members of an organism**. In other words, members of an organization may not necessarily have a relationship to other members, but members of an organism demand a close-knit relationship to the other members and they are accountable to one another. The concept of a close relationship is enhanced by the use of the reciprocal pronoun ἀλλήλων, "*one another*." In order for this body to function smoothly and efficiently, truth must be expressed among the members. Deception by one member not only harms that member but the whole body suffers as well and in the end self-destruction occurs.

Andrew Lincoln: The *neighbor* of the exhortation, who in Judaism would have been a companion in the covenant, now takes on the specific shape of a fellow member of the body of Christ. In this body, which is a paradigm of harmonious human relationships, there is no room for lies which poison communication and breed suspicion instead of mutual trust. As Mackay (God's Order, 185) puts it graphically, "a lie is a stab into the very vitals of the body of Christ." The point has already been established a little earlier in **4:15**, where the writer insists that the essential means of building up the body of Christ is speaking the truth in love.

B. (:26-27) The Christian's Anger Management – Aware of Satan's Schemes

1. Positive Command

"*Be angry*"

Martin: If you are angry, be sure it is the kind of anger that is not sinful… Even a righteous wrath by overindulgence may pass all too easily into sin"

Grant Osborne: **Stop Being Angry and Gain Control** –
Paul realizes that in a fallen world there will always be anger. There are times when anger is necessary; the wrath of God against sin is a constant theme throughout Scripture, and Jesus felt anger at the stubborn hearts of the leaders (**Mark 3:5**). There is a need for righteous indignation on our part as well when we experience human depravity, but we must gain control of it and use it redemptively in situations that call for it. Handling anger well is so critical that Paul will revisit the issue in **verse 31**, below. There it is one of the six sins (with the others related to it) of which we must rid our lives if we are to follow the Lord. Here he introduces the topic by quoting from **Psalm 4:4**. The next verse of the psalm goes on to speak about the "*sacrifices of the righteous*," describing how God's servants are to act when they trust Yahweh. The

meaning is clear: anger must not be allowed to linger and fester, for it can turn into resentment and then bitterness.

Harold Hoehner: It is necessary to acknowledge that **anger is not intrinsically sinful**. As mentioned above, God expresses anger. What causes God to become angry? When wrong has been done against a person or against God himself. However, when God is angry, **he is always in control of his anger**. Unlike God, however, people have a tendency to allow anger to control them. Hence, the second command "*do not sin*" is necessary. This agrees with the concept of πραΰτης, "*gentleness*," discussed at **4:2** where a believer who is controlled by the Spirit is angry at the right time and never angry at the wrong time. For example, when someone in the body of believers has been wronged, it is correct for one to be angry but not to be consumed by that anger.

Clinton Arnold: some have contended that the imperative should be understood as having a conditional or concessive force and thus translated, "*if you get angry, do not sin*." Lincoln, for instance, paraphrases the meaning of the text, "Anger is to be avoided at all costs, but if, for whatever reason, you do get angry, then refuse to indulge such anger so that you do not sin." As we have already suggested, it is best, however, to interpret this imperative as a command. Although the conditional use of an imperative is possible, it is rare in the NT.

2. Negative Exhortation

"*and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger*"

3. Why?

"*and do not give the devil an opportunity*"

Grant Osborne: The term *topos* ("*foothold*") means "place," and the picture is of letting the devil into our house and allowing him to inhabit a room. A similar term is used in **Romans 7:8** for sin as an invading army that seizes the opportunity (*aphormē*) to gain a foothold in our lives. *Aphormē* is a military term for a bridgehead from which forays may be sent out to attack the enemy. This metaphor has much the same force. We do not want to permit Satan the opportunity to use our anger to gain control over us. Rather, we must gain control over our tempers.

II. (4:28-32) REJECT STEALING AND HARMING OTHERS

A. (:28) The Christian's Work Ethic -- Intended to Help others

1. Negative Exhortation

"*Let him who steals steal no longer*"

2. Positive Command

"*but rather let him labor*"

Harold Hoehner: In classical literature κοπιάω had the idea "to be tired, grow weary." Later, the same sense "to tire" referred specifically to warfare but could also allude to

great efforts or "to wear out in work.". . . The point is that the labor exerted is **exhausting**. In this context the stealer used to obtain things with little effort, but with the acquisition of the new person all things are acquired with labor that requires much effort.

3. Clarification (Nature of Christian work)
"*performing with his own hands what is good*"

4. Why?
"*in order that he may have something to share with him who has need*"

Harold Hoehner: The **purpose** (ἵνα) for work is not self-indulgence but to benefit those who are in need. The infinitive is from μεταδίδωμι and means "to give part of, to give a share," as Greek cities shared in the use of a temple or shared in the benefits of the constitution. It can also mean "to communicate," which is the sharing of information. This word is used seven times in the LXX (only twice in the canonical books) meaning "to impart" (**Job 31:17; Prov 11:26; Wis 7:13; 2 Macc 1:35; Bar 6:27**) or "to communicate" (**Tob 7:10; 2 Macc 8:12**). In the NT the word appears five times, four times in Paul, only here in Ephesians. It can be used of sharing spiritual things, as when Paul shared a spiritual gift to strengthen the Romans (**Rom 1:11**) or of sharing the gospel (**1 Thess 2:8**). Also, it can be used of sharing material goods. For example, a person with two coats is to share with one who has no coat (**Luke 3:11**; cf. also **Rom 12:8**). In the present context Paul is talking about sharing materially the good that has been gained with hard labor. He uses this term instead of δίδωμι, "*to give*," in order to avoid the idea that all that is earned must be given to others, but rather some earned good must be shared with others. This is a mean between two extremes. One is neither to hoard nor recklessly give all away.

Andrew Lincoln: The **motive** for work is not individual profit but rather communal well-being. This is different from the explicit reasons given for working in the discussions in 1 and 2 Thessalonians, namely to retain the respect of outsiders and not to become dependent on others, and is perhaps more directly related to the ideal of Christian love.

B. (:29) The Christian's Speech -- Intended to Edify

1. Negative Exhortation
"*Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth*"
cf. sitcoms today on TV -- difficult to fine a 2 minute segment without an unwholesome word or sexual innuendo

Grant Osborne: Paul has in mind primarily slander and backbiting, using our tongue to abuse and put down others. Paul is picturing nasty people, and there are plenty of those in our time as well.

2. Positive Command
"*but only such a word as is good for edification*"

cf. how the world thinks it is funny to try to outdo one another on putting other people down

3. Clarification

"*according to the need of the moment*"

not some canned, rote presentation

4. Why?

"*that it may give grace to those who hear*"

Frank Thielman: In Ephesians, however, the expression "*give grace to*" has a specific theological meaning: it refers to a gift that enables the recipient to accomplish the task God has given them (**3:2, 7, 8; 4:7**). Since Paul has just spoken of building up another where the need exists, it seems probable that this purpose clause carries the thought even further and speaks of enabling needy people to function in the way God intended them to function in the body of Christ (cf. **4:16**).

Clinton Arnold: The final clause specifies even further how believers can minister to one another according to their need. Paul says that they are to provide grace (ἵνα δῷ χάριν) to one another. The resurrected Christ has bestowed grace on every individual member of the body (**4:7**). Now the obligation is to pass it on. This takes place not only in utilizing one's giftedness in service, but also in spoken words. This expression is best interpreted to mean that believers are called to "impart a blessing" to those in need. This can happen through timely, well-spoken words that are appropriate to a difficult situation. But it may also extend to praying with and for believers in the midst of their trouble, that is, calling on the one who has the power to intervene with divine resources. This kind of ministry is not reserved only for those with specialized giftings; it is a form of service that Paul expects all believers to practice regularly.

C. (:30) The Christian's Sensitivity to the Holy Spirit

1. Negative Exhortation

"*And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God*"

John Stott: Re what grieves the Holy Spirit -- Since he is the 'holy Spirit', he is always grieved by unholiness, and since he is the 'one Spirit' (2:18; 4:4), disunity will also cause him grief. In fact, anything incompatible with the purity or unity of the church is incompatible with his own nature and therefore hurts him… For the Holy Spirit is a sensitive Spirit. He hates sin, discord and falsehood, and shrinks away from them. Therefore, if we wish to avoid hurting him, we shall shrink from them too. Every Spirit-filled believer desires to bring him pleasure, not pain.

Harold Hoehner: The coordinating conjunction καὶ is the first in this section, which would suggest that this is not a new and separate injunction but is to be added to the last exhortation. It could be linked ad sensum to the immediately preceding purpose clause

so that it would be a second motivation for speaking that which is beneficial. However, it is better rendered as a coordinate to the negative imperative in the previous verse. Therefore, it would read, "*let no unwholesome words come from your mouths . . . and do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God*." Both imperatives are in the present tense which portrays the action as an ongoing process. . .

In the present context then, unwholesome words are forbidden for two reasons: first, they impede spiritual growth of fellow believers; second, they grieve the Holy Spirit.

Grant Osborne: The sins of Israel brought pain to Yahweh, and this precipitated his anger. This is even more strongly the case here, because God's saving work has intensified in Christ, and we are even more responsible than God's Old Testament people to live for him. The holiness of God will not tolerate sin. The divine justice is first of all terribly hurt and then filled with wrath, which leads to divine judgment. The four sins Paul has listed (and others) will not only cause the Spirit to grieve but will bring down divine retribution on the unrepentant.

2. Why?

"*by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption*"

Klyne Snodgrass: This verse marks the incongruity of grieving the one who is proof we belong to God and are destined for his future salvation. Why live contrary to him whose ownership seal we wear and in violation of our destiny? Here eschatology is brought to bear on ethics, and once again the double focus on present (now) and future (not yet) is expressed. This verse stands in marked contrast with what is said of the devil in **verse 27**. No room is to be permitted for the devil, but through the Spirit God is at work in us. The personal character of the Spirit is assumed.

Clinton Arnold: The "*day of redemption*" (ἡμέραν ἀπολυτρώσεως) is an equivalent expression to "*the day of the Lord*" and refers to Christ's return to bring judgment on the ungodly and full and final salvation to his people (see **Rom 13:11–12; 1 Cor 5:5; 1 Thess 5:1–11; 2 Thess 2:1–2**). This is an additional indication that the new identity in Christ involves a seal of ownership and belonging that cannot be broken until Christ comes and claims his people as his own at the end of time.

D. (:31-32) The Christian's Spirit of Kindness and Graciousness

1. Negative Exhortation

"*Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice*."

Harold Hoehner: To summarize, first noun "bitterness" in **verse 31** deals with attitude. The next two nouns "*anger and wrath*" deal with disposition, and the last two "*shouting and abusive*" refer to the manner of speech.

Grant Osborne: The order of these five vices **increases in intensity**, from bitterness to rage to fighting to slander, all of them **fueled by malice**. The descent into the

maelstrom of hatred begins with "*bitterness*," a term that denotes growing resentment as our hurt hardens into a settled animosity directed against the other person. This is followed by "*rage and anger*," two terms (*thymos kai orgē*) that are usually synonymous in both the Old and New Testaments. Their presence together here emphasizes the deep rage that results when we give vent to our hurt and allow it to fester. This is why Paul counseled in **verse 26**, "*Don't let the sun set on your anger*."

Bitterness and rage (internal attitudes) give way to "*fighting*" or "*brawling*" (external behaviors); the latter term suggests yelling and screaming over someone or something that has triggered an eruption of our temper. In the midst of this conflict between ourselves and the people we have grown to dislike, our screaming issues in "*slander*" (literally, "*blasphemy*"). We broadcast our anger, often reverting to unfounded and malicious rumors, in order to turn others against the objects of our wrath. Undergirding all of these actions is "*every form of malice*." Each of the five forms of wrath has resulted from a studied malice that cares nothing about the truth of the situation but just wants to get even. The desire to hurt the other has removed from our consideration all reason or logic. There is no desire for reconciliation but only for vengeance.

2. Positive Command

"*And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other*"

Harold Hoehner: It is interesting to notice that some English translations render this word "*to forgive one another*." Although this is a legitimate translation, it is not the normal rendering of the word. There are three reasons to render it "*being gracious to one another*."

1. First, "to be gracious" is not only the normal meaning of the word, but it is the most suited to the context. Graciousness is the antithesis of bitterness, anger, wrath, shouting and abusive speech. In other words, bitterness is counteracted by a gracious attitude, anger and wrath are counteracted by a gracious disposition, the shouting and abusive speech are counteracted by gracious speaking.
2. Second, the participle functions as a circumstantial participle of manner, describing how they are to be kind and compassionate to one another.
3. Third, this concept is broader than forgiveness and, in fact, includes forgiveness.

Hence, in this context "*to be gracious to one another*" is a better and more natural rendering of the verb.

3. Why? The Standard is Christ

"*just as God in Christ also has forgiven you*."

III. (5:1-2) IMITATE GOD'S LOVE

"*Therefore*"

Based on the example of God in Christ forgiving us …
Closely tied to ending verses of **Chapter 4**; yet this word is used in Ephesians to

introduce new topics (cf. **4:1, 17, 25**) … so it serves as a good **transition** here to the new topic of walking in purity and walking in the light (next message)

Klyne Snodgrass: The chapter division at **5:1** is unfortunate, for the commands to imitate God and to love as those who have been loved in **5:1–2** continue the idea of forgiving as God has forgiven in **4:31**. **Ephesians 5:1–2** is best seen as the conclusion of this unit in the letter.

Frank Thielman: The οὖν signals that Paul is now drawing his admonitions in **4:25–32** to a close by stating clearly the principle he has been developing. The previous section has ended with the statement that his readers' re-creation in God's image should motivate their behavior (**4:24**), and the new section began with a διό (*dio, therefore*) showing that Paul intended to explain what this meant with specific examples (4:25). Now at the close of this section, Paul summarizes his admonitions by returning to the thought that, in their behavior, his readers should be "imitators" (*μιμηταί, mimētai*) of God.

A. (:1) Following the Example of God Our Father

1. Imitate the Love of God

"*Be imitators of God*"

2. Reproduce Your Family Character

"*as beloved children*"

B. (:2) Following the Example of Christ Our Savior

1. Imitate the Love of Christ

"*and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you*"

Harold Hoehner: it is a love given quite irrespective of merit and it seeks the highest good in the one loved. That highest good for anyone is the will of God. This command to walk in love is reminiscent of Christ's command to his disciples in his farewell discourse where he tells them to love one another as he has loved them (**John 13:34; 15:12, 17**). Paul shows next the kind of love we should have.

Klyne Snodgrass: Living in love sums up **4:25 – 5:1**. Love is the sphere in which the believer lives. The standard by which Christian love is shaped and energized is the self-giving love of Christ on the cross. This verse is an important soteriological one, for it focuses on Christ's giving himself rather than on God's giving or sending his Son, and on the death of Christ as a "*sacrifice*" (see also **5:25**). Christ gave himself for us or on our behalf. As Ernst Käsemann stressed, Christ's death for us always covers two ideas: in our place and for our benefit.

Frank Thielman: In a way similar to the movement from **2:1–3** to **2:10**, Paul has taken his audience from the futility, darkness, estrangement, ignorance, hard-heartedness, and despair of Gentile life apart from Christ (**4:17–19**) to a life of kindness, compassion, forgiveness, and love in Christ (**4:32 – 5:2**). . .

The love of God and the love of Christ provide the models for individuals within the church to follow in their relationships with one another. The specific ethical instructions of **4:25–32** are practical examples of how the church, as God's re-created humanity, can fulfill the mandate implied in its creation in God's image (**4:24**) and in its status as the body of Christ (**4:13–16**). The love of believers for one another should imitate the richly gracious and self-sacrificing nature of God's love in Christ for them.

Andrew Lincoln: The language of **walking in love** had been used by Paul in his exhortation in **Rom 14:15**. Here, walking in love is the way in which one imitates God. The stress on the necessity of love is similar to that at the beginning of the paraenesis in **4:2, 15, 16** and reflects the emphasis it is given in **Col 3:12–14**, the text on which the writer draws. Certainly the sacrifice of one's own interests out of concern for the welfare of others is the quality above all that fosters **harmony in the community**.

2. Remember the Sacrifice Made by Christ
    a. Sacrificed Himself for Our Benefit
        "*and gave Himself up for us*"

    b. Offered Up Himself as a Sacrifice to the Father
        "*an offering and a sacrifice to God*"

    c. Ultimate Example of Pleasing God
        "*as a fragrant aroma*"

Harold Hoehner: In the past, even when properly prepared, God did not receive every sacrifice as a fragrant aroma because the offerer had a wrong attitude and a heart far from him. In contrast, Christ willingly gave himself to be offered and he did it to be a pleasant aroma to God. Likewise, we as believers should walk in sacrificial love so that we may be a pleasant aroma not only to God but also to fellow believers (**2 Cor 2:14–16**).

Grant Osborne: There are two primary themes that run through Ephesians: the exalted Christ, who is Lord of all, and the unity of the church as a new creation in Christ. This section relates to the second. In it Paul tells us how to keep the harmony and unity of God's people in the living relationships within the body of Christ. Vices fracture relationships and disrupt the church, while virtues maintain peace and bring people together as the family of God. In every area we seek Christlikeness, emulating the grace and love of God and Christ in our interactions with one another.

* * * * * * * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Which of these practical areas of the Christian's walk gives us the most trouble? What are some of the positive things we can "put on" in this area to live a life that is

radically different from our former life?

2) Do we actively think about the danger of "*grieving the Holy Spirit*" and use this as a motivation to live lives of purity and love and unity and truth?

3) If imitation is the highest form of flattery, how do our efforts at imitating the love of God serve as the highest form of our worship? Is love for God or love for others (or both) primarily in view here?

4) How do we communicate to our children that we deeply love them as their parents? As children of God, how do we respond to the deep love that He has shed upon us?

* * * * * * * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Lenski: The ethics which forbids all anger and demands unruffled calmness in every situation is Stoic and not Christian. If all anger is wrong, as some think on the basis of **v. 31**, Paul should have written, "Be not angry!" and stopped with that.

Foulkes: The Christian motive for earning is not merely to have enough for oneself and one's own, and then perhaps for comforts and luxuries, but to have to give to those in need. The Christian philosophy of labour is thus lifted far above the thought of what is right or fair in the economic field; it is lifted to the place where there is no room for selfishness or the motive of personal profit at all. Giving becomes the motive for getting. We may note the place that giving to the poor had with our Lord and His disciples, in precept and practice, though their resources must have been very slender (**Mt. xix. 21; Luk. xiv. 13; Jn. xiii. 29**). Then from the beginning the Church felt a great responsibility in this direction (**Acts ii. 44f., iv. 32ff., vi. 1ff**.). Paul himself laid great emphasis on provision for the poor (**Rom. xv. 26f.; 2 Cor. viii and ix; Gal. ii. 10**), and was an example, in spite of all his labours in the ministry of the word, both in working with his hands for his own support (**1 Thes. ii. 9; 2 Thes. iii. 8f**.), and also in supporting others in need (**Acts xx. 34f**.).

John Piper: Re putting off anger and nursing grudges -- Which brings us back to where we started -- *'from your heart*,' from your new nature, the purified spring, the good tree. The only way to get victory over anger is to put off the old nature corrupted by desires of deceit -- Satan's deceit, and to put on the new nature, by acting according to the truth -- 1) the truth that none of us is so exalted that we can justify holding a grudge, 2) the truth that vengeance belongs to God, he will settle all accounts; 3) the truth that the cross of Christ is the wisdom and power of God, not foolishness; 4) the truth that the unity of the church is precious beyond words; 5) and the truth that it is possible by holding a grudge to commit spiritual murder and suicide simultaneously.

John Piper: Re Work Ethic -- Working in order to have is perhaps an American ideal -- if you earned it you should have it. But it is NOT a Christian ideal. The most radical

thing about this text is that we are commanded to do all our secular work with a view to meeting the needs of others. You can live to HAVE, either legally or illegally. Or you can become a Christian and live to give. This is a thrilling teaching! I think it has the potential of changing your whole life…

Why? Because this is what it means to walk by faith. The very essence of faith is the delight of the soul in the experience and display of God's grace. And so faith is the power, by grace, to be content with what we have. And faith is also the power, by grace, to be DIScontent with what others DON'T have. And so faith doesn't have to steal or hoard in order to be happy. But it does have to give and share in order to be happy. The inflow of God's grace satisfies the heart of faith, and the overflow of God's grace satisfies the needs of others. And faith is utterly addicted to these experiences and displays of the grace of God.

Andrew Lincoln: What the writer in this passage expects of his readers' practical conduct can now be summed up. Negatively, the lives of the Gentile Christians of the Pauline churches in Asia Minor will be characterized by the absence of lying, destructive talk, stealing, and indulgence of anger or any of its associated vices. Positively, they will be marked by truthful and edifying speech, hard work enabling them to do good deeds, kindness, compassion, forgiveness, and love. The values and beliefs which are to sustain this quality of life emerge from the writer's motivating clauses. Prominent among these is a profound respect for the corporate nature of Christian existence which derives from his earlier vision of a unified Church; believers are members of one another (**4:25**), who are concerned about sharing with those of their number in need (**4:28**) and about the beneficial effect of their words on the rest of the community (**4:29**). Also involved are beliefs about the roles of God, Christ, the Spirit, and the devil in their lives. The experiential knowledge of God's forgiveness of them in Christ (**4:32**), of Christ's sacrificial love for them (**5:2**), and of the Spirit's sealing of them and personal involvement in their communal life (**4:30**) and the awareness of a personal power of evil able to exploit sinful situations (**4:27**) are all invoked to shape the response required of the readers in their everyday living.

Wood: A child will show himself to be a true child by wanting to grow up like his father. In the same way, God's precious children (*tekna*, those born from him) will be eager to copy him, as he enables them… God is love and the life that is like the life of God will be a life of love. If love is the essence of God's nature, it is the esential of the Christian character.

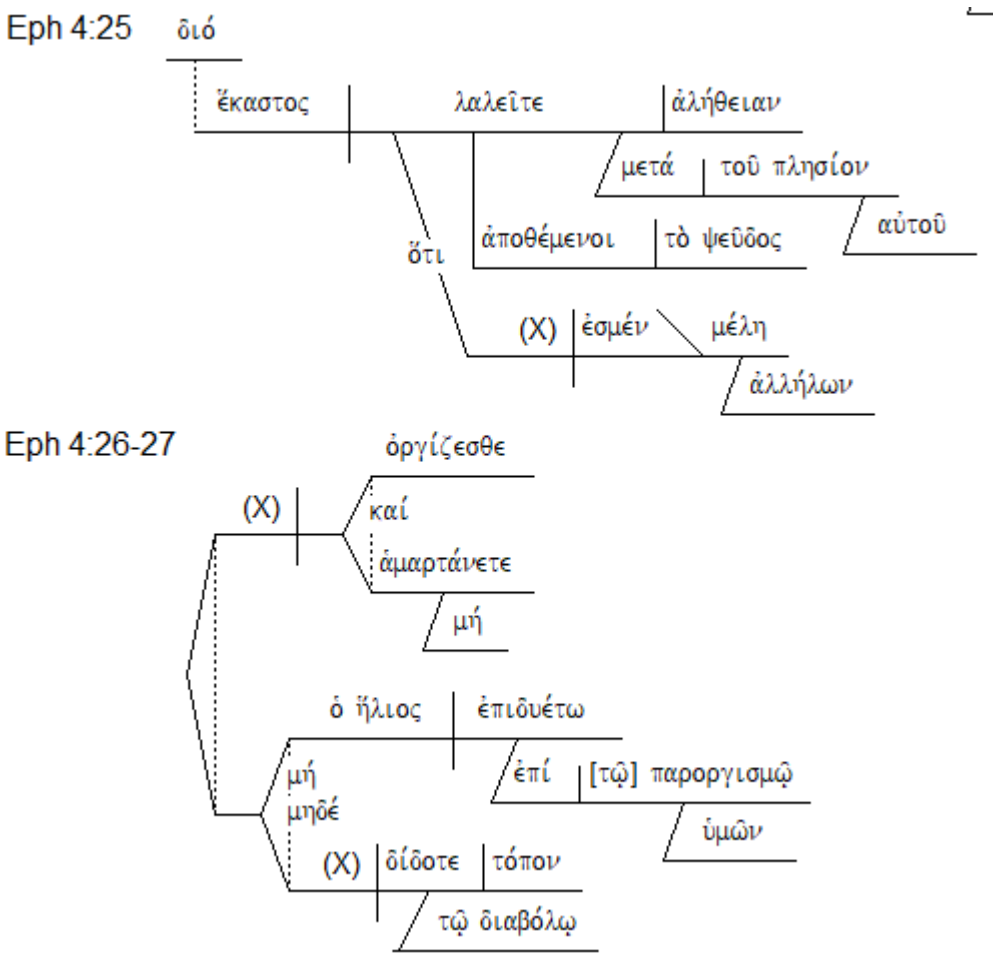
John MacArthur: The first five chapters of Leviticus describe five offerings commanded by the God of the Israelites. The first three were the burnt offering, the meal offering, and the peace offering. The burnt offering (**Lev. 1:1-17**) depicted Christ's total devotion to God in giving His very life to obey and please His Father; the meal (grain) offering (**Lev. 2:1-16**) depicted Christ's perfection, and the peace offering (**Lev. 3:1-17; 4:27-31**) depicted His making peace between God and man. All of those offerings obviously spoke of what was pleasing to God. Of each, the Scripture says it provided a "soothing aroma to the Lord" (**Lev. 1-9, 13, 17; 2:2, 9, 12; 3-5, 16**).

Philippians 4:18 explains that the fragrant aroma meant the sacrifice was "*acceptable … well-pleasing to God*."

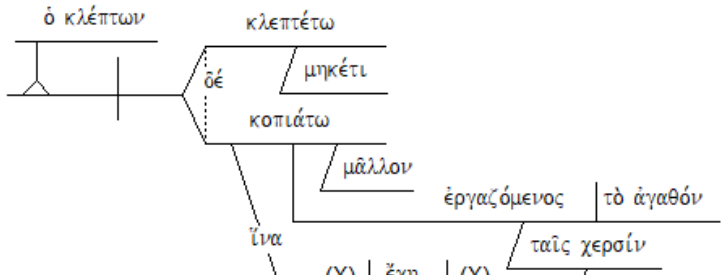
Kenneth Wuest: The saint is to order his behavior or manner of life within the sphere of this divine, supernatural love produced in his heart by the Holy Spirit. When this love becomes the deciding factor in his choices and the motivating power in his actions, he will be walking in love. He will be exemplifying in his life the self-sacrificial love shown at Calvary and the Christian graces mentioned in **I Corinthians 13**.

Lenski: It is not accidental that Paul writes about the supreme sweetness of the odor of Christ's sacrifice when he purposes to warn against filthiness on our part. The love of God brought forth such a pure, sweet sacrifice for us on his part. Can we, who were made God's beloved children by this sacrifice on our part return a life that is reeking and stinking with vile odor? It is thus that the idea of agape or love is colored and individualized by the additional concepts into the midst of which it is set for the apostle's present purpose.

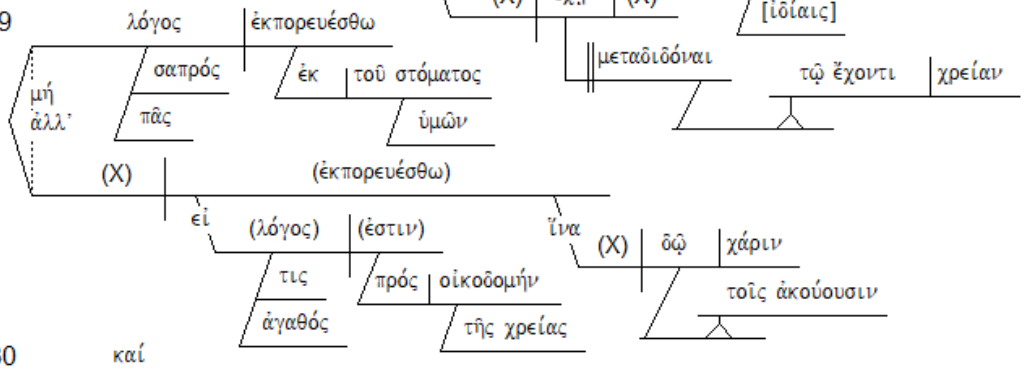
Leedy Greek Diagram:



Eph 4:28



Eph 4:29



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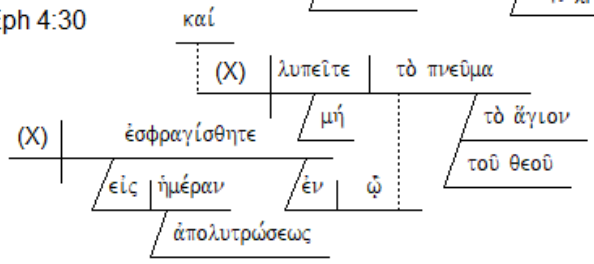
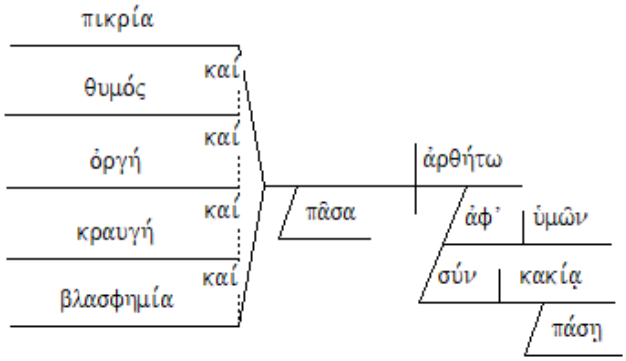
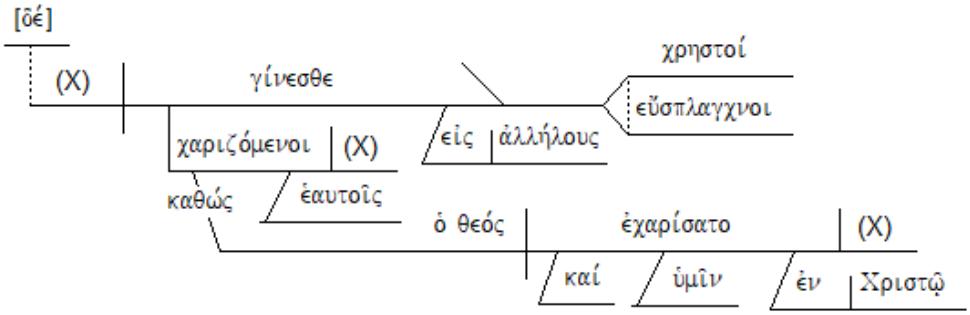
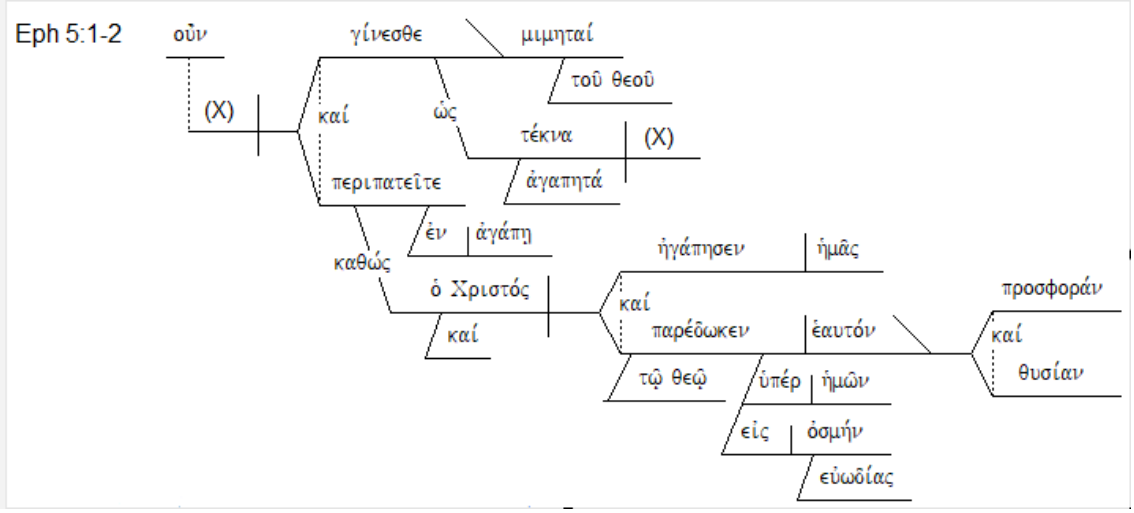


Eph 4:31



Eph 4:32




Eph 5:1-2
οὖν
γίνεσθε
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ἀγάπῃ
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ὁ Χριστός
ἠγάπησεν
ἡμᾶς
καί
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παρέδωκεν
ἑαυτόν
προσφοράν
καί
θυσίαν
τῷ θεῷ
ὑπέρ
ἡμῶν
εἰς
ὀσμήν
εὐωδίας

TEXT: EPHESIANS 5:3-14

TITLE: WALK AS CHILDREN OF LIGHT – ABSTAINING FROM IMPURITY

BIG IDEA:
KEEP YOURSELF PURE AS YOU WALK IN THE LIGHT AND EXPOSE DEEDS OF DARKNESS (ESPECIALLY SEXUAL IMPURITY, GREED AND SHAMEFUL SPEECH)

INTRODUCTION:

Remember the theme of Walk in Love (**5:1-2**). This leads into the discussion on **abstaining from impurity** = the perversion of love.

Grant Osborne: As part of the new humanity (**2:15**) believers are children of light and can no longer have anything to do with darkness. Thus our lifestyle must change to reflect kingdom values. There are two main subsections here:

(1) a description of and a warning about the deeds of darkness (**5:3–7**)
(2) and a call to be children of light (**vv. 8–14**).

Andrew Lincoln: What specifically constitutes Christian behavior according to this passage? Negatively, it will be characterized by the absence of any talk about fornication or sexual impurity, any dirty jokes or sexual innuendo, let alone any participation in immoral acts. Positively, it will mean thanksgiving, goodness, righteousness, truth, discovering what is pleasing to the Lord, and exposing sinful activity. The warrants for exhortation to this pattern of life can be as general as "*what is fitting*" (**v 4**), but this should be interpreted in the light of the more specifically Christian motivation, "*as befits saints*," to be what is appropriate for those called to be holy (**v 3**). Other aspects of the framework of motivations include judgment (exclusion from the kingdom of Christ and God and experience of the wrath of God), believers' change of status through their conversion-initiation and the ethical implications this carries, and assurance about the power of the light and its source, Christ.

Clinton Arnold: Becoming a Christian entails the reception of an entirely new identity that Paul identifies as "light." Believers are here summoned to live in accordance with their new identity, which will involve two important activities:

(1) Christians need to entirely dissociate themselves from lifestyles associated with "darkness," that is, evil, sinful behaviors; and,
(2) as members of a new community, believers need to expose the deeds of their sinning brothers and sisters as part of a process of restoration that will result in their growth to maturity in Christ.

Frank Thielman: In **4:25 – 5:2** Paul telegraphs his ethical concerns in seven brief statements with few connecting conjunctions. Here the concern throughout is with two vices—**sexual immorality** and **greed**—and Paul's admonitions concerning these vices

are organized in threes. Three terms describe the two vices of sexual immorality and greed, three words describe immoral speech, and three words describe the people who engage in sexual immorality and greed (5:3–5). This trio of sinful trios is counterbalanced first by "thanksgiving" (5:4) and then by a trio of virtues: "goodness," "righteousness," and "truth" (5:9).

I. (:3-7) ABSTAIN FROM IMPURITY

Grant Osborne: Paul begins with two primary examples of shameful excess and the pleasure principle: **sexual immorality** and **greed**, both of which he addresses frequently in this letter (**2:3; 3:19; 5:5, 12**).

A. (:3) Dirty Deeds (and Thoughts) Are Totally Inappropriate for Saints

1. List of Dirty Laundry

a. "*But immorality*"

Andrew Lincoln: **Sexual sins** now dominate the vices mentioned in **vv 3–5** and are primarily what is meant by the language of "*deeds of darkness*" and "*what is done in secret*" in **vv 11, 12**.

b. "*or any impurity*"

c. "*or greed*"

Andrew Lincoln: Sexual lust elevates the desired object, whether a person's own gratification or another person, to the center of life and is antithetical to the thanksgiving which recognizes God at the center.

2. Inappropriateness

"*must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints*"

Frank Thielman: Paul offers two motivations for avoiding such sinful activity in this first section of the paragraph. Such conduct is not fitting for those whom God has set apart as his people (**5:3–4**), and those whose conduct is characterized by these sins have no inheritance in the kingdom of the Messiah and of God (**5:5**).

B. (:4) Dirty Talking Is Totally Inappropriate for Saints

1. List of Dirty Talking

a. "*and there must be no filthiness and silly talk*"

b. "*or coarse jesting*"

Harold Hoehner: "*nor sarcastic ridicule*" -- In classical times it is used in a good sense, that is, "witty, wittiness," and Aristotle alludes to it as the fondness of laughter characterized by the youth. Further, Aristotle states that it is the mean between

buffoonery and boorishness, but there is a tendency to move from that midpoint because people are so fond of jokes and ridicule that they will do anything to get a laugh. Again it is not found in the LXX and is used only here in the NT. In the context it most likely indicates **jesting that has gone too far**, thus becoming sarcastic ridicule that cuts people down and embarrasses others who are present. It is humor in bad taste. Believers should build up and not destroy, even in humor. Or, since in the context the preceding words were concerned with sexual sins, εὐτραπελία could even have reference to dirty jokes or humor with suggestive overtones. This does not mean humor cannot not be used by Christians. However, it should not be employed at someone's expense thus running counter to Paul's injunction to edify each other (**4:29**). Consequently, Paul gives this warning. **Like anger, humor is to be controlled**.

2. Inappropriateness –
"*which are not fitting*"

Does our speech in the body of Christ reflect only what is proper as befitting saints? These are good verses to help us address those awkward moments when we choose not to go along with the crowd and laugh at the dirty jokes and innuendos.

3. Thanksgiving is Appropriate
"*but rather giving of thanks*"

Grant Osborne: In place of such unsuitable speech our conversation should be characterized by "*thanksgiving*," replacing a filthy, worldly mindset with a mind filled with gratitude to God. The self-centered thoughts of the unbeliever are to be replaced by thankfulness. We need to dwell on all that God has done for us rather than on the earth-centered pleasures in which we can indulge. In **Colossians 2:7** Paul describes this as "*overflowing with thankfulness*." Since God has lavished his riches on us (**Eph 1:7–8**), we must focus on the heavenly wealth that is ours rather than on the earthly wealth and the pleasures we can accumulate.

C. (:5-6) Such Impurity is Worthy of God's Wrath

1. Make No Mistake -- no mystery here
   a. No Confusion on this Issue
   "*For this you know with certainty*"

   b. Guard Against Deception on this Issue
   "*Let no one deceive you with empty words*"

There are many false prophets who make a good living by calling evil "good". Look at how we have stripped away much of the language of sin and guilt from our vocabulary.

2. List of the Guilty Reviewed
   a. "*immoral*"

b. "*impure person*"

Andrew Lincoln: Believers' distancing from such vices must extend to their conversation. Presumably, the assumption behind this prohibition is that thinking and talking about sexual sins creates an atmosphere in which they are tolerated and which can indirectly even promote their practice.

c. "*covetous man, who is an idolater*"

3. Exclusion from God's Kingdom Blessings
"*has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God*"

Harold Hoehner: The kingdom of God is not for saints who have never sinned but for sinners who have been redeemed by Christ's supreme sacrifice (**Eph 1:7, 14; 2:4–10; 4:32**). Here in Ephesians Paul, addressing believers, rightly assumes that they have inherited the kingdom of God. However, Paul warns that those whose lives are characterized by immorality, impurity, and greed, even though they may claim to be Christians, are not included in the kingdom of God.

4. Inclusion in God's Judgmental Curses
"*for because of these things*
the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience"

This passage clearly shows that hell is not for banishing sinful deeds, but for punishing sinful people. We hear the phrase: "God hates the sin, but loves the sinner" … we need to rethink that emphasis and make sure we are giving a balanced perspective from God's point of view.

D. (:7) Abstain from Participation
"*Therefore do not be partakers with them*."

Grant Osborne: To give in to the false reasoning of these raging secularists is extremely dangerous, because to follow their reasoning is to partake in their sins. "*Partners with them*" means sharers in all they do. There are three stages to such partnering: listening and agreeing with their false logic, participating in their sinful lifestyle, and facing the wrath of God along with them. In **Ephesians 3:6** the same Greek word describes the Gentile Christians as "*sharers together* [with believing Jews] *in the promise in Jesus Christ*," connoting full participation in a joint status or enterprise. To be a complete partner in the sins of these evildoers is to participate fully in their judgment. How can any thinking individual want that? Paul is commanding these Christians to refuse to have any part in the reasoning or the actions of hedonistic fools. The dangers are too great.

II. (:8-10) WALK IN THE LIGHT

A. (:8a) Your Nature Has Been Transformed -- The Radical Nature of our

Conversion

1. From Darkness

"*for you were formerly darkness*"

2. To Light

"*but now you are light*"

Grant Osborne: We who are light have been "*rescued from the dominion of darkness*" and given power over it (**Col 1:13**; see also **Mark 3:15; 6:7**). The reign of darkness is a past reality for us as saints, and there is no reason for us to have anything further to do with it.

Light versus darkness is a major motif in John's writings. His Gospel begins with the new creation; he states at the outset that Christ created a new life that constitutes "*the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness cannot overcome it*" (**John 1:4–5**). Through Christ the light of God illuminates and convicts every person ever born (**John 1:7, 9**). Tragically, however, because the people of this world prefer darkness they "*hate the light and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed*" (**John 3:20**).

With conversion the new believer enters the realm of light and becomes a new creature, part of a new humanity (**Eph 2:15**), so a return to the old realm of darkness should have no appeal at all. Since they are now "*light in the Lord*," believers are to live differently. Paul is not saying that they once lived in darkness and now live in light. He is speaking ontologically—about their very being: they were darkness, and now they are light. They are a different people, the children of the God who "*is light; in him is no darkness at all*" (**1 John 1:5**). We are a new creation, conceived as light and now inhabiting light. This takes place "*in the Lord*," meaning that Christ is now the sphere in which we live and the universe we inhabit.

Therefore, since we are light, we must "*live as children of light*." In my commentary on **verse 5:6** I noted that calling people "*children of*" something identifies a major characteristic of the person. Here the believers not only belong to the light; they are light and must conduct themselves as such. Their walk must be "*in the Lord*" and must demonstrate the light that Christ has brought into this world. The world must see the light of God in the way Christians behave, in their daily decisions and in the manner in which they relate to those around them. The people of light recognize the despair and slow death that comes with darkness, so they should want nothing to do with dark deeds.

3. Difference = Union with Christ

"*in the Lord*"

B. (:8b) Walk Consistent with Your New Nature

"*walk as children of light*"

C. (:9) Description of Walking in the Light

"*for the fruit of the light consists in*":

Grant Osborne: Paul's discussion of vices and virtues in the previous verses has centered on the **lifestyle** God expects of his new community. If believers are indeed the children of God, part of his family, we must manifest the "*fruit of the Spirit*" (**Gal 5:22–23**), a term synonymous with the Christlike virtues Paul has delineated. Fruit denotes harvest, so these are the natural results of the work of the Triune Godhead in our lives. Just as light is a necessary ingredient in the growth of plants, so the light of God enables us to grow in these attributes. The presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives must produce certain fruit, the natural result of life in the Spirit. Like Jesus (**John 1:7, 9**), the Spirit is light, so the fruit of the Spirit is the fruit of light. This is the antithesis of the "*fruitless deeds of darkness*" in **verse 11**. Light has nothing to do with darkness, which can bear no fruit acceptable to God.

1. "*all goodness*"

2. "*righteousness*"

3. "*truth*"

Frank Thielman: Like the light, darkness gives rise to activity, but unlike the light, whose activity bears fruit (**v. 9**), the activity of the darkness is **not fruitful** (cf. **Rom. 6:21**). In other words, it yields no profit and has no point (cf. **Wis. 15:4; 4 Macc. 16:7; 1 Cor. 14:14; Titus 3:14; 2 Pet. 1:8**). The thought is similar to that of **Jude 12**, where the futility of debauched behavior is also described as "*unfruitful*": "*These stains on your love feasts [the false teachers] are those who banquet luxuriously together without fear, shepherding themselves. They are clouds without water, driven along by the winds, late autumn trees without fruit [ἄκαρπα]*." The description of the works of darkness as unfruitful, then, is part of the theme of the futility of existence in the unbelieving world that Paul has already developed in **2:1–3** and **4:17–19**. It stands in utter contrast to the purposeful, goal-oriented existence that characterizes the believing community because of its union with Christ (**1:9–12; 2:19–22; 4:11–16**).

D. (:10) Walking in the Light Involves a Process of Growth -- Key Determining Principle:

"*trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord*."

Andrew Lincoln: Paul holds that believers are able to discover the will of God in the concrete situations they face, as they place their whole beings at God's disposal. Cullmann (Christ and Time [London: SCM, 1962] 228–29) stresses the significance of this term: "The working of the Holy Spirit shows itself in the testing (δοκιμάζειν), that is in the capacity of forming the correct Christian ethical judgment at each given moment. . . . This 'testing' is the key of all New Testament ethics." In the Pauline tradition, then, the testing is according to the will of God, now revealed most fully in Christ. Here, that notion is formulated in terms of "*what is pleasing to the Lord*."

Because the readers are light in the Lord, they will want to discover what pleases their Lord. The idea of pleasing God or the Lord is found frequently in the LXX (e.g., **Gen 5:22, 24; 6:9; Sir 44:16**) and as the goal and motivation of Christian living in Paul (cf. **Rom 12:2; 14:18; 2 Cor 5:9; Phil 4:18; Col 3:20**). If the readers' motivation is to please their Lord, then living as children of light will involve exercising a responsible freedom and developing an intuitive sense about how to act in a given situation.

Grant Osborne: Just as children on the basis of love try to discover what pleases their parents and then do those things, so we as children of God seek to find out what pleases our heavenly Father. The verb "*find out*" indicates a studied search, and the progression Paul has in mind involves examination, reflection, and action resulting from the search. We are to study God's word and determine from it what is acceptable to God, thinking hard about how we can alter our actions to bring him pleasure.

Frank Thielman: In the first part of the paragraph (**5:8–11a**), the light is passive, simply defining the new existence of Paul's readers. In the second part (**5:11b–14**), it is active, exposing, illuminating, and transforming the darkness.

III. (:11-14) EXPOSE DEEDS OF DARKNESS

Frank Thielman: **Ephesians 5:8–14** accomplishes two purposes in Paul's argument.

- First, it supplies a second reason (beyond experiencing the wrath of God) for avoiding sexual immorality and greed. This sort of conduct, Paul tells his readers, is as incompatible with their new existence as light is with darkness. The transformation they have experienced enables them to discern what is pleasing to God in the affairs of everyday life, and so their conduct ought to be marked by generosity, fairness, and honesty.
- Second, Paul urges his readers to become agents of transformation for those whose lives are dominated by the darkness and the sterile and shameful behavior that comes from it. They should expose this behavior for what it is by training the light of the gospel on those who engage in it. When the gospel awakens people to the reality of their sinful condition, then Christ shines on them and they too become "*light in the Lord*."

A. (:11a) Don't Follow the Crowd (in their dirty lifestyle)

"*Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness*"

Klyne Snodgrass: The **separation** Paul calls for, however, is not so much a withdrawal as a **confrontation**. "*Expose*" (**vv. 11, 13**) often carries a nuance of correcting or convincing someone. Whether the confrontation is only by conduct or also verbal is debated, though to suggest this passage has nothing to do with spoken confrontation is overly narrow. Although no guidelines are given for confronting, clearly Paul is not thinking of geographical separation and avoidance of contact, but of the refusal to participate in indecent actions. After all, contact with non-Christians is required if the light is to accomplish its purpose.

B. (:11b) Rather Expose Their Deeds of Darkness

"*but instead even expose them*"

Harold Hoehner: Observing the NT passages other than Ephesians, the word can be narrowed down to two basic senses:

(1) "*to expose, convict*" (**Matt 18:15; John 3:20; 8:46; 16:8; 1 Cor 14:24; 2 Tim 4:2; Jas 2:9; Jude 15**) and

(2) "*to reprove, rebuke*" (**Luke 3:19; 1 Tim 5:20; Titus 1:9, 13; 2:15; Heb 12:5; Rev 3:19**).

When wrong is exposed, a conviction must follow that should result in reproof or rebuke. This in turn should lead to discipline. Hence, exposing includes both convicting and rebuking. In the present context it is best translated as "*expose*" because the object of the imperative is not persons but works. This coheres with the whole passage. In **verse 9** Paul speaks of actions or works of goodness, righteousness, and truth (fruit of light) and in **verse 10** believers are enjoined to discover actions or works that please the Lord. Both of these verses speak about good actions or works that are associated with light. Furthermore, in **verse 13** Paul speaks of "*everything*" (τὰ πάντα) and not "*everyone*" is to be exposed by light. Now in **verse 11** Paul discusses the opposite kinds of actions or works, unfruitful works of darkness which must be exposed. The present imperative may well be iterative to denote repeated action.

The question needs to be asked: "**Whose deeds are to be exposed**?" It is all too easy to conclude that it is the deeds of those in darkness. Nevertheless, it is more likely that it refers to **believers** who are participating in unfruitful works of darkness. First, the context is speaking about believers. Second, Paul exhorts believers (not the world) not to participate in the works of darkness but rather to do the works or fruit of light. Thus, it appears that some believers were participating in the works of darkness, making the enjoinder necessary. Third, in the NT there is no reprimand of those in the world. Rather, Paul exposes, rebukes, and disciplines those in the church (cf. also **Matt 18:15–17**). He explicitly states that believers are to judge those inside the church and not to judge those outside the church because God alone is going to judge the latter (**1 Cor 5:12–13**). Furthermore, instructions in Proverbs (**9:7; 15:12**) and even in Qumran literature (1QS 9:16) warn against rebuking unbelievers. Hence believers, rather than participating in evil works, are to help those who have fallen by exposing their unfruitful works and showing them that participation in those works is totally inconsistent with light. In this respect, the Corinthians failed to expose the sin of incest that was practiced by one of the believers in the church.

C. (:12) Any Association with Deeds of Darkness Is Disgraceful

"*for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things*
which are done by them in secret."

D. (:13) The Nature of Light Is to Expose Darkness

"*But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light,*
for everything that becomes visible is light."

Klyne Snodgrass: The question that must be resolved is whether the "*revealing*" is merely negative (exposing people's sins) or whether a positive element exists as well, so that people are both exposed and transformed. The context seems to require both, and since the word translated "*expose*" also means "convince," this is understandable. **The person who is exposed and convinced by the light is transformed**. This is confirmed both by **verse 8** and the confession in **verse 14**. F. Foulkes rightly sees three stages of the work of grace in **verses 13–14**:

(1) People are exposed;
(2) they allow themselves to be revealed;
(3) and then they become light.

The context (the primary determiner of meaning) seems to require a translation such as:

All things exposed/convinced by the light are enlightened,
For everything being enlightened takes on the quality of light.
For this reason it says,
Get up, sleeper,
and rise from the dead
and Christ will shine on you.

The logic seems to assume that the light not only exposes, but also transforms (see **2 Cor. 4:6**). In all likelihood we are dealing with **proverbial statements about light**, which lends to the logic being compacted (see also **John 3:19–21; Rom. 13:11–14; 1 Thess. 5:4–8**).

E. (:14) Walking in the Light Requires Spiritual Alertness

"*For this reason it says, 'Awake, sleeper, and arise from the dead,*
and Christ will shine on you.'"

Grant Osborne: I prefer to read this as describing Christians who have fallen into sin. The imagery would then parallel the words of Jesus in Gethsemane when he found the disciples asleep: "*Are you asleep? … Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak*" (**Mark 14:37–38**). Paul picks up this image in **Romans 13:11** ("*The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed*") and **1 Thessalonians 5:6** ("*So then, let us not be like others who are asleep, but let us be awake and sober*"). These are weak Christians (**Eph 4:14**) who on a spiritual level are virtually dead and need to wake up. Satan has defeated them and led them back into the darkness of sin, and they are barely clinging to their spiritual vitality. The light of Christ is on them, but their stupor is so heavy that they are unaware of it. They need to awaken and rise up; only then will it be true for them that "*Christ will shine on you*." Only then will they be enabled to live in the light of Christ as victorious Christians.

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) In what sense are immorality and impurity expressions of "*greed*"? How does a life of selfishness contrast with a life of sacrificial love?

2) If the dirty talking and innuendos we are called to avoid have regards to sexual impurity, what is the focus of the "*giving of thanks*" commanded in vs. 4?

3) Paul has already assured the Ephesian believers of their full reception of all spiritual blessings, of their certain inheritance and of their receipt of the Holy Spirit "*who is given as a pledge of our inheritance*." How can these themes be reconciled with the somber warning of verse 5?

4) How does light function to not only expose the deeds of darkness but actually convert darkness into light? What type of evangelistic application can we gain from this emphasis in vs. 13?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Clinton Arnold: **Living as People of the Light (5:3–14)**

A. What Is Not Appropriate and What Is Appropriate for the Lifestyles of Christians (5:3–5)

1. Avoiding sexual immorality and greed (**5:3**)
2. Avoiding shameful behaviors and foul speech (**5:4a-b**)
3. Developing a heart of gratitude to God (**5:4c**)
4. Warning against inappropriate lifestyle (**5:5**)

B. Watching Out for Arguments That Justify Sinful Behavior (5:6)

C. What It Means to Live as People of the Light (5:7–11a)

1. Declining to participate in the activities of non-Christians (**5:7–8b**)
    a. The former identity (**5:7–8a**)
    b. The new identity in Christ (**5:8b**)
2. The command to live as children of light (**5:8c–10**)
    a. Identifying the virtues associated with this new identity (**5:9**)
    b. Discerning how to act in any given situation (**5:10**)
3. Declining to share in evil activities (**5:11a**)

D. Exposing the Sins of Fellow Believers (5:11b–14)

1. The shamefulness of sin (**5:12**)
2. The importance of exposing sin (**5:13–14a**)
3. A hymnic appeal to sinning Christians (**5:14b-e**)

a. An appeal to leave a lifestyle of sin (**5:14c-d**)
b. The promise of Christ's presence and help (**5:14e**)

Klyne Snodgrass: The passage unfolds as follows:

5:3–6: Commands to avoid shameful sins

5:3: **Command** to avoid sexual sin and covetousness
Motivation: what is proper for God's people

5:4: **Commands** to avoid sins of the tongue and, rather, to be thankful
Motivation: Such sins are not "fitting"

5:5: Motivation for both commands: Such sins prohibit inheriting the kingdom

5:6: Motivation emphatically restated: the wrath of God is coming on the disobedient

5:7–14: The relation of Christians and the disobedient

5:7–10: The Christian's nature should exclude association with the disobedient
5:7: **Command** not to partner with such people

5:8a: Motivation: formerly darkness, now light

5:8b: Contrasting **command**: live as people of light

5:9–10: Parenthetical description of life in the light

5:11–14: Commentary on the distinction and on living as light
5:11a: **Command** not to participate in their actions

5:11b: Rather, even reprove such people

5:12–13: Motivations: Shameful character of their works and the revealing nature of light

5:14: Verification: Words of an early confession.

William Hendriksen: The Glorious Renewal of which Paul is speaking in this entire section (**4:17 - 6:9**) calls for self-sacrifice instead of self-indulgence. Since in the preceding verses great emphasis was placed on self-sacrifice in imitation of Christ, the attention is now shifted to its very opposite: self-indulgence. Stating it differently, the admonition to "*walk in love*" is followed here by the condemnation of love's perversion.

John MacArthur: Instead of being involved in immorality or filthy speaking, the believer's mouth should be involved in the giving of thanks. Thanksgiving is an expression of unselfishness. The selfish and unloving person does not give thanks because he thinks he deserves whatever good thing he receives. The unselfish and

loving person, on the other hand, focuses his life and his concern on the needs of others. Whatever good thing he receives from God or from other people he counts as undeserved and gracious. He is always thankful because his spirit is one of loving and of giving. Instead of using others, he serves them. Instead of trying to turn the innocent into the immoral, he seeks to change the immoral into what is righteous and holy. He is thankful because the holy life is the satisfying life, and people see love for God in the thankful person.

Homer Kent: It is not enough merely to abstain from evil practices. Believers are to "*reprove them*." To be a true follower of Christ is to take a positive stand for purity. Evil practices are not to be ignored or tolerated, but exposed and attacked for what they are. Jesus called His followers "*the salt of the earth*" (**Mt 5:13**), and the primary significance of this metaphor connoted the common retardant against corruption. Christians dare not be so cloistered that they raise no voice against the evils of the day. It should be clear to all whose lives we touch that our standards are those of God's Word, not those of the world of darkness.

John Stott: Re **vs. 14** -- Here our former condition in Adam is graphically described in terms of sleep, death and darkness, from all of which Christ rescues us. Conversion is nothing less than awaking out of sleep, rising from death and being brought out of darkness into the light of Christ. No wonder we are summoned to live a new life in consequence.

John Piper: In sum, then, there are six things that this text of Scripture eliminates from the Christian life. The first three are fornication (premarital sexual relations), uncleanness (gross sexual distortions like homosexuality and lesbianism), coveteousness (not merely the simple urge for sexual experience which is normal and good, but the dominion of this desire that controls the behavior and elevates the pursued pleasure above the revealed will of God). The last three are filthiness, silly talk and levity, and together they show that the good gifts of God should not be treated as filthy or as flippant…

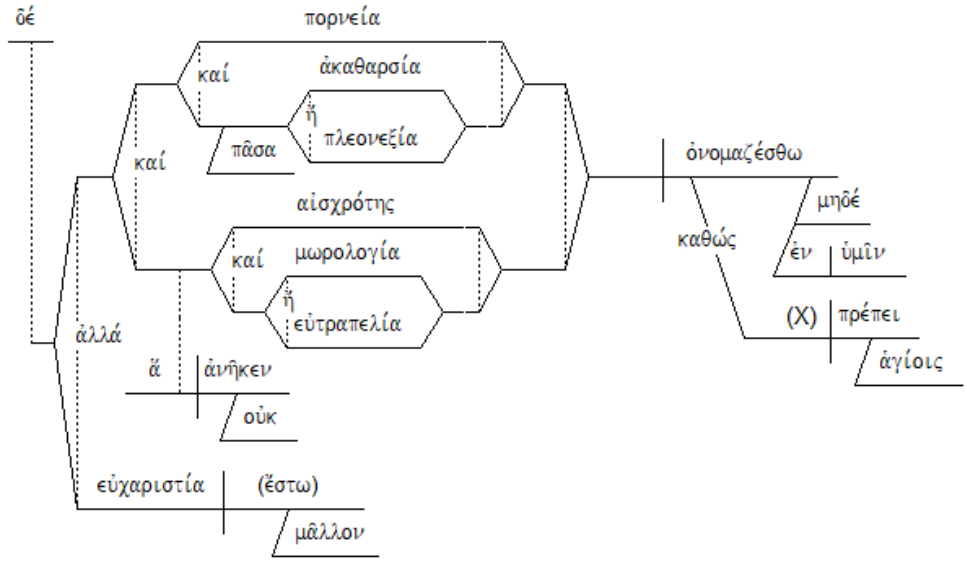
If fornication and impurity are driven by coveteousness, and coveteousness is a deep discontented craving that dominates your life and even leads you to go against the will of God, then it is clear that the opposite experience would be thanks giving. If you are overflowing with thanksgiving to God, then you are not dominated and driven by discontentment at what you have been denied.

Gratitude is what you feel when you believe God is for you and not against you. It's what you feel when you believe that he gives you only what is good for you and withholds no good thing (single or married!). It's what you feel when you trust Him, that the tragedies of your life are not evidences of his meanness or his incompetence; but rather that they are the discipline of a loving Father who values your holiness above your fleeting worldly happiness. That's why **verse 20** goes so far as to say, "*Always and for everything give thanks in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father*."

So you can see how thanksgiving is the alternative to a life driven by cravings for what you don't have (whether sex or money). Thanksgiving says, in God I have all that is good for me, and I will not be driven to dishonor the worth of his name just to get a few sexual sensations or a few new toys.

Leedy Greek Diagram:

Eph 5:3-4



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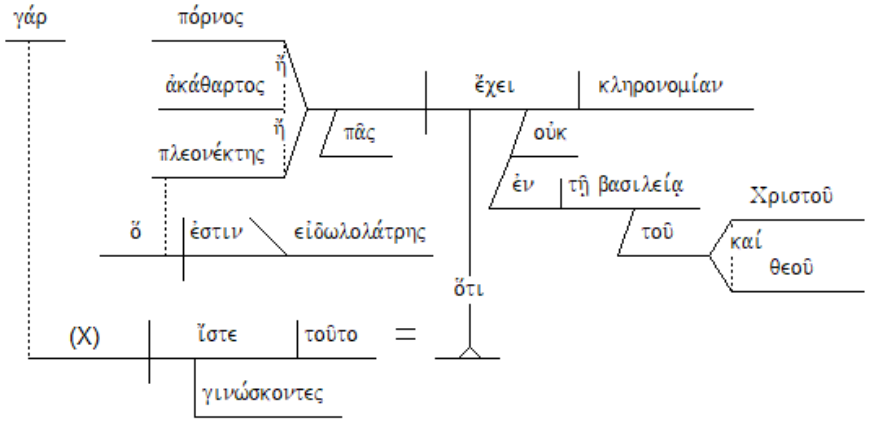

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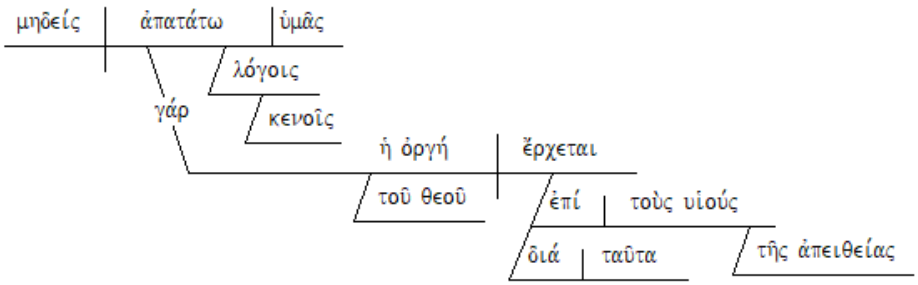

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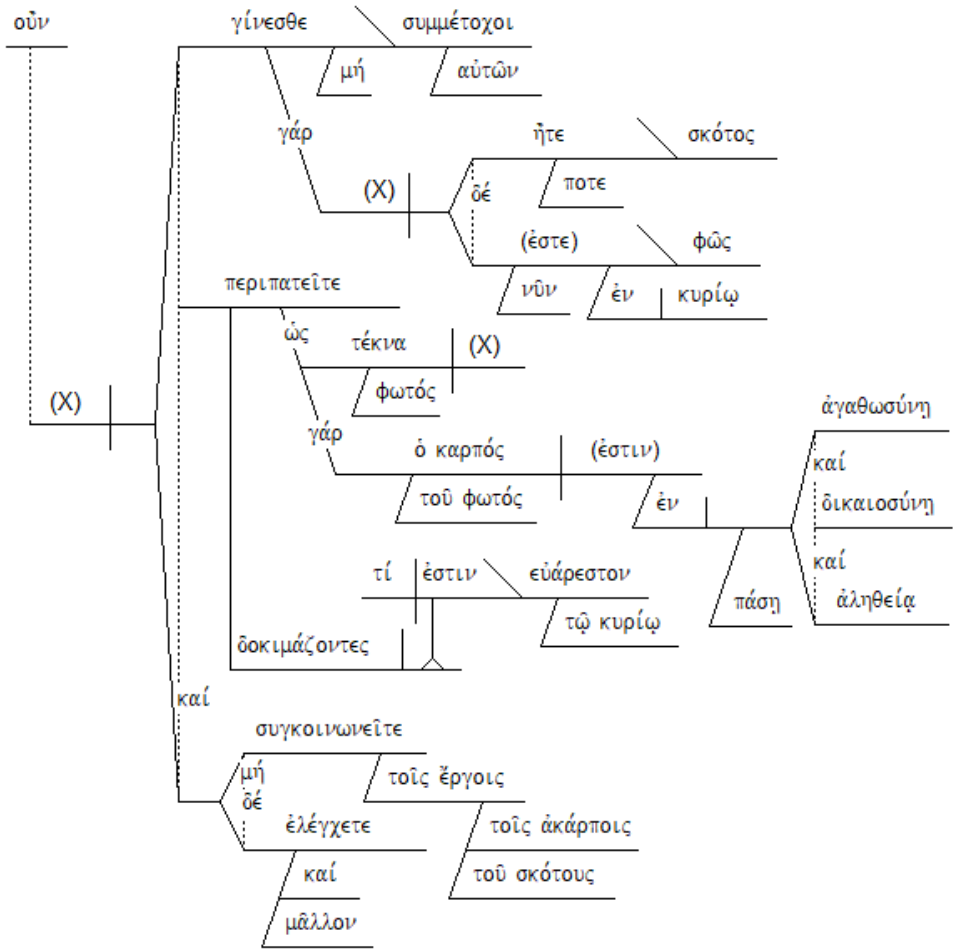
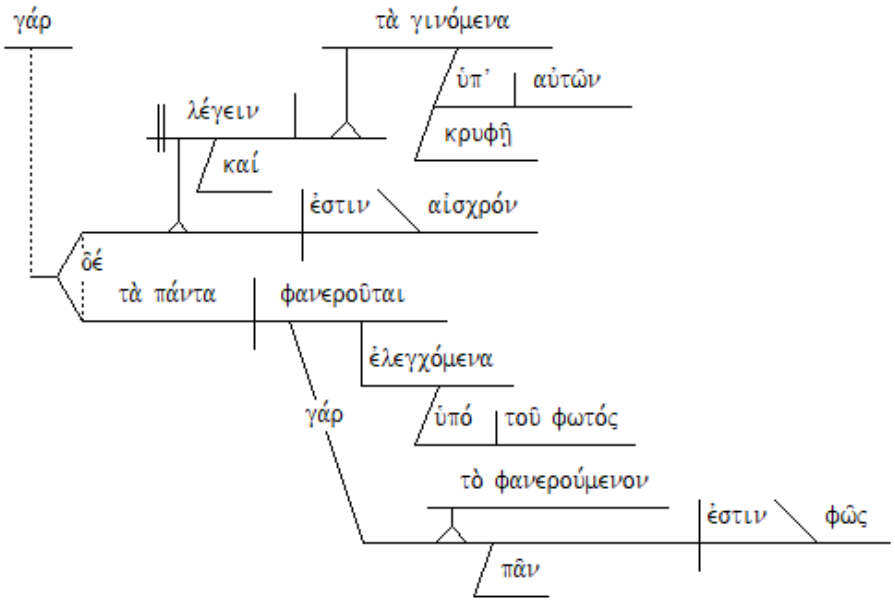


Eph 5:12-14a



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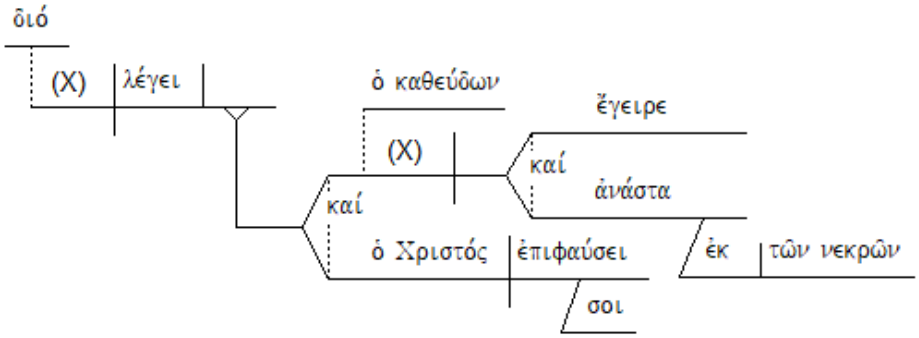

TEXT: EPHESIANS 5:15-21

TITLE: *WALK WISELY*

BIG IDEA:
WALK WISELY
- IN THE WILL OF THE LORD
- UNDER THE CONTROL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

INTRODUCTION:

Frank Thielman: The theme of wise conduct within the household binds the entire passage together. In light of the evil times in which believers live, Paul seems to say, they should center their households on the worship of God and on loving, heartfelt submission to one another. . .

In **5:15–20** Paul begins the transition to a body of positive, practical advice about how his readers should live within a culture dominated by evil. They cannot simply relax and hope for the best, but instead need to be alert to how they are living, perceptive about the condition of the world around them, and sensitive to the Lord's will. They should have nothing to do with the drunken debauchery that characterizes the prevailing culture but should live in the realm of the Spirit and grow in their maturity in Christ. As a result, they will gather with other Christians for instructional singing and for thanksgiving to God—the Father who has so richly blessed them through their union with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Clinton Arnold: Paul shifts from the metaphor of light (**5:8–14**) to the themes of **wisdom** and the **Spirit.** He presents these as two complementary and essential features of the Christian life that believers need if they are to conduct their lives in ways that are pleasing to God. Paul's exhortation in this text gives further expression to his prayer in **1:17** that the Father will provide them with the Spirit, who will impart wisdom to them.

John Stott: Paul's next little paragraph is based upon two assumptions, first that Christians are *sophoi*,—wise people, not fools—and secondly that Christian wisdom is **practical wisdom**, for it teaches us how to behave. His word for to 'behave' throughout the letter has been a Hebrew concept, to '*walk*'. Our Christian walk or behaviour, he has written, must no longer be according to the world, the flesh and the devil (**Ep 2:1, 2, 3**), or like the pagans (**Ep 4:17**). Instead, it must be '*worthy*' of God's call, '*in love'*, and '*as children of light*' (**Ep 4:1; 5:1; 5:8**). Now he adds a more general exhortation to us to behave like the wise people he credits us with being: look carefully how you walk, he writes. Everything worth doing requires care. We all take trouble over the things which seem to us to matter—our job, our education, our home and family, our hobbies, our dress and appearance. So as Christians we must take trouble over our Christian life. We must treat it as the serious thing it is. '*Be most careful then how you conduct yourselves: like sensible men, not like simpletons*' (neb).

I. (5:15-17) WALK WISELY IN THE WILL OF THE LORD WITH A SENSE OF URGENCY

A. (:15) Theme: Walk Wisely

"*Therefore, be careful how you walk*"

Klyne Snodgrass: The call to live wisely is not a call for theoretical knowledge. It is a call for moral discernment and a practical skill in making decisions. The emphasis once again is on the mind and on careful attention to keep life on target, the target being that which pleases Christ and fits his purposes.

1. Negatively
   "*not as unwise men*"

2. Positively
   "*but as wise*"

Harold Hoehner: Since they are God's children, believers are to walk carefully, not as ones who walk without true insight into God's plan for their lives; not unwisely, as characterized by the Gentile world (**Eph 4:17–19**), but in a new lifestyle in conformity to God's wise plan.

B. (:16) Sense of Urgency

"*making the most of your time, because the days are evil*"

Warren Wiersbe: How foolish to stumble along through life and never seek to know the will of the Lord! Instead of walking "*accurately*" (which is equivalent to "circumspectly"), they miss the mark, miss the road, and end up suffering on some detour. God wants us to be wise and understand His will for our lives. As we obey His will, we "buy up the opportunities" (redeem the time, **Eph 5:16**) and do not waste time, energy, money, and talent in that which is apart from His will. Lost opportunities may never be regained; they are gone forever.

Harold Hoehner: The days are evil because they are controlled by the god of this age (2:2) who opposes God and his kingdom and who will try to prevent any opportunities for the declaration of God's program and purposes. Hence, in this present evil age believers are not to waste opportunities because this would be useless and harmful to God's kingdom and to those who are a part of it. Paul would have felt this very keenly. Although the evil plots against him caused his imprisonment for the sake of the gospel, nevertheless he used every opportunity to proclaim the gospel while imprisoned (**Phil 1:12–14**). Though believers are redeemed and are prepared for the days to come, they still live in the present evil days as has been true for believers throughout history (**Ps 49:5**). It is interesting to notice that he is not recommending that they fear the present evil age or avoid interaction with it. Rather his exhortation is to walk wisely in the evil days by seizing every opportunity. Unrelenting warfare exists between the God of

heaven and the god of this age. In essence, believers are commanded not to let the god of this age intimidate them, but to take advantage of every opportunity in this immoral environment to live a life that pleases God (cf. **Gal 2:10**). How this is done is explained more fully in the following verses.

Grant Osborne: The wise will not fritter away their lives on earthly pursuits but will make "*the most of every opportunity*" (**5:16**; literally, "*redeeming the time*"). The verb is a commercial metaphor used for purchasing a commodity, and it implies a period of vigorous trading while there is profit to be made. The same is true in the Christian walk. As Paul directs us in **2 Timothy 2:15**, "*work very hard to present yourself to God as one approved*." Here the intention is that we will use our time wisely, making every opportunity count.

Frank Thielman: Paul believed that his readers lived in a world over which the devil and other evil spiritual powers had considerable influence (**2:2; 6:12–13**). He also believed that human beings were by nature "*children of wrath*" and only too willing to devote their thoughts to doing the desires of the flesh (**2:3**). In a world of such exterior and interior evil forces, it was especially critical to know the Lord's will and to make wise decisions about what it involved in one's day-to-day existence.

Clinton Arnold: When Paul says that the days are evil, he reflects a deep conviction shared with much of Judaism that God's people presently live in an age characterized by an abundance of evil and dominated by powerful supernatural forces (**Gal 1:4; Eph 2:2**). The present evil era will continue until the Messiah comes and subdues the widespread rebellion against the authority and reign of God. This apocalyptic worldview has its roots in Daniel, became widespread, and was characteristic of Judaism by the first century.

Benjamin Merkle: Paul's language here reflects his eschatological perspective that we are living in the last days. Scripture sees all reality as represented by two ages: the present age and the coming age. Although the present age is evil (**Rom. 8:18; Gal. 1:4; Eph. 2:2; 6:13**), one day the Messiah will return and subdue all his enemies and make all things right. Until then, believers are urged to walk with wisdom and make use of every opportunity.

C. (:17) In the Will of the Lord

1. Negatively
   "*So then do not be foolish*"

2. Positively
   "*but understand what the will of the Lord is*"

Harold Hoehner: Believers are to understand by careful consideration of individual circumstances what is the will of the Lord and then to carry out his will. However, since there is agreement in both the OT and NT that the ability for people to understand the

things of God is a gift of God, how can God's will be comprehended? Paul answers this in the next verse. . .

The unwise are governed by the flesh, whereas the wise are governed by the mind as it understands the will of the Lord. Once they comprehend the will of the Lord, then they are to walk according to it. The will of the Lord is discerned by the gift of God's insight and it is carried out by the power of God's Spirit.

Wayne Barber: Generically, the **will of the Lord** is that we be strengthened in the inner man by the Spirit of God (**Eph 3:16**+), that we obey Him, that we depend completely on Him, that we be surrendered in our attitude towards Him. Specifically because of that fear of God (cp **2Cor 7:1**+), God will give us wisdom in the specific areas of our life (**Pr 1:7**).

John Stott: Nothing is more important in life than to discover and do **the will of God**. Moreover, in seeking to discover it, it is essential to distinguish between his 'general' and his 'particular' will. The former is so called because it relates to the generality of His people and is the same for all of us, e.g. to make us like Christ. His particular will, however, extending to the particularities of our life, is different for each of us, e.g. what career we shall follow, whether we should marry, and if so whom. Only after this distinction has been made can we consider how we may find out what the will of the Lord is. His 'general' will is found in Scripture; the will of God for the people of God has been revealed in the Word of God. But we shall not find His 'particular' will in Scripture. To be sure, we shall find general principles in Scripture to guide us, but detailed decisions have to be made after careful thought and prayer and the seeking of advice from mature and experienced believers.

II. (5:18-21) WALK WISELY UNDER THE CONTROL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT CHARACTERIZED BY

- **SPIRITUAL SINGING**
- **THANKSGIVING**
- **MUTUAL SUBMISSION**

A. (:18) Holy Spirit Filling Means Holy Spirit Control

1. Negatively

"*And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation*"

Andrew Lincoln: The shift from the notion of drunkenness to that of being filled with the Spirit is not as abrupt as it may appear at first sight. The former represents folly; the latter is the prerequisite for wisdom. Both involve the self coming under the control of an external power, and the states of alcoholic and of religious intoxication were often compared. . .

Drunkenness leads to disorderly and dissolute behavior, but being filled with the Spirit produces very different results—praise, thanksgiving, and, when the participle of **v 21** is also included, mutual submission.

David Thompson: Four observations:

1) It was real wine that could get you drunk.
2) Real wine was used at meals.
3) Real wine was used in church for communion (**I Cor. 11:20-21**).
4) This was action these believers needed to stop.

There is an inflexible principle that is seen over and over again in the Bible in both the O.T. and the N.T. and the principle is **do not get drunk**. Drunkenness is a sin that is no respecter of persons. It will always lead to **destruction**. This is true for people who are beautiful and not so beautiful; people who are young or old; people who are successful or not successful. Too much wine leads to destruction. Getting drunk with wine is "*dissipation*" (ασωτια), which means is a wasteful way to live life (Smith, p. 66). Getting drunk with wine is a waste of time and a waste of life. Now Ephesus was a Gentile party city and many of those who came to faith were Gentile party people. Paul says one way to show that you are a child of God is by not getting drunk like most people of the world do.

2. Positively
   "*but be filled with the Spirit*"

Harold Hoehner: It is interesting to note that the indwelling, sealing, and baptizing ministries of the Spirit are bestowed on every believer at the time of salvation. There are no injunctions for the believer regarding them because they are an integral part of the gift of salvation. For example, if you are not indwelt by the Holy Spirit, then you are not a believer (**Rom 8:9**). On the other hand, "*be filled by*" and "*walk by*" the Spirit expressed in the present imperative indicates that this is not an automatic bestowment at the time of salvation but an injunction for every believer to follow continually. The filling by the Spirit is more than the Spirit's indwelling—it is his activities realized in and through us. Believers are commanded to be filled by the Spirit so that they will understand the will of the Lord and allow God's control of their lives, thus providing enablement to make the most of every opportunity rather than succumbing to the desires of the flesh. If believers were only filled with wisdom, the influence would be impersonal; however, the filling by the Spirit adds God's personal presence, influence, and enablement to walk wisely, all of which are beneficial to believers and pleasing to God. With the indwelling each Christian has all of the Spirit, but the command to be filled by the Spirit enables the Spirit to have all of the believer. The wise walk, therefore, is one that is characterized by the **Holy Spirit's control**.

Van Parunak: "*Be filled with the Spirit*": lit., "*Be being full of*." The NT distinguishes two different ministries of the HS.

- "*Filled with*" (πιμπλημι) refers to a sudden, temporary, repeatable empowerment for a specific ministry, known in the OT as well as the new: "*The Spirit of the Lord came upon Samson…*"
- "*Full of*" (πλυροω) refers to maturity, spirituality, and is a distinctive privilege of the NT. This is the verb used in this place. "Let the HS, who lives within you

under the terms of the New Covenant, completely occupy and take control of you." Like the ointment in **John 12:3**, let its fragrance fill the whole house. Let this, not alcohol, be the source of your joy.

B. (:19-21) Three Manifestations of Holy Spirit Control

1. (:19) Spiritual Singing

a. Intended for Mutual Edification

"*speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs*"

Klyne Snodgrass: Whether any difference is intended between psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs is difficult to say. In all probability no clear demarcation is intended. That people are to sing in their heart is not a request that people sing with feeling or emotion. Rather, "heart" refers to the controlling center of one's being: "*Sing with your whole being*" (which certainly includes the emotions). The issue is the **integrity** with which one sings, not the feeling. Words are not merely sung, they express the reality of the life in the Spirit.

Grant Osborne: Hymns in the early church were used to teach theology to believers. The lyrics were chosen not for their artistic value but for their truth and depth of content. That is the emphasis here. Both preaching and worship played a teaching function in anchoring the people in the truths of God and Christ.

b. Intended for Sincere Worship

"*singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord*"

Andrew Lincoln: The passage links Spirit-led worship with the wisdom required for living in this present evil age. It is precisely the experience of being filled with the Spirit that gives believers understanding of their Lord's will, and it is the spiritual songs that are a means of promoting the knowledge of that will. In this way the community's worship can be seen to make a vital contribution to its wise living in the world.

2. (:20) Christ-Focused Thanksgiving

a. All Encompassing Scope of Thanksgiving

"*always giving thanks for all things*"

Andrew Lincoln: In addition, believers who are filled with the Spirit will give thanks. The writer still has in view primarily thanksgiving in public worship (cf. also **1 Cor 14:16, 17**), which, as well as spiritual songs, could well include material like that found in his opening berakah. But the attitude of thanksgiving that is expressed in their worship will also be one that permeates believers' whole lives. They will give thanks not just sometimes for some things but always for everything (cf. also **1 Thess 5:18**). And this time their thanks is directed to the ultimate giver of all good things, to the one who is both God and Father, and offered in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ—a formulaic expression with liturgical connections (cf. **1 Cor 5:4; Phil 2:10; 2 Thess 3:6**) but one whose significance goes beyond such settings. So the Spirit inspires

thanksgiving to God the Father, and everything for which there is cause for thanks is summed up in and mediated through Christ.

b. Mediator of Thanksgiving
"*in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*"

c. Object of Our Thanksgiving
"*to God, even the Father*"

Stephen Fowl: Ephesians began with a powerful expression of praise, which reminded believers that the ultimate purpose of God's redemption of the world is so that the world can fulfill its proper vocation of praising God. Here toward the end of the epistle, Paul again turns his attention to the praise of God. In this case, praise of God is tied up with the role of the Spirit in the lives of believers. Working in and through believers, the Spirit both reforms and redirects their praise and worship to God. In the light of the overall concern of this passage with "walking wisely," it becomes clear that the worship of the Christian community in Ephesus is the context where the Ephesian believers will best learn how to "walk wisely."

3. (:21) Mutual Submission
a. Action
"*and be subject to one another*"

b. Attitude
"*in the fear of Christ*"

Klyne Snodgrass: Christians are called to live in mutual submission, and without mutual submission they cannot fulfill their destiny. Such submission is a strong and free act of the will based on real love of the other person (cf. **4:2**). In the end, submission is nothing more than a decision about the relative worth of another person, a manner of dying and rising with Christ, and a way to respect and love other people. In fact, for Christians, authority and submission are the same thing.

Grant Osborne: A church that is characterized by "the unity of the Spirit" (**v. 3**) must be dominated by humble Christians who defer to one another's interests and who "value others above [themselves]" (**Phil 2:3-4**).

Clinton Arnold: Mutual submission is not just the result of Spirit-filling; it is prerequisite to the reception of grace from the Spirit-endowed members of the body. Thus, it is easy to see from Paul's perspective that attitudes and behavior reflecting arrogance, harshness, impatience, and intolerance will not only adversely impact the unity of the community, but will also keep believers from effectively ministering to one another. The work of the Spirit is thus effectively hindered.

Klyne Snodgrass: For us the term "*fear*" is usually negative, and the biblical writers knew this negative use. But by and large they used it in a **positive sense**, for which

there is no satisfactory English equivalent. Words like “reverence” or “respect” are too weak to capture the nuance intended. The positive sense of the fear of Christ points to his power and holiness and to the recognition that he is Lord and coming Judge. Such fear is the ground of both praise and obedience. We ought not forget that the one who is feared is the same one who “*loved us and gave himself for us*” in **5:2**.

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Do we just meander carelessly through life or are we truly alert and careful to understand and carry out the will of the Lord? If we knew that life was full of landmines to be avoided, would we be more circumspect? If we knew that life was full of opportunities to be identified and seized, would we be more aggressive?

2) What is the real problem of being "*drunk with wine*"? (What does this passage contribute to the discussion of doubtful areas -- such as "Is it OK for a Christian to drink alcoholic beverages?") Have we lowered the Lord's standards if we are merely satisfied with not being drunk, but still go on living as we please?

3) What is your own definition in your own words of being filled either:
- "*in your spirit*" OR
- "*with the Spirit*"??

4) Do we experience other believers interacting with us in the sense of "*speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs …*"? Is Paul talking about just on Sunday morning here? Where do we see this today in our fellowship with others? Does talking about the weather and sharing sports stories really fit the bill?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

William Hendriksen: The unwise are those who, having no insight into things that pertain to God and salvation, are not aiming to reach the highest goal and therefore do not know and do not even care to know what are the best means to reach it. They regard as very important what is in reality of minor value or may even be harmful, and they do not appreciate what is indispensable. They conduct themselves accordingly. Those who are wise, on the other hand, have the proper insight and walk in harmony with it.

Adrian Rogers: 4 principles on **how to redeem time...**

A. The Prayer Principle - Principle number one is what I want to call the prayer principle. How important that you let prayer be the key that unlocks the door of the morning, that you begin your day with prayer. As the poet said, "Lean your arms upon the windowsill of Heaven, and gaze at the face of God" (paraphrase of Thomas Blake).

As you greet the day, begin the day with prayer, spend enough time every day, in the morning, to get God's will for your life. Prayer must be in the morning. You see, it's not a waste of time to wait on God any more than a woodchopper is wasting time when he sharpens his axe. I've said this before from this pulpit, and I honestly believe it. There's enough time in every day to do everything that God wants you to do and to do it gracefully. It's an insult to God to say you don't have enough time. If you don't have enough time, you're doing something God did not intend for you to do—either something that you've imposed upon yourself, or you've allowed others to impose upon you. So, what you must do in prayer every morning—the principle of prayer—is to get quiet before the Lord, and let God speak to your heart.

B. The Priority Principle - Now, after the prayer principle, there comes the priority principle. I mean, after God speaks to you, it's very obvious that you've got some priorities. You see, life would be simple, if life were a choice between good and bad. Very frankly, most of the choices that I have to make are not choices between good and bad—they are **choices between good and best**. Isn't that true? I mean, I don't have time to read good books for I haven't read the best ones yet. I need to find out what God wants me to do. Most of the time, management books tell you how to do more things. How you can play and work, and how you can read, and how you can do all of those things, are fine; they all have their place. But you see, my dear friend, what you do is far more important than how you do it. I mean, to get your priorities correct. Jesus, who lived only to the age of 33 in His humanity here on earth, said, when He bowed His head, "*It is finished*" (**John 19:30**). And, the Lord Jesus said to the Father, "*I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do*" (**John 17:4**). Now, notice it was the work that God gave Him to do. Now, there were many villages wanting Jesus to come and teach, there were many places that wanted Jesus to heal and so forth, but Jesus didn't do everything. Jesus didn't go everywhere. Sometimes, when the crowds were clamoring after Jesus, He just got alone. But, He could say, at the end of His ministry, "*I have finished the work thou gavest me to do*" (**John 17:4**). You go to our bookstore, some bookstore, and buy the little book by Charles Hummel, called The Tyranny of the Urgent. It's a great little book: The Tyranny of the Urgent. Do you know what our problems are, dear friend? We're constantly having a battle between the important and the urgent. Now, what is more important—the plumbing in your house, or your quiet time with God? "Well," you say, "my quiet time with God." What's more urgent—your quiet time or your toilet that's overflowing? You say, "That's more urgent; I've got to get that fixed." Your wife calls you and says, "Adrian, no matter what you're doing, you go in there and you've got...—I mean, the thing is overflowing." Now that, my dear friend, is something that is urgent. And, it is the urgent so many times that keeps us from the important. Isn't that true? I mean, in all of life, we have these things, that somebody calls, and you've just got to do this, you've just got to do that. It takes such incredible willpower, such an incredible prioritizing of priorities, to see **the difference between the urgent and the important**. Your greatest danger is letting the urgent things crowd out the important things.

C. The Promptness Principle - Third principle—not only the prayer principle, not only the priority principle, but there is the promptness principle. Boy, am I speaking to

me at this time! This deals with the **sin of procrastination**. The Bible says, in **James 4:17**, "*Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin*" (**James 4:17**). Sin is not just merely doing wrong; it is failing to do what you ought to do. Did you know that procrastination and disobedience are different shades of the same sin? Procrastination and disobedience are different kinds of the same sin. In my life, what I want to do is to cultivate the habit of **instant obedience**. Now, where most of us fail, it is in this area of willpower. Isn't that correct? I heard a good definition of willpower—I copied it down, and I want you to listen to it: "When you have a job to do, begin this very hour. **You supply the will, God supplies the power**." Isn't that great? "When you have a job to do, begin this very hour; you supply the will, God supplies the power." And, my friend, that is willpower. When there is something you know you ought to do it, and do it now.

D. The Power Principle - There's the promptness principle, and, last of all, there's the power principle—there's the power principle. Most of us think, "Oh boy, I'd just have it made, if I did exactly what God wants me to do." I've already talked to you about this willpower, which is really God's power. Listen—in **verse 16**, he says, "*Redeem the time*" (**Ephesians 5:16**)—that's the promptness principle. In **verse 17**, he says, "*Be... not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is*" (**Ephesians 5:17**)—that's the prayer principle. Look in **verse 18**: "*And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit*" (**Ephesians 5:18**)—that's the power principle. You see—the power principle is **to do God's will in the power of the Holy Spirit**. Most of us don't need to learn to work harder—we need to work with more power. We need to learn to work with more effectiveness.

John MacArthur: Re "*being filled with the Spirit*" -- Before we look specifically at what the filling of the Spriit is, we should clarify some of the things it is not:

1) First, being filled with the Holy Spirit is not a dramatic, esoteric experience of suddenly being energized and spiritualized into a permanent state of advanced spirituality by a second act of blessing subsequent to salvation. Nor is it some temporary 'zap' that results in ecstatic speech or unearthly visions.

2) Second, being filled with the Spirit is not the notion at the other extreme -- simply stoically trying to do what God wants us to do, with the Holy Spirit's blessing but basically in our own power. It is not an act of the flesh which has God's approval.

3) Third, being filled is not the same as possessing, or being indwelt by the Holy Spirit, because He indwells every believer at the moment of salvation …

4) Fourth, being filled with the Spirit does not describe a process of progressively receiving Him by degrees or in doses. Every Christian not only possesses the Holy Spirit but possesses Him in His fullness…

5) Fifth, it is also clear from **1 Corinthians 12:13** that the filling with the Spirit is not the same as the baptism of the Spirit…

6) Finally, the filling with Spirit is not the same as being sealed, or secured by Him. That is an accomplished fact …

The continuous aspect of being filled … involves day-by-day, moment-by-moment submission to the Spirit's control. The passive aspect indiates that it is not something we do but that we allow to be done in us. The filling is entirely the work of the Spirit Himself, but He works only through our willing submission. The present aspect of the command indicates that we cannot rely on a past filling nor live in expectation of future filling. We can rejoice in past fillings and hope for future fillings, but we can live only in present filling…

3 additional senses of the word:

1) to be moved along in our Christian life by God Himself …
2) God wants His Holy Spirit to so permeate the lives of His children that everything they think, say, and do will reflect His divine presence…
3) connotation of total control …

Wood: "*With the* Spirit" is actually "*in spirit*" (*en pneumati*). The Greek text does not indicate whether the Holy Spirit is intended. The word *pneuma* can equally well mean the human spirit as affected by the Holy Spirit (RV mg.). We have noted a similar ambiguity in **Ephesians 2:22** and **3:5** and will meet it again in **6:18**. Lenski (p. 619) contended that Paul would not have attempted the daring comparison between wine and the Holy Spirit, and that we are not told explicitly with what the believer is to be filled but only where he is to be filled, i.e., in spirit.

Homer Kent: This submission in **verse 21** must not be explained as being in contradiction to the passage which follows. When Paul says that Christians should submit to one another, he does not mean, for example, that husbands and wives are to submit to each other, for that would render **verse 22** meaningless and destroy the very pattern of authority which he is about to teach. Rather, he is exhorting against a spirit of self-exaltation by anyone in the church.

John Stott: Sometimes a person who claims to be filled with the Spirit becomes aggressive, self-assertive and brash. But the Holy Spirit is a humble Spirit, and those who are truly filled with him always display the meekness and gentleness of Christ. It is one of their most evident characteristics that they submit to one another.

They also submit to Christ… Incidentally, this expression *'in the fear of Christ'* is a notable if indirect testimony to Paul's belief in the deity of Jesus, since the regular Old Testament requirement was to live *'in the fear of God'*…

Such are the wholesome results of the fullness of the Holy Spirit. They all concern our relationship. If we are filled with the Spirit, we shall be harmoniously related both to God (worshipping him with joy and thanksgiving) and to each other (speaking and

submitting to one another). In brief, Spirit-filled believers love God and love each other, which is hardly surprising since the first fruit of the Spirit is love.

Foulkes: Re **vs 21** -- In this verse there is an unexpected, but not illogical, turn in the apostle's exhortation, and one that leads him into the instructions that follow in the whole of the next section, **v. 22 - vi. 9**. He has implied in verse 19 that the enthusiasm that the Spirit inspires is not to be expressed individualistically, but in fellowship… He knew from experience that the secret of maintaining joyful fellowship in the community was the order and discipline that come from the willing submission of one person to another (cf. **Eph. iv. 2, 3**). Pride of position and the authoritarian spirit are destructive of fellowship. The importance to Paul of the whole concept of submission is evident from the use of the word more than twenty times in his Epistles. He is to apply this in special instances in the next section, but we should note that he first gives it a completely general application. There must be a willingness in the Christian fellowship to serve any, to learn from any, to be corrected by any, regardless of age, sex, class or any other division.

John Piper: The second way of expressing the paradox of these verses is to say that we must live in the tension between analysis and exultation. Let me try explain what I mean.

Verse 15 says, "*Look carefully then how you walk*." **Verse 17** says, "*Do not be foolish but understand what the will of the Lord is.*" So together these verses call us to use our minds in careful thought. Look carefully! Know yourself, know your enemy, know your commander, know the situation, apply your mind understand what the Lord wills in this crucial time. This is what I mean by analysis. It is the use of the mind to scrutinize, to examine, to sort out distinctions and seek relationships and patterns and to draw conclusions and inferences.

But then **verse 19** says that we should be full of exultation. We should make melody to the Lord in our hearts. Our emotions, not just our minds should be engaged. We should not merely scrutinize the providence of God, we should also be carried away by it. We should not just analyze the message of the Bible, we should be swept up into song when we read it. We shouldn't be content to formulate a theory of salvation, we should be filled with thanksgiving that we are saved.

John Piper: Re **filling with the Spirit** -- Nobody stays full of the Spirit all the time -- no one is always totally joyful and submissive to God and empowered for service. But this should still be our aim, our goal, our great longing. "*As a hart pants for the flowing streams, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God*" (**Psalm 42:1, 2**). But in order to slake that thirst we must fight the fight of faith. We must preach to our souls a sermon of hope.

Moule: The Apostle comes now to a few more lines of general caution and precept, before he approaches his final topic, the Christian Home. He has to appeal again for a grave remembrance that the "*walk in the light*" is no mere promenade, smooth and easy,

but a march, resolved and full of purpose, cautious against the enemy, watchful for opportunity for the King, self-controlled in every habit, and possible only (if it is to be a reality) in the power of the eternal Spirit. It is to be a walk, onward and upward, of holy and habitual praise, of fellowship in spiritual help, and of a mutual submission which means forgetfulness of self in the recollection of others, in the Lord...

See therefore, with eyes spiritually open to the path and its environment, that you walk (it is the seventh time that this pregnant word has been written - 8x in 7v - **Eph 2:2 2:10 4:1 4:17 5:2 5:8 5:15**) accurately; recollecting the importance of detail, fully aware that life is made up of steps and incidents, and that nothing in it lies outside the claims of God. Spend watchful thought upon duty and opportunity; think nothing trivial in such matters as use of time, manner of act and speech, consistency in common things;

not as unwise men, blind to the import and occasions of the passing day, and the relation of time to eternity, but as wise men, with that holy wisdom which comes of heart-concord with the will of God, and with a watchful use of thought and of every faculty for its ends. As you walk, make all you can of the events of life, to use them for Him.

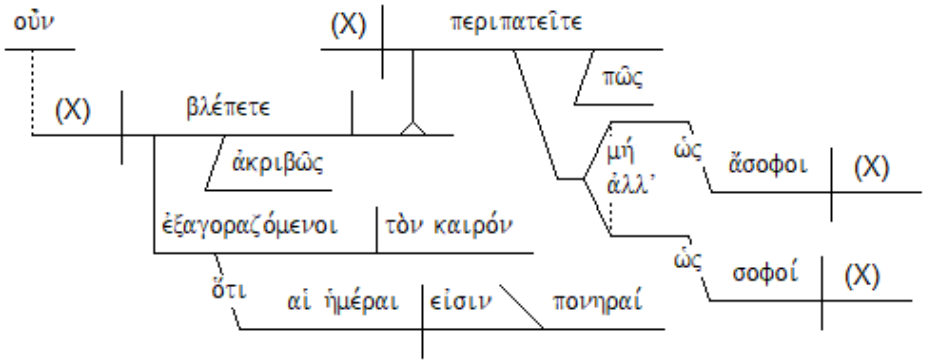
Bryan Chapell: Paul is encouraging and urging us to recognize that we have the privilege not merely of reflecting the light of the Son, but also of living as the light of the Son. We are to be the light of the Son, both reflecting him and also shining the light of his indwelling presence that is our life. Paul speaks to believers with the understanding that we can be so filled with Christ's radiance, power, and being that we have his identity and bear it to others.

This is the deep truth of our union with Christ that is so difficult, but necessary, to fathom in order to experience the deepest joys and greatest light in the darkness of this world. We should understand that, fundamentally, our faith is not about what we do (as important as that is), nor is it about what we think (as important as that is). Our faith is fundamentally strengthened by understanding who we are through the indwelling Christ. We are who we are because of our union with him. Nothing else can be the integration point (the place where the promises of Scripture and our identity intersect) of true spirituality. If we make what we do (right actions) the integration point of our faith, then we become fundamentalistic and Pharisaical, with the judgment of others' misbehaviors the preoccupation of our religion. If we make what we think (right doctrine) the integration point of our faith, then we become rationalistic debaters with judgment of others' faulty doctrine the preoccupation of our religion.

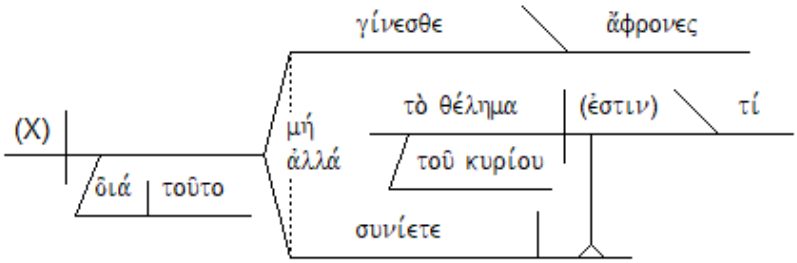
Only when the integration point of our faith is knowing and living out the fullness of the person of Jesus Christ will his person and witness be the true preoccupations that fill our lives. Right doing and thinking are necessary for this proper filling, but Christ alone is the aim, the object, and the goal of what we do and think. When we confuse the means (what we do and think) with the goal (the reality of the indwelling Christ), then religion becomes sterile, fruitless, and, in the most sad of ways, merely human.

Leedy Greek Diagram:

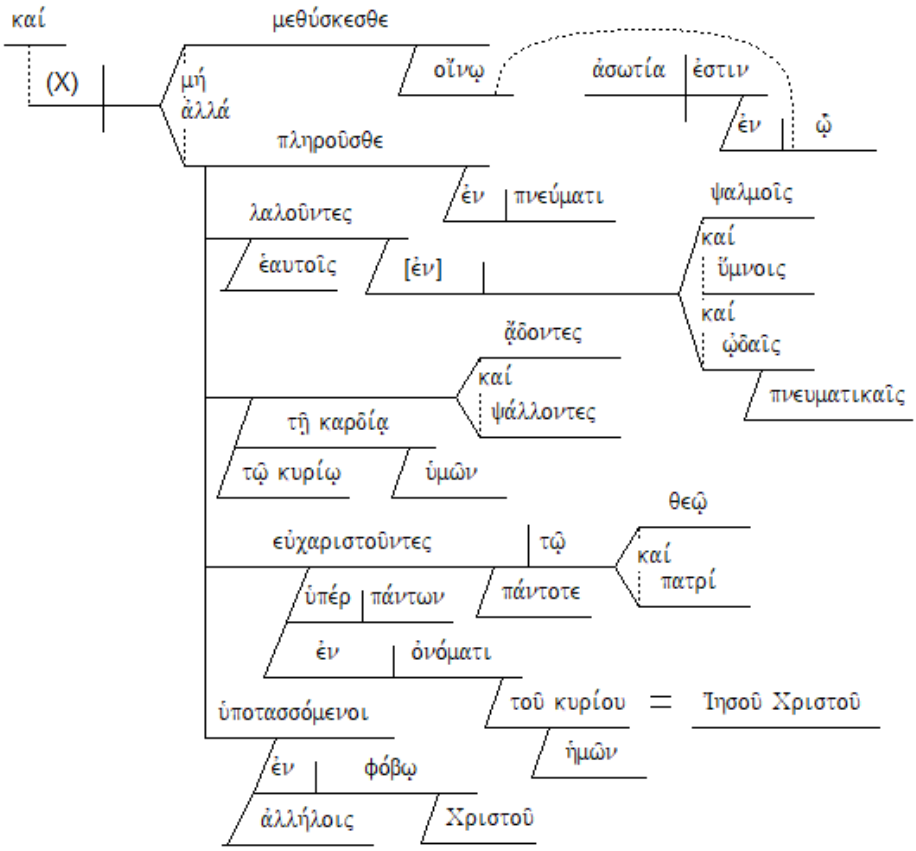
Eph 5:15-16



Eph 5:17



Eph 5:18-21



TEXT: EPHESIANS 5:22 - 6:9

TITLE: HOUSEHOLD RELATIONSHIPS OF SUBMISSION AND CONSIDERATION

BIG IDEA:
WALKING WISELY INVOLVES FULFILLING YOUR ROLE IN RELATIONSHIPS OF SUBMISSION AND CONSIDERATION

INTRODUCTION:

Stephen Fowl: It is crucial that readers interpret **5:21** as **pointing both backward and forward**. It serves to conclude a section that presents some of the ways in which believers are to manifest the life of the Spirit, and it also serves as an overarching admonition for the relationships between wives and husbands, children and parents, and slaves and masters in the church. In fact, almost all commentators, no matter how they divide the passage, treat the verse this way.

Harold Hoehner: The theme in Ephesians is the **unity of the church** (**Eph 2:11–3:13; 4:1–16**) and the practical outworking of this unity in the present context is for believers to walk wisely by being filled by the Spirit (**5:15–21**). Therefore, the function of the Ephesian household code (**5:22 – 6:9**) is to enhance this unity. Furthermore, Dudrey rightly points out that the purpose of the household codes "is not to repress the socially downtrodden, but to transform spiritually all who are in Christ—husbands, fathers, and masters included." It was to be a display to the Roman world how believers who are transformed and empowered by the Holy Spirit function within the family structure. . .

The present context is very much related to the previous context, for only believers filled by the Spirit are able to please the Lord by fulfilling their duties and are able to live blameless lives in close and continual contact with their family or employment relationships.

Clinton Arnold: Paul gives a variety of instructions to various members of the Christian household on how to think and conduct themselves as believers in their respective roles. A focus on knowing the Lord and pleasing him is the primary motivation for each member of the household for fulfilling their role obligations.

Matthew McCraw: **Love and Submission in Relationships**
Submission normally carries with it a negative reaction. Have you ever thought of why that is? Why do we think of submission as negative?
If Jesus modeled it [**Phil. 2:5-8**] and commended it, if Paul instructed us to do it, if it's a result of being filled with the Spirit, shouldn't we desire it?
Well, today we're going to consider love and submission in our relationships.

In each of the following relationships, the submissive role is discussed first.

I. (5:22-33) WIVES AND HUSBANDS

Clinton Arnold: Paul projects a vision in this passage for a distinctively Christian marriage. He bases his instructions for each spouse not on what is appropriate in Roman culture, but on lessons that can be derived from the nature of the relationship between the church and Christ. Husbands are called to love their wives in the way Christ loved the church, and wives are called to recognize and follow the leadership their husbands provide.

A. (:22-24) Wives -- Relationship of Submission

1. (:22) Command with Qualification

"*Wives, be subject to your own husband, as to the Lord*."

Grant Osborne: It is important to state at the outset that submission does not equate to absolute servitude or imply inferiority. It is the voluntary decision of an equal (the wording of **1 Pet 3:7**, "*joint-heirs of the grace of life*," is helpful here) to place themselves under the authority of another. This is seen in the middle voice of the verb, which means, in effect, "*submit yourselves*." While the verb is borrowed from **verse 21**, it still is an imperative, commanding this "decision": God expects wives to submit to their husbands. Note that the emphasis restricts this command to "*your own*" husbands. Paul is not speaking of male-female roles in general but only of those in marital relationships. Within marriage wives are to place themselves under the headship of their own husbands and are to both respect them and follow their leadership within the family.

Frank Thielman: "*as unto the Lord*" -- when wives submit to their husbands, they are submitting to Christ because they are doing what Christ wants them to do? This seems consistent both with **6:7**, where Paul urges slaves to work with goodwill since they are working for the Lord and not for human beings, and with **Col. 3:18**, where wives are urged to submit to their husbands "*as is fitting in the Lord*" (ὡς ἀνῆκεν ἐν κυρίῳ, *hōs anēken en kyriō*).

Clinton Arnold: we can rule out many things that the passage does not say:

- It does not call for "obedience."
- It does not make the husband the boss and the wife the servant.
- It does not lead to the wife's loss of her self (or her identity).
- It does not mean that the wife loses her voice and decisions are made unilaterally.
- It does not set the wife up for emotional, verbal, or physical abuse.

2. (:23-24) Parallel Relationship = the Church Being Subject to Christ

a. Parallel Concept of Headship

"*For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body*."

Harold Hoehner: The head in this context has the idea of "ruler" or "authority over," as seen in the present and the preceding verses. In light of this, the husband's position of authority over the wife must encompass a **protective quality**, which is exemplified in Christ who is "*the savior of the body*."

Klyne Snodgrass: Paul is not arguing that Christ is the **source** of the principalities and powers, but that he has **authority** over them. Some connotation of authority appears to be included in Paul's metaphorical uses of *kephale*.

Frank Thielman: The instruction to the wife to "*fear*" her husband in **5:33** (cf. v. 21), advice not repeated to the husband, reveals a **hierarchical element** in the advice to wives and husbands generally and makes it likely that both Paul and his readers would have understood κεφαλή to have overtones of **authority**. This conclusion becomes virtually unavoidable when we look at the close verbal relationship between **5:21–23** and **1:20–23**. In **1:20–23** Christ's position as head (κεφαλή) over all things is defined in terms of God's subjection (ὑποτάσσω, *hypotassō*) of all things to Christ. This same pairing of the noun κεφαλή with the verb ὑποτάσσω in **5:21–23** indicates that here too κεφαλή carries an authoritative nuance.

b. Parallel Concept of Submission

"*But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything*."

Grant Osborne: Paul directs the wife to "*submit in everything*" because he doesn't want wives to think they can pick and choose those areas in which they wish to comply. Submission is not to be occasional or partial but should be reflected in every area of the marriage.

Clinton Arnold: "*In everything*" (ἐν παντί) indicates that this should be the normal disposition of the wife toward her husband. It means that a wife should cultivate an attitude of affirming, supporting, and respecting her husband's leadership in the marriage without holding back certain areas where she wants to assert or maintain control. . .

the consideration of how the church responds to Christ's leadership should motivate and inform how the wife responds to the leadership of her husband. There are numerous ways to describe what this might look like in application to a Christian marriage, but here are a few ideas:

- to receive her husband's love, care, and provision
- to provide encouragement, support, and input to her husband's initiatives to give vision and direction to the family
- to resist the temptation to "take control"
- to resist the impulse to undermine or complain about the leadership her husband provides
- to align her spending habits with the priorities she agreed upon with her husband for the vision and direction of the household.

B. (:25-30) Husbands -- Relationship of Consideration

1. (:25a) Command

"*Husbands, love your wives*"

Frank Thielman: Paul's main concern throughout the section, both in practical and theological terms, is with the **husband's love for his wife** and **Christ's love for the church**. This is clear not only from the relative length of the material devoted to wives and husbands, but also from the summary of Paul's practical advice to both in **5:33**. Both the rhetorical forcefulness and the number of words in that concluding statement devoted to the husband's love for his wife (**5:33a–b**) outweigh the delicately phrased and brief admonition to the wife to fear her husband (**5:33c**). Paul places the burden of this section on the husband, whose headship must be expressed not in managing his wife but in meeting her physical and emotional needs (**5:29**), in short, in giving his own life for hers (**5:25**).

2. (:25b) First Parallel Relationship = Christ Loving His Body = the Church

"*just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her*"

3. (:26-27) Objectives

a. Sanctification

"*that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word*"

Frank Thielman: in the purpose clause contained in **5:26**, Paul begins to digress from his instructions to husbands into a description of why Christ has showed his love for the church by giving his life for it. He did this to cleanse the people who would make up the church from their sin and to set them apart as God's special people. This cleansing, sanctifying action was applied to them when they were washed in the verbal proclamation of the gospel, that is, when they heard the gospel preached, believed it, and were sealed as God's special people by the Holy Spirit (cf. **1:13–14**).

b. Presentation

"*that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless*."

4. (:28-30) Second Parallel Relationship = Husband Caring for His Own Physical Body -- Nourishes / Cherishes

"*So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, because we are members of His body*."

R. C. Sproul: One of the most wonderful parts of the marriage ceremony is the vow that we take to **cherish one another**. To cherish one another means to hold one another in

the highest esteem and to place an infinite value on one another. This is the attitude that is to permeate the home. Not a power struggle or a see-saw battle for more authority than the other one. Rather, the man is to love his wife as he loves his own flesh. A man takes care of his own flesh. He feeds himself, eats, drinks, nourishes his body and protects it. He has a strong instinct of self-preservation. He is to love his wife even more than he loves himself. . .

One of the most difficult things to admit or to understand is that there is probably nothing that a man wants more from his wife than her admiration. There is probably nothing that a woman wants more from her husband than his attention, taking her seriously and treating her with the greatest dignity. Here what we are getting at is the question of respect. If I exercise my headship over my wife in a tyrannical way, I am not respecting my wife. If my wife gives slavish obedience to me without any love, she is not respecting me. The whole basis of the relationship is built upon love, cherishing and respecting one another.

C. (:31-33) Summary

1. (:31-32) Review: Parallel Relationship -- Marriage and the Church

a. Marriage -- Commitment and Intimacy

"*For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh*."

b. Church

"*The mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church*."

Clinton Arnold: "*This mystery*" thus refers to the union of husband and wife in marriage as a divinely instituted illustration of the close and intimate union between Christ and the church. It is "*great*" (μέγα) because it is so profound and significant.

David Thompson: There are deep applications in this text about the Church and its relationship to Jesus Christ:

1) The Church should submit to Jesus Christ who is the head of the church. **5:22-23**
2) The Church is loved by God at the highest level–Jesus Christ gave Himself. **5:25**
3) The Church is to be clean at a sanctified level–made clean by the washing with the Word. **5:26**
4) The Church should develop in a holy, blameless, wrinkle free sanctification. **5:27**
5) The Church is nourished and cherished by Jesus Christ. **5:29**
6) The Church is part of the body of Jesus Christ. **5:30-32** We should all cleave to Him.

2. (:33) Review: The Commands -- Love / Respect

a. Husband -- Love

"*Nevertheless let each individual among you also love his own wife even as himself*"

b. Wife -- Respect

"*and let the wife see to it that she respect her husband*"

Klyne Snodgrass: The translation of the Greek word used here as "*respect*"—if joined to love—comes close to the idea intended for the attitude toward husbands. A wife is to show recognition of her husband's role and responsibility. No doubt, the fear due Christ is far different from the fear due husbands. The latter do not love as greatly, are not inherently holy, and are not end-time judges.

II. (6:1-4) CHILDREN AND PARENTS

A. (:1-3) Children -- Relationship of Submission

1. Obedience

"*Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right*."

Clinton Arnold: The "*children*" (τὰ τέκνα) he speaks of are those who are still in the home. They are old enough to understand instructions from their parents and deliberate over whether they should obey or go their own way. They are still being "*brought up*" (ἐκτρέφω), receiving instruction and correction from their fathers (**6:4**), and have not gotten married and left home (**5:31**). This would most likely place the age range of the children from early elementary to the late teen years or early twenties. It is significant that Paul addresses them directly and not through their parents. This implies that they are present when the community assembles to worship, to hear the reading of the Word, and to receive teaching.

2. Honor

"*Honor your father and mother*"

3. Promise

"(which is the first commandment with a promise), that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth."

Frank Thielman: Paul urges children to obey their parents and gives three reasons why they should do this.

1. First, it is conduct expected of those who have been incorporated into the Lord through their faith in the gospel.
2. Second, it is "*right*," by which Paul probably means that obedience to parents is widely acknowledged to be fair and proper.
3. Third, the Scriptures both command it and attach a promise to the command—the first promise in the Mosaic law that is attached to a specific command.

Paul is primarily concerned with this third reason for obedience to parents: the Scriptures promise that, generally speaking, children who obey their parents will live successful and long lives. . .

Everyone would be aware that many well-behaved children succumb to untimely deaths, but most people would also know that, provided they escaped disease and accident, children who took to heart the wisdom of those who cared for them had a better chance of doing well and living long than those who despised their parent's instruction (**Prov. 15:5; 20:20; 30:17**; cf. **Prov. 6:20–22; 13:1; 23:22**).

B. (:4) Fathers -- Relationship of Consideration

1. Negative

"*And fathers, do not provoke your children to anger*"

Clinton Arnold: This passage, however, teaches that fathers need to exercise a sensitivity and care in how they interact with their children, and especially in how they discipline them. Fathers should carefully weigh the potential impact of their words and actions before responding to their children. This passage effectively rules out reactionary flare-ups, overly harsh words, insults, sarcasm, nagging, demeaning comments, inappropriate teasing, unreasonable demands, and anything else that can be perceived as provocative. In his instructions to fathers in Colossians, Paul says, "*do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged*" (**Col 3:21**).

2. Positive

"*but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord*"

III. (6:5-9) SERVANTS AND MASTERS (WORKERS AND EMPLOYERS)

R. C. Sproul: There were certain kinds of voluntary slavery in the ancient world, where a person would bind himself over to the service of another person, for example, to pay off his debts. But there was also the whole idea of selling people into slavery and the even worse practice of stealing people who were free and using them as slaves. Paul doesn't comment here on any of the variety of forms of slavery that did exist in the ancient world. He just speaks in general to anyone who happens to be in that situation of slavery. John Murray deals with this subject in his book Principles of Conduct. Murray says that Paul doesn't speak for or against slavery here in this passage, he is simply addressing those who happen to be in that particular situation. If you are a slave, whether justly or unjustly, you are still under the authority of your designated master, and as such it is your duty to perform the services that are expected and required of you. That is the Christian way for slaves to behave. Murray goes on to say that, in spite of Paul's instructions here to slaves and in spite of his writing an entire letter (Philemon) concerning a runaway slave, the New Testament in general, and Paul's writings in particular, contained the seeds of the dissolution of the institution of slavery. Subsequent history demonstrates that the Christian church has been at the forefront of the movement for the abolition of this institution.

A. (:5-8) Servants -- Relationship of Submission

1. Command

"*Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh*"

2. Right Attitudes

a. Healthy Respect

"*with fear and trembling*"

b. Sincerity

"*in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ*"

c. As Unto the Lord

"*not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart*."

Clinton Arnold: The highest priority, then, is to **do the will of God** (τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ). This is the call for all believers, whether they are slaves of humans or free. This does not mean that it is God's will for them to remain in slavery, but it does mean that as long as they are under this structure of authority, they should serve their human masters as though they were serving Christ himself (see **6:5d**) and not attempt to "pull the wool over the eyes" of their masters.

"*with good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men*"
Transition to point #3

3. Looking for God's Compensation

"*knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free*."
Same principle whether you work for someone else or are self-employed

Clinton Arnold: This suggests that Paul is trying to give believing slaves an **eschatological perspective** on their present condition. Although they may face arduous days of difficult work and be asked to do thankless tasks that no one would ever want to do, the Lord notices all that they do, and they can be assured of future reward.

Frank Thielman: Throughout the section the emphasis lies on the leveling effect that Christ's lordship has on human relationships, and the reciprocity that should result from this among members of the household. Paul achieves this emphasis rhetorically by comparing the lordship of Christ with the lordship of the slave master (**6:5, 6, 9b**). He achieves it theologically by appealing to the principle of God's impartiality on the final day of judgment (**6:9c**). . .

Paul uses five phrases to describe the slave's obedience, and each phrase emphasizes the sincerity with which slaves should obey.

1. First, they should obey "*with fear and trembling*." . . . The phrase seems to refer to the recognition of the **subordinate and weak position** that one occupies with respect to others.

2. Second, slaves should obey in "*integrity of heart*" = **inner sincerity**. . . The obedience of the slave should have this straightforward character: there should be no division between the quality of the labor produced and the attitude of the one who produces it.
3. Third, slaves should obey "*as to Christ*.". . . Work that believing slaves have no choice but to do now becomes a way for them to "*walk worthily*" of their calling as believers (**4:1**).
4. Fourth, slaves are to obey not merely when the slave master's eye is on them, as if they were merely to please people, but from their inner being as people who are slaves of Christ and committed to the will of God. – "*eye-service*"
5. Fifth, Paul says that salves should do their assigned work "*with goodwill*". . . Slaves should obey their owners, then, with a **positive attitude**.

In sum, slaves should obey their masters with sincerity and integrity, recognizing the subordinate position they occupy. They should avoid a division between the obedience they render and their willingness to render it. Their obedience to their masters should instead arise from their inner commitment to the Lord.

Clinton Arnold: Among the other attitudes and work practices that should characterize Christians in their jobs today, especially in relationship to their managers, are a number of principles (note: these can easily be transferred to prison life or military life).

1. Treat your managers or supervisors with **deep respect** (see **6:5b**). Because of their position of responsibility over you, managers or supervisors should be accorded respect (even if you think they do not deserve it). As soldiers have sometimes said, you may need to "salute the rank and not the person."

2. Do your work with a **pure heart and a good attitude**. There are many possible base or duplicitous motives that do not please God. It is important for workers to check their hearts and periodically engage in self-evaluation.

3. **Don't perform just to make a good impression**. When the boss is gone, how is your job performance? The Lord is aware of all that we do. If in our hearts we are serving him in our jobs, we will always give 100 percent.

4. **Give God's will top priority** in your life and work. Because we are ultimately serving Christ and will answer to him at the end of the age, God's will should always trump any wrong attitude or behavior we might be tempted by in our work, or if we are asked to do something that is clearly wrong or unethical. In the first century, "*doing the will of God*" would have prevented Christian slaves from obeying commands from their masters that were contrary to God's will (such as worshiping an idol or a female domestic having sex with her master).

5. Remember that the Lord expects us to do good works, notices when we do them, and **will reward** all that we have done. There are many good things an employee may do that are never properly recognized by his or her supervisor.

Remember that they are recognized by the one Supervisor for whom it really makes a difference.

B. (:9) Masters -- Relationship of Consideration / No Harshness / Fairness

"*And, masters, do the same things to them, and give up threatening, knowing that both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him*."

Frank Thielman: Paul's advice to believing slave masters subtly undermines the whole system of slaveholding. Slave-owning believers are, in a sense, to submit to their slaves (**5:21**), serving their slaves in the same way they desire their slaves to serve them. The threat of violence is impossible in such an arrangement, and without the threat of violence, the whole system will theoretically collapse.

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) How far back in American History do you have to go to find the principle of a husband's *headship* in the home and the wife's role of the *submissive* supporter as the accepted norm? When did marriage vows start to be changed to reflect a different perspective in these areas? What were some of the factors that influenced these changes and what have been some of the effects of these changes?

2) How much importance does the Lord lay on the institution and symbolism of the *marriage relationship* since He intends for it to be a picture of the union between Himself and His Church? What are some evidences that our society is taking a much too casual approach towards the institution of marriage -- an approach that is destructive to the very fabric of our society?

3) Do a study of the concept of "*Honor*" in the Old and New Testaments. What are some of the main principles that can be applied to how children should relate to their parents?

4) How is your everyday work transformed by the simple perspective of performing it *unto the Lord* rather than merely to men? How will those around us perceive this work ethic and in what different ways might they respond?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Kenneth Wuest: Re "*Submitting*" -- The simple verb *tasso* was used in classical Greek in a military meaning, 'to draw up in order of battle, to form, array, marshall" both troops or ships. It speaks of soldiers marshalled in military order under a commanding officer. Thus, it speaks of the subjection of one individual under or to another. The

prefixed preposition *hupo* means 'under.' *Hupotasso* in classical Greek meant, 'to subject, make subject.' In N.T. Greek, it means, 'to arrange under, to subordinate, put in subjection,' in the middle voice as it is here, 'to subject one's self to, to obey.'

Lenski: Honor is the form love assumes toward those who are placed above us by God. God rightly put the word *'honor'* into this commandment and not merely '*love*,' for it is 'love' plus respect, reverence, and corresponding obedience. God places father and mother on the same plane as far as the child is concerned, and Christian ethics is right in extending this commandment so as to include all persons who rightfully assume any part of the parental relation to a child, all the different kinds of parents, teachers, and pastors, even governors and rulers ('fathers' of their people).

Foulkes: Re **vs 31** -- Now at last comes the quotation of **Genesis ii. 24** that has been influencing all the apostle's thought. This statement from the creation story is the most profound and fundamental statement in the whole of Scripture concerning God's plan for marriage…Prior to marriage a man or a woman has his or her closest bond with parents, and to them owes the greatest obligation. The new bond and obligation that marriage involves transcends the old. Filial duty does not cease, but the most intimate relationship now, and the highest loyalty, is that between husband and wife, and parents only imperil that relationship by trying in any way to come between. There must be a leaving of parents on the part of husband and wife, and a corresponding renouncing of rights on the part of parents.

William Hendriksen: Re: "*do not provoke your children to anger*" -- Some ways in which parents may become guilty of this error in bringing up their children:

1. By over-protection …
2. By favoritism …
3. By discouragement …
4. By failure to make allowance for the fact that the child is growing up, has a right to have ideas of his own, and need not be an exact copy of his father to be a success.
5. By neglect …
6. By bitter words and outright physical cruelty

Homer Kent: In His position as our Master, He is the one to whom we all are responsible and must eventually give account. In the slave, Christ as Master should inspire faithful service and assure of ultimate reward. In masters, Christ should inspire kind treatment of their subordinates because He will someday judge the masters. And this judgment will be absolutely impartial. Christ will not be swayed by the external factors that often affect justice on earth. 'The gold ring of the master does not attract His eye, and it is not averted from the iron fetter of the slave.' Christ is no more impressed with Christian masters than with Christian slaves. Righteous conduct will be the significant factor, not social standing. These principles apply just as much to Christian employers today as to slaveowners in the past.

John Stott: Once Christian slaves were clear in their minds that their primary responsibility was to serve the Lord Christ, their service to their earthly masters would become exemplary. First, they would be respectful, obeying them *with fear and trembling* (**verse 5**), which implies not a cringing servility before a human master but rather a reverent acknowledgement of the Lord Jesus whose authority the master represents… Next, they would obey in *singleness of heart* (**5**), with integrity or wholeheartedness, without hypocrisy or ulterior motives. Thirdly, they would be conscientious, not offering eye-service as men-pleasers, working only when the boss is watching in order to curry favour with him, but as servants of Christ, who is in any case watching all the time and is never deceived by shoddy work. Fourthly, their service would become willing and '*cheerful'* (NEB) instead of reluctant or grudging. Because they would consciously be doing the will of God, they would do it from the heart (**verse 6**) and with a good will (**verse 7**). As we might say, their heart and soul would be in it. And all this because they know that their Lord is also their judge, and that no good work, whoever does it (slave or free), is ever left unrewarded by him (**verse 8**).

David Holwick: Three qualities of transformed relationships in **Ephesians 6:5-9**.

A. Equality.

1) All are equal before God. **6:9**

2) God has no favorites. **6:9**

a) Your social situation means nothing to him. **1 Sam 16:7**

3) Slaves and owners both must know they will answer to God. **6:8**

a) James: God will be harsh on the rich. **James 2:1-7, 5:1-5**

B. Justice.

1) Justice is implicit in Ephesians, explicit in Colossians.

a) **Eph 6:9**, "*treat your slaves in the same way*."

b) **Col 4:1**, "*provide your slaves with what is right and fair*."

2) The gospel gives everyone rights, including slaves.

a) Revolutionary idea for Roman society.

b) Significant thrust in our own day, in E. Europe, Russia.

3) All relationships are reciprocal. **6:9**

a) Workers have duty to do good job / right to decent wage.

b) Bosses have duty to treat and pay fairly / right to expect job done right.

c) Problem:

1> Each side concentrates on securing its own rights, and on making the other side do its duty.

2> Paul says concentrate on your responsibilities, not your rights.

C. Brotherhood.

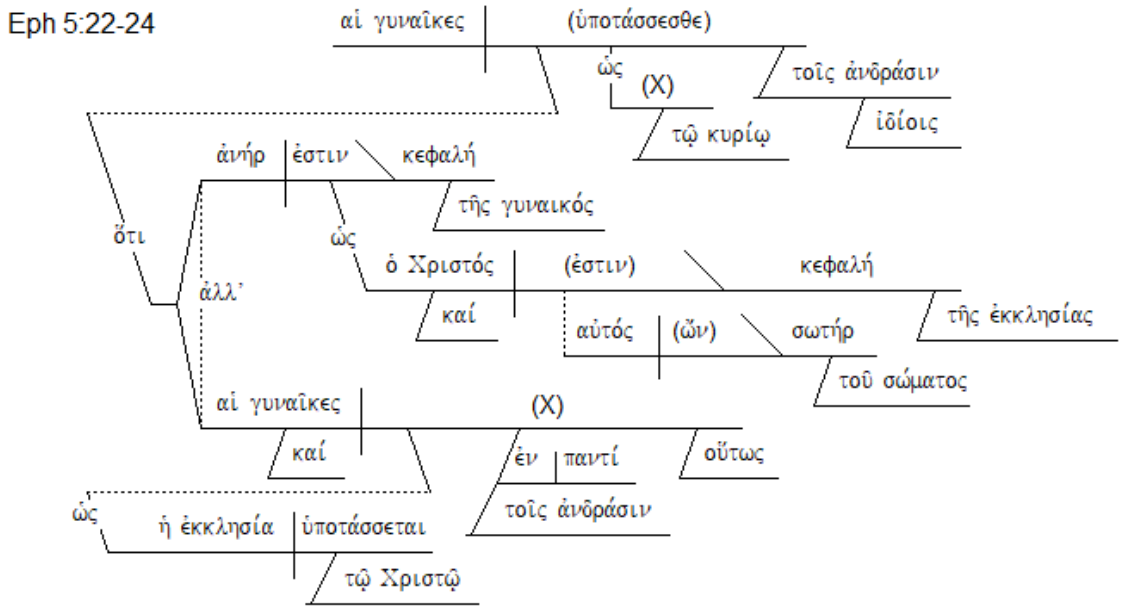
1) The runaway slave Onesimus was to be welcomed as a brother. **Philemon 1:16**

a) Incredible thought in that day and age.

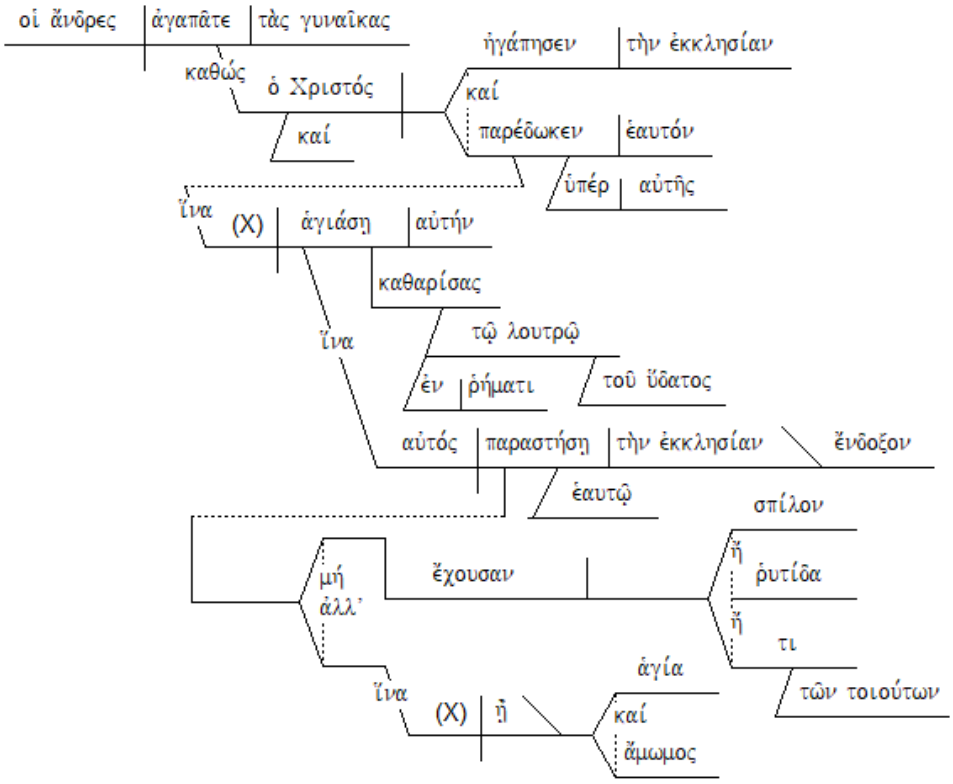
b) Even Seneca called them "*comrades*" instead of brothers.

2) Paul's message: "Slavery must be abolished from within."
   a) **Philemon 1:8** - instead of "ordering," Paul appeals on the basis of Christian love.
3) Paul includes slaves in God's family, the theme of Ephesians.
   a) Churches shouldn't look down on anyone.
   b) All have sinned, all can be saved by blood of Christ.
   c) There is no slave or free, worker or boss, in eyes of Jesus. **Gal 3:28**

Leedy Greek Diagram:



Eph 5:25-27



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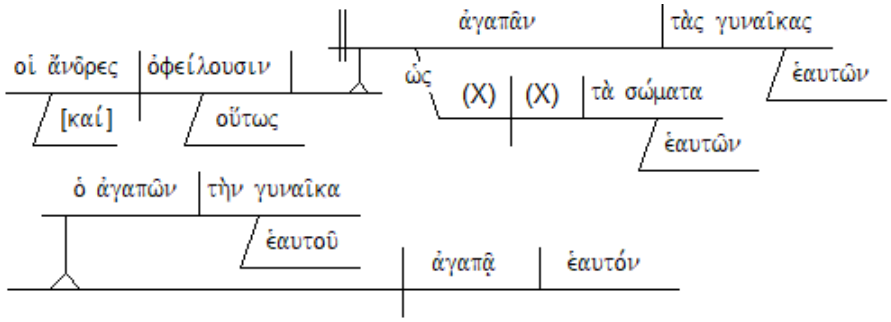

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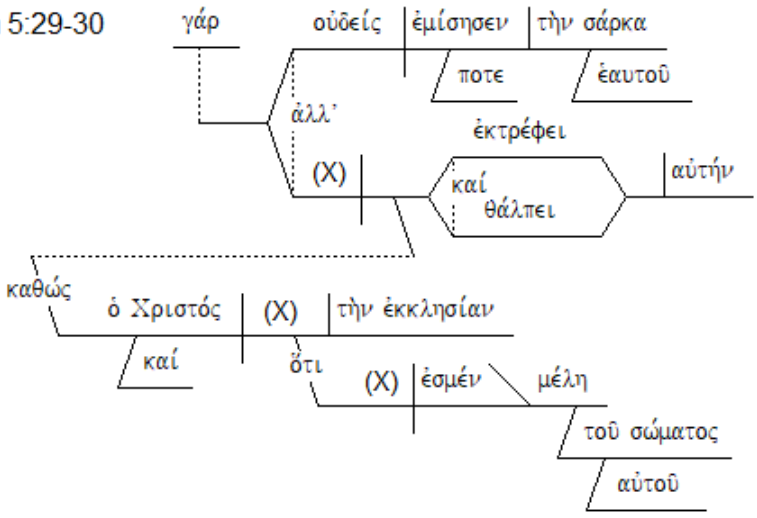

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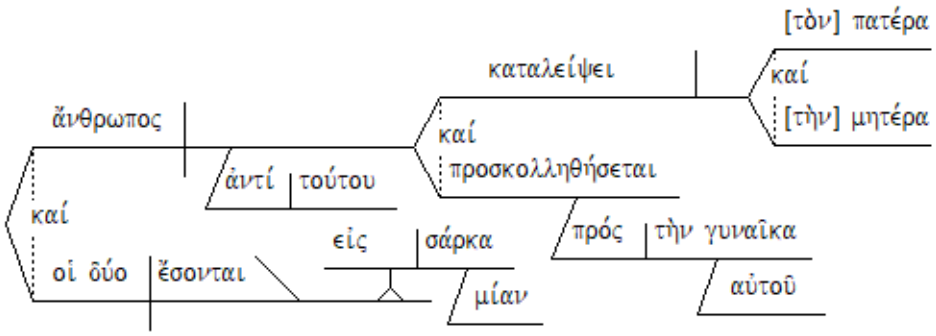

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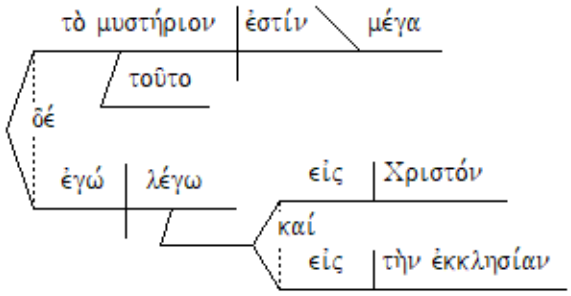

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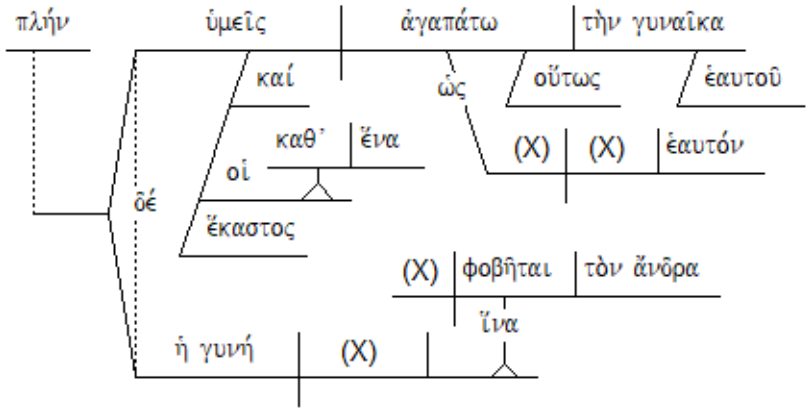

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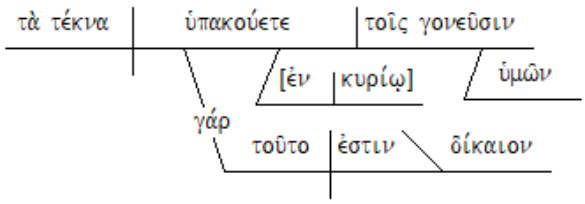

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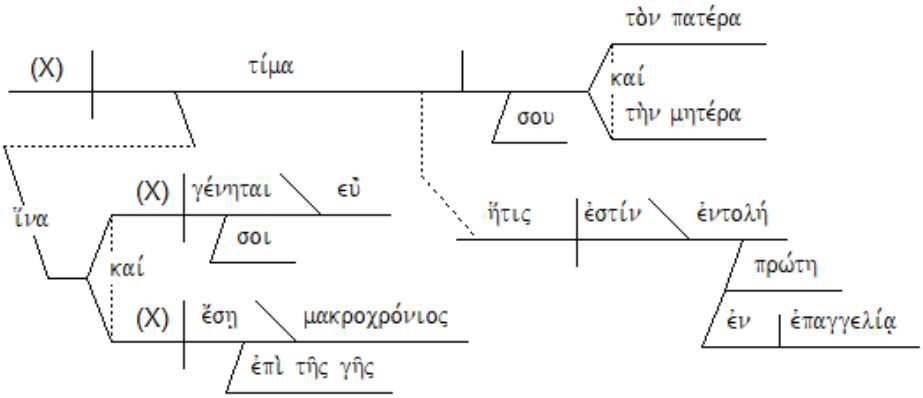

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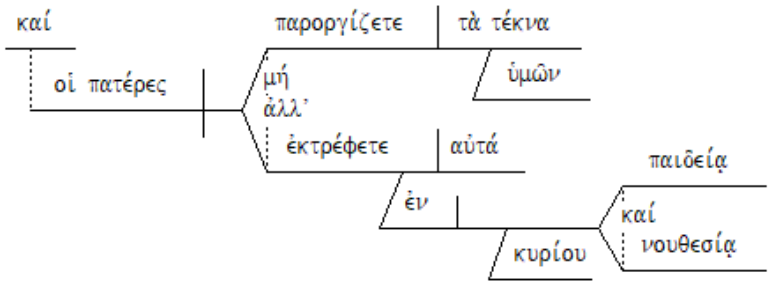

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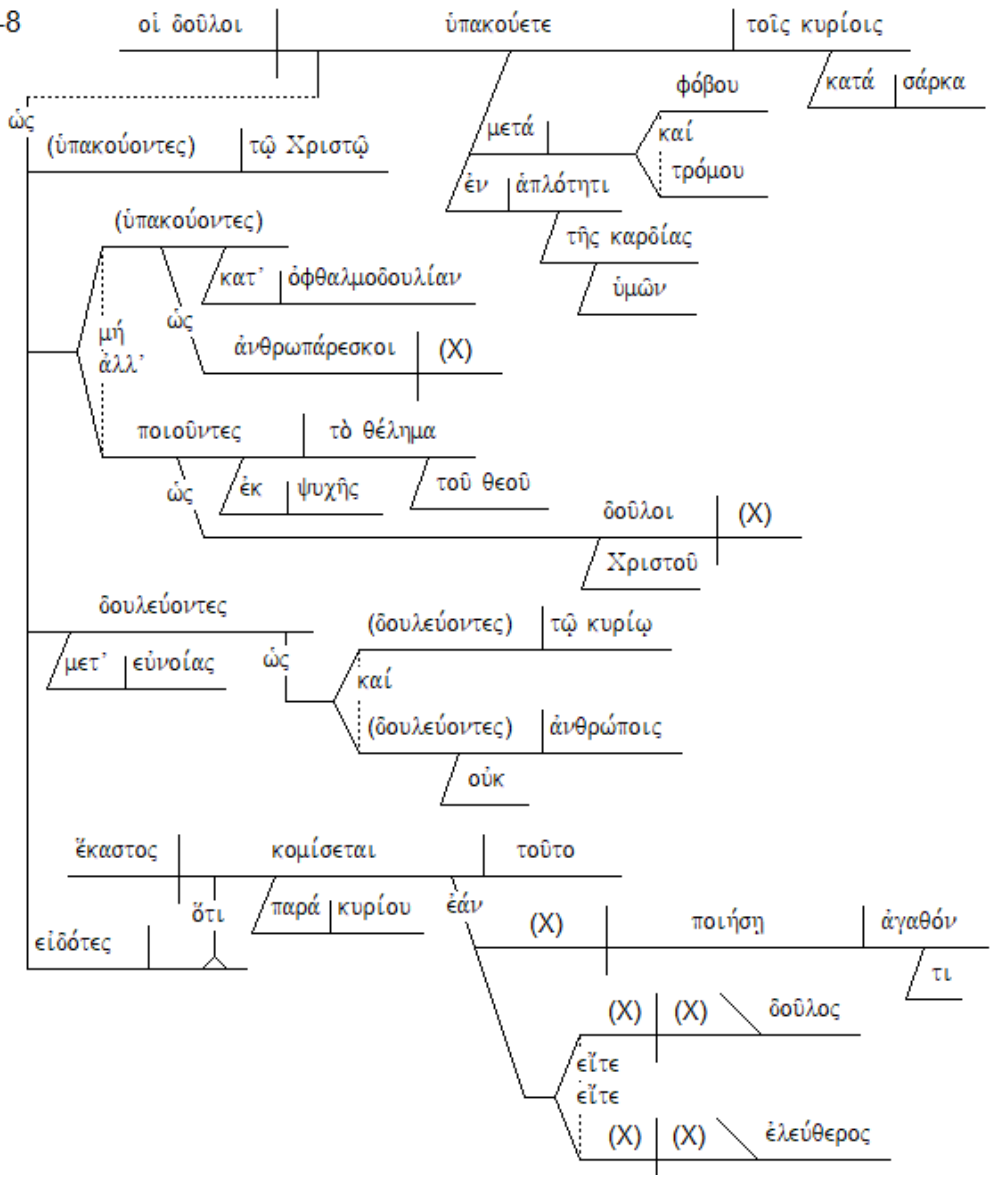

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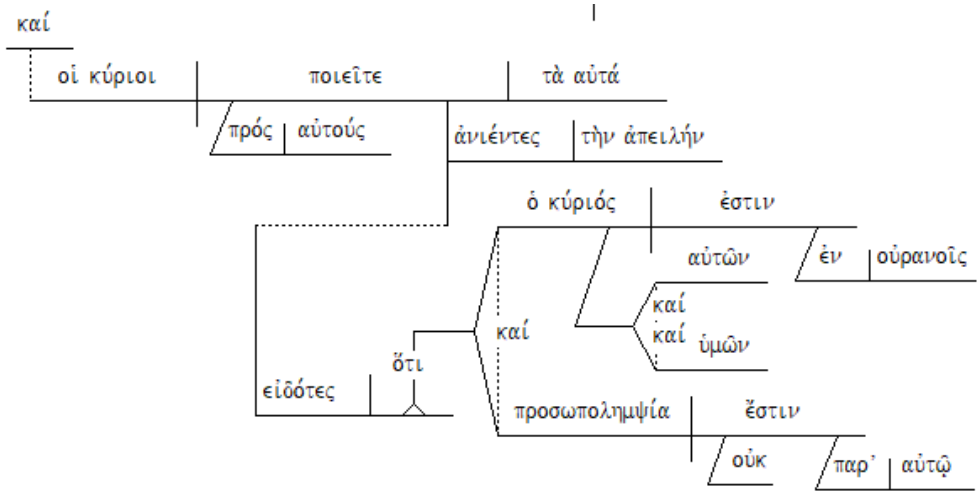

TEXT: EPHESIANS 6:10-17

TITLE: WALK STRONG IN THE ARMOR OF GOD -- THE CHRISTIAN WARFARE

BIG IDEA:
WALK STRONG – DEFEND AGAINST THE ENEMY WITH THE FULL ARMOR OF GOD

INTRODUCTION:

Stephen Fowl: As a way of completing his epistle, Paul in this final substantive section shifts from admonitions about **walking in a manner worthy of the gospel** to a discussion of the strength, power, and defenses needed to stand and resist the spiritual forces arrayed against the church. . .

The dominant image in **6:10–20** is **standing firm against an array of diabolical enemies**. Defense and resistance are the primary images here. Since a Christ-focused, Spirit-inspired wisdom is essential to walking in a manner worthy of the Ephesians' calling in **4:1 – 6:9**, then **6:10–20** requires courage and steadfastness. Without question, Paul is quite willing to offer judgments about the corruption and decadence of the cultures in which the Ephesians find themselves. He can even speak of them as if they are under the influence of corrupting spiritual powers. In **6:10–20**, however, Paul is quite adamant that believers in Ephesus are engaged in a battle against spiritual foes. . .

It is very easy to read this discussion of the armor of God and then to assume that this is a set of instructions to individual believers to take up the armor of God. That is not really the way the text reads. Rather, the command to take up the armor of God is a summons to the community as a whole. Taking up the armor of God is a communal practice integrally tied to the unity of the church and the church's witness to the powers. In this respect, **6:10–20** continues the emphasis on the common life of the church that began in **4:1**.

Clinton Arnold: The aim of walking worthily of God is actually a profound struggle that goes beyond simply putting forth more effort or overcoming human obstacles. There are extremely powerful spiritual beings that strategize and carry out plans to derail the best intentions of Christians to live out God's call in their lives. This theme of powerful supernatural opposition to the people of God can be traced throughout the letter. These are the powers who held humanity in bondage before the redemptive work of Christ (**2:2**) and now threaten to find an inroad and set up a base of operations in the lives of people who have come to know Christ (**4:27**). . .

Living a life pleasing to the Lord and engaging in the mission of the church is not easy because there are powerful supernatural beings that strategize and attack. Because of this, God makes available his power and divine resources to believers so they can resist

the assaults of these hostile spirits and advance God's kingdom into the world. Believers are called to appropriate these gifts, cultivate their corresponding virtues, and above all, pray in the Spirit as an expression of their dependence on the Lord to receive God's enabling power.

Frank Thielman: Here Paul subtly sums up what the readers of the letter must do in order to fulfill their role in God's plan to unite all things in Christ. They must stand against the devil and his forces on the ground that God has won for them in Christ. To do this they must live in the truth of the gospel, the righteousness that it inculcates, the preparation to battle evil that it brings, and the faith with which they first have believed it. They must constantly receive both salvation and the Spirit's application of the gospel to their lives. In addition, they must constantly and devotedly pray for themselves, for other Christians, and especially for Paul in his difficult circumstances.

Grant Osborne: This passage concludes the section of the letter on right Christian living (**4:1 – 6:20**). At the same time it concludes the entire letter, for both the doctrinal and the practical wrap up in this section on spiritual warfare and the need to learn how to use every weapon in God's repertoire. The emphasis on the battle against the cosmic powers is found throughout the letter (**1:21; 2:2; 3:10; 4:27**, compare **4:13**). Satan in frustrated rage (**Rev 12:12**) has gone to war against God's people and wants to destroy them spiritually. He and his fallen angels use temptation and evil thoughts to sidetrack the saints in an effort to gain more and more control over their lives. The sources of these temptations are found in the vice lists of this book (**4:17-19, 25-30, 31; 5:3-7, 11-12**), and through them the evil powers keep believers bogged down with the world and spiritually defeated.

Believers need spiritual strength, which comes to them both vertically from the Lord and horizontally from fellow members of the body of Christ. The overcoming of the dividing wall (**2:14**) and the unity of the people of God in Christ's new creation (**v. 15**) cannot take place until the demonic forces are defeated, and that can happen only "*in the Lord.*" The devil's strategies cannot be overcome without divine help. The pieces of the believer's armor come from God's own armor in **Isaiah 59:17**. God's people must employ every facet of the strength God gives in defeating their great enemy – Satan and his minions.

Andrew Lincoln: The pericope of **6:10–20** falls into <u>three subsections</u>:

(i) **vv 10–13** which stress the necessity of putting on God's full armor in order to be strong and to stand in the battle against the spiritual powers;
(ii) **vv 14–17** which detail the pieces of the armor that must be put on;
(iii) **vv 18–20** which emphasize in addition the need for constant prayer and watchfulness, the prayer including intercession for all believers but especially for the imprisoned apostle's bold proclamation of the mystery.

Klyne Snodgrass: **Structure:**
<u>Three imperatives</u>—"*be strong*," "*put on the full armor of God*," and "*stand*" (**vv. 10–11, 14**)—dominate the text; the rest is explanatory. Verse 10 functions as a heading

for the whole passage. **Verse 11** explains that we are strong in the Lord when we put on the armor he provides. **Verse 12** shows why strength is needed, and the command to put on God's armor is then repeated (**v. 13**) and explained (**vv. 14–20**).

I. (:10-13) SPIRITUAL WARFARE REQUIRES GOD'S STRENGTH AND GOD'S ARMOR

A. (:10) Be Strong in God's Strength

"*Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might.*"

Harold Hoehner: He begins this section with the articular adjective τὸ λοιπόν/τοῦ λοιποῦ, "*finally*," to indicate that these are his **final thoughts** before he ends the epistle.

Stephen Fowl: Paul begins by urging the Ephesians to be **strengthened in the Lord**. The use of the passive voice here reminds the Ephesians that although this strength is necessary in order to withstand the forces of evil, it is not something the Ephesians can really do for themselves. One way of understanding this notion of being strengthened in the Lord is in the light of **John 15**. There Jesus teaches his followers that **abiding in him**, "*the vine*," is the only way to maintain the possibility of bearing fruit in an otherwise hostile environment. **Abiding in the Lord is the way in which believers may come to be strengthened by the Lord**. The issue here does not seem to be one of preferring weakness to strength or even of misperceiving the true nature of strength and weakness, as in **1 Corinthians**. Rather, the issue seems to focus on where one finds strength. The struggle is to seek strength in God rather than in other apparent sources of power and security (see **Isa 40:12–31**). On the one hand, this would seem to be a fairly straightforward task. On the other hand, the story of the people of God in the OT is one of constantly seeking power and protection from things, people, and nations that are not God.

Bryan Chapell: Paul's specific wording indicates that God does not want us merely to supplement our strength with his, but so to invigorate the new life that he has regenerated in us that he is our strength.

B. (:11a) Be Protected in God's Armor

"*Put on the full armor of God*"

Clinton Arnold: Knowing the truth of who we are in union with Christ, cultivating the virtues of this new identity, and using the resources available through this new relationship are at the heart of what it means to put on the armor of God.

Harold Hoehner: It is quite possible that Paul's vivid description of the armor may stem from the fact that, while writing this letter, he was in prison being guarded by Roman soldiers (cf. **Acts 28:16, 20**).

C. (:11b-12) **Understand the Enemy** / Don't Underestimate the Enemy

1. <u>The Enemy is Deceitfully Tricky</u> -- The Crafty Devil

"*that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil*."

Clinton Arnold: The idea in Ephesians is that the devil (ὁ διάβολος; see comment on **4:27**) is an intelligent being that carefully strategizes plans against the church, God's plan of redemption, and individual believers. What Paul does not say in this passage is how these schemes, which he will later refer to as "*flaming arrows*" (**6:16**), are discerned and felt. Given the broader context of Paul's thought, it would seem prudent to see an expansive variety of ways that the devil hatches his attacks. This could come through people who teach things contrary to the "*one faith*" (**4:5**), through temptation, difficult physical trials, or overt manifestations, or through any of a limitless array of intelligently designed plots.

Grant Osborne: The key to victory in ancient warfare was to **remain standing** through all of the battle situations one faced. Those who fell would die, for they would be helpless against the swords being brandished against them from every direction.

2. The Enemy is Extremely Powerful -- much stronger than flesh and blood

"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness"

Clinton Arnold: This expression also highlights the fact that the readers should not consider their fight as one against Roman rule or any of the local civic rulers who might oppose them or cause them harm. Paul is here unmasking the ultimate source of many of the evils they experience—the influences behind the Roman Imperium.

3. The Enemy is Shockingly Wicked

"against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places."

Frank Thielman: In this spiritual dimension, Christ has already won the victory over the rebellious and demonic powers (**1:20–22a**), but the victory has not yet been fully implemented. Demonic powers are still active in the world, influencing the "Course" it takes and working within human beings who continue to rebel against the Creator (**2:2–3**). It is necessary, then, for believers to put on God's full armor, to take their stand on the ground that Christ has won, and to resist the final, ultimately futile attacks of the devil.

D. (:13) Resist and Stand Firm

"*Therefore, take up the full armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm*."

Clinton Arnold: Since believers continue to live in the present evil age and face the powerful, strategic, and varied attacks of hostile spirits at key intervals throughout their lives, they need to depend completely on the power of God. Successful resistance means drawing on the resources God provides.

II. (:14-17) PUT ON THE WHOLE ARMOR OF GOD AND STAND FIRM

6 Different Pieces of the Armor of God:

A. (:14a) The Belt = Truth

"*Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth*"

David Holwick: "*Gird the loins*"

1) Means hike up outer shirt.
   a) Loose-fitting, all the way to ankles.
   b) Run or fight in it, trip up.
   c) Girding it into belt prepared soldier for action.
2) Bible characters said to *gird up loins*.
   a) Israelites did so as they escaped Egypt. **Exodus 12:11**
   b) Elijah when he outran King Ahab's chariot. **1 Kings 18:46**
   c) Christians should gird up mind. **1 Peter 1:13**

Clinton Arnold: The "*truth*" (ἀλήθεια) that Paul speaks of here can be interpreted in two ways: in the objective sense of the truth of the gospel or the elements of "*the faith*" (**4:5**), that is, the doctrinal truth of the common confession of the early church; or in the **subjective** sense of practicing honesty and living with moral integrity. Paul has used "*truth*" in both ways earlier in the letter, and most likely both senses of the term are intended here.

B. (:14b) The Breastplate = Righteousness

"*and having put on the breastplate of righteousness*"

Wood: The '*breastplate*' (*thorax*) covered the body from the neck to the thighs. Polybius tells us that it was known as a heart-protector. Usually it was made of bronze but the more affluent officers wore a coat of chain mail. The front piece was strictly the breastplate, but a back piece was commonly worn as well. In **Isaiah 59:17** we are told that Yahweh himself put on righteousness like a breastplate. In this context *dikaiosyne* ('*righteousness*') stands for uprightness and integrity of character. But this moral rectitude and reputation for fair dealing results directly from the appropriation of Christ's righteousness…

Clinton Arnold: Righteousness is the breastplate for believers (the genitive τῆς δικαιοσύνης should be taken as a **genitive of apposition**, "*the breastplate, which is righteousness*"). Putting on righteousness means, in part, that we gain a full knowledge and appreciation of this new identity in Christ, especially as it pertains to Christ as our righteousness (see **1 Cor 1:30; Phil 3:9**). One of the strategies of the accuser or slanderer (the meaning of διάβολος, often translated "*devil*") is to call into question our status before God as righteous. Paul sought to counteract this through his continual reassurance that all who are in Christ are "*saints*" (see, e.g., **Eph 1:1, 4, 15, 18**).

R. C. Sproul: The breastplate in a Roman soldier's armor was the heavy section that fitted over his torso. Its chief purpose was to **protect the vital organs** of the body from being pierced by an arrow or a sword or other weapons. Paul says that Christians need

to protect their vital areas with righteousness. Remember the classic story of the great hero, Achilles, who seemed to be invincible. The legend is that his mother, when he was a baby, dipped him into some kind of magical potion that coated his entire body with an invincible shield. But when she dipped him into this substance, she held him by the tip of his heel, so that one portion of his body was not covered with the magic solution. It was there that, in the course of a great battle in the Trojan War, Achilles was struck in the heel by an arrow and was slain. He had one uncovered point on his body where he was vulnerable. When believers are living in unconfessed sin, they are vulnerable to the assaults of Satan.

C. (:15) The Boots = Peace

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

Homer Kent: The feet are what carry the soldier to the battle. Feet properly shod enable the soldier to march long distances and to fight without slipping or stumbling on rough terrain. Spiritually, the Christian is to be shod with the *'preparation of the gospel of peace*.' He achieves a confident readiness for the conflict through the peace of God provided in the gospel. A recognition that the good news of salvation has provided peace with God and thus all that we need for spiritual victory furnishes us with calmness for the conflict.

William Hendriksen: "Am I prepared to fight?: is the next question. In other words, Have I shod my feet with "*readiness derived from the gospel of peace*"? The meaning of this expression has been much debated. Nevertheless, the following facts must be admitted:

1. In order to promote facility of motion over all kinds of roads Roman soldiers were in the habit of putting on 'shoes thickly studded with sharp nails' (Josephus, *Jewish Wars* VI. i. 8). Thus, one important reason for Julius Caesar's success as a general was the fact that his men wore military shoes that made it possible for them to cover long distances in such short periods that again and again the enemies were caught off guard, having deceived themselves into thinking that they still had plenty of time to prepare an adequate defense… Accordingly, proper footwear spells readiness.

2. A person who experiences within his own heart the peace of God that passes all understanding , the very peace which the gospel proclaims, has been delivered of a great burden. The conviction of being reconciled with God through the blood of Christ gives him the courage and the zeal to fight the good fight. If the gospel, accepted by faith, had not given him this peace, how could he be prepared to engage in this battle?

3. The fact that this readiness is actually derived from the gospel whose message or content is peace is clear from such passages as **2:15, 17**; cf. **Rom. 5:1**.

R. C. Sproul: In the ancient world it was customary, in some places, that if the messenger brought bad news, he was punished with death. If it was bad news, then, he would be burdened by the news that he was carrying, and fearful of what treatment he might expect. As each city posted lookouts to watch the approaching runners, it became almost a science whereby the lookout could determine whether the messenger was bringing good news or bad news, just by his feet. If the messenger was bringing good news of victory, his feet would be flying and he would be kicking up a lot of dust. There would be an exuberance and an enthusiasm in his gait, as he approached the walls of the city. Hence the phrase, '*How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!*'

Paul is saying that there is nothing more beautiful to see than a messenger who is bringing good news, and that is what the word 'gospel' means. It is the good news of the peace that we have with God, having been reconciled to the Father by the work of Jesus. The gospel becomes that which protects our feet, covers our feet and makes us mobile in the battle against cosmic evil.

Frank Thielman: The expression probably means, then, that the gospel, whose content is peace, is the source of the metaphorical soldier's "*readiness*" (ἑτοιμασία). At the center of the gospel stands the death of Christ on the cross, the peace that this death brings between rebellious humanity and its Creator, and the peace that it brings to the various competing factions within humanity itself (**2:11–22**). The message of this multifaceted reconciliation is the subject of the church's proclamation to "*the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places*" (**3:10**). Fully embracing the gospel of peace in faith (cf. **1:13**), then, is necessary preparation for doing battle with the forces of evil, which stand against the believer and against God's plan to unite all things in heaven and on earth in Christ (cf. **1:10**).

D. (:16) The Shield = Faith

"*in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming missiles of the evil one*"

David Holwick: This shield is not a little round one, but the large one which measured four feet by two feet, big enough to protect the whole body.

Polybius: The Roman panoply consists firstly of a shield (scutum), the convex surface of which measures two and a half feet in width and four feet in length, the thickness at the rim being a palm's breadth. It is made of two planks glued together, the outer surface being then covered first with canvas and then with calf-skin. Its upper and lower rims are strengthened by an iron edging which protects it from descending blows and from injury when rested on the ground. It also has an iron boss (umbo) fixed to it which turns aside the most formidable blows of stones, pikes, and heavy missiles in general. (Hist. 6.23.2–5)

Grant Osborne: It is our dynamic faith that enables us to clothe ourselves with and effectively use God's full armor as we struggle in an evil world to remain faithful to

him. Faith turns our hearts and minds from relying on self to full surrender and continuous reliance on him.

Harold Hoehner: The genitive is most likely a **genitive of apposition**, that is, the shield consists of faith. Although some would consider this objective faith, it is more likely the subjective faith of believers. This is more consistent with the defensive parts of the armor previously mentioned. The possession of the shield of resolute faith helps believers stand firmly and resist the devil (cf. **1 Pet 5:8–9**) and his schemes.

E. (:17a) The Helmet = Salvation

"*And take the helmet of salvation*"

R. C. Sproul: The helmet protected the head, where it was so easy to deliver a fatal blow. Although Satan cannot kill the soul, he can wound the mind. Those who are in a state of salvation have their minds covered by the salvation (past, present and future) that has been wrought for them in Christ.

Frank Thielman: He urges his readers, then, to receive salvation not because they do not already have it, but because, although they have it, they need to appropriate it constantly in faith.

Grant Osborne: The emphasis on salvation is not so much about final salvation as it is about the present experience of salvation, helping the readers to understand the divine power and deliverance they have already received in Christ.

Harold Hoehner: With his head protected, the soldier feels safe in the midst of battle. Likewise, believers' posssession of salvation gives them confidence of safeness during the assaults of the devil.

F. (:17b) The Sword = The Word of God (the only Offensive Weapon)

"*and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God*"

Klyne Snodgrass: The gospel empowered by the Spirit is the means by which the well-armed Christian is protected and empowered for life. That includes sharing the good news, but is much more comprehensive. . .

Whether **prayer** is a seventh piece of equipment is debated. Grammar suggests it is not, or else being alert, which is a parallel to praying, would have to be considered a piece of the equipment as well. But the question is irrelevant, for whether it is a piece of the equipment or the **demeanor** with which the equipment is worn, neither prayer nor being alert is optional for believers. **By definition, to be Christ's soldier is to pray and keep alert.**

Harold Hoehner: This is not preaching the gospel but speaking God's word against his foes. It should be noted that God's word is not to be recited as a magical formula. On the contrary, it is speaking the words of God in Christ's name empowered by God's

Spirit. The spoken word of God is the "*instrument*" of the Spirit. Again, it must be remembered that although this is the only offensive weapon listed among the pieces of the armor, in the present context it is not used to make advances but rather to enable the believer to **stand firmly** in the midst of satanic warfare. The devil and his forces must not be allowed to gain new territory in Christ's kingdom or to rob believers of their spiritual blessings in Christ. With this piece, the description of the armor comes to an end.

The **entire armor** is absolutely necessary in the spiritual warfare against the devil and his angels. As in other parts of this book, the exhortation is directed to both the individual and the corporate body. This is in keeping with the dominant theme of the book, unity of believing Jews and Gentiles in one body. Thus the church, the body of believers, is in this warfare together. As the Roman soldier did not fight alone, so must believers as a body, united under their commander-in-chief, stand against spiritual wickedness in heavenly places.

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) What are some other OT examples of individuals strengthening themselves in the Lord? How did David do it? Moses? Joshua? Daniel??

2) Why are we so often oblivious to the unseen spiritual warfare that wages around us and to the evil spiritual forces of darkness? Why do we get so preoccupied with our own internal spiritual struggles that we lose sight of the bigger battle that is being waged?

3) What were some of the weapons used by Pilgrim in John Bunyan's classic work *Pilgrim's Progress*? How do we use the helmet of salvation and the shield of faith in our everyday life?

4) Do we find ourselves debating with others about the validity and effectiveness of the Word of God rather than just using the Sword of the Spirit and allowing it to accomplish God's intended purposes?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

John MacArthur: Jesus' ministry began in a great battle with Satan that lasted forty days (**Luke 4:2**). As Jesus' ministry ended, Satan besieged Him again in the Garden of Gethsemane with such force that He sweat great drops of blood (**22:44**). Among many other instructive truths, those two accounts teach us that the battle may not become easier as we grow in obedience to God. If anything, Satan will intensify his efforts

against those who continue to effectively serve the Lord. As believers grow stronger, so will Satan's attacks…

Satan opposes the believer in many ways, some of them direct and obvious and others of them indirect and subtle.
1) First of all, he attempts to impugn God's character and credibility, just as he did with Adam and Eve. Because man's greatest strength is to trust God, Satan's objective is to make him distrust God…
2) Second, Satan tries to undermine present victory by generating trouble that makes life difficult, thereby tempting us to forsake obedience to God's standards and calling. His most extreme tactic is persecution…
3) Third, Satan attacks believers through doctrinal confusion and falsehood. Christians who are untaught in God's Word fall easy prey to wrong ideas about the things of God ..
4) Fourth, Satan attacks God's people by hindering their service to Him. He opposes every faithful life and every effective ministry…
5) Fifth, Satan attacks believers by causing divisions. That is why Jesus prayed so earnestly and repeatedly for the unity of His followers (**John 17:11, 21-23**) and commands them to be quickly and willingly reconciled to each other (**Matt. 5:24**)…
6) Sixth, Satan attacks believers by persuading them to trust their own resources. To attempt to do the Lord's work in our own power is not to do His work at all…
7) Seventh, Satan attacks believers by leading them into hypocrisy…
8) Eighth, Satan attacks believers by leading them into worldliness, by enticing them to let the world squeeze them *'into its own mold'*…
9) Ninth, in a way that encompasses all the others, Satan attacks believers by leading them to disobey God's Word.

Warren Wiersbe: In one sense the *'whole armor of God'* is a picture of Jesus Christ. Christ is the Truth (**John 14:6**), and He is our righteousness **(2 Cor. 5:21**) and our peace (**Eph. 2:14**). His faithfulness makes possible our faith (**Gal. 2:20**); He is our salvation (**Luke 2:30**); and He is the Word of God (**John 1:1, 14**). This means that when we trusted Christ, we received the armor. Paul told the Romans what to do with the armor (**Rom. 13:11-14**): wake up (**v. 11**), cast off sin, and *'put on the armor of light'* (**v. 12**). We do this by putting *'on the Lord Jesus Christ'* (v. 14). By faith, put on the armor and trust God for the victory.

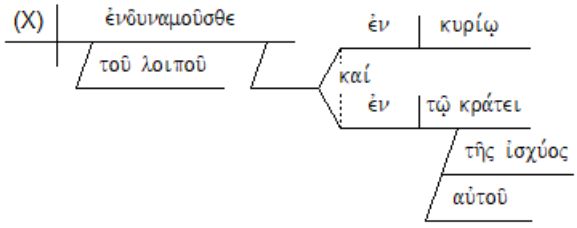
Criswell: In symbolism and in type, in the New Testament and in history, Christianity is always martial. Is that not an astonishing thing? Marital imagery is so often used to describe the faith. The symbolism of the Christian life is filled with war and conflict, but it is not actual steel and iron that the Christian uses in spiritual warfare. It is the steel and iron of the spirit.

Charles Hodge: To enter on this spiritual conflict ignorant or doubting, would be to enter battle blind and lame. As the girdle gives strength and freedom of action, and therefore confidence, so does the truth when spiritually apprehended and believed. Let not any one imagine that he is prepared to withstand the assaults of the powers of

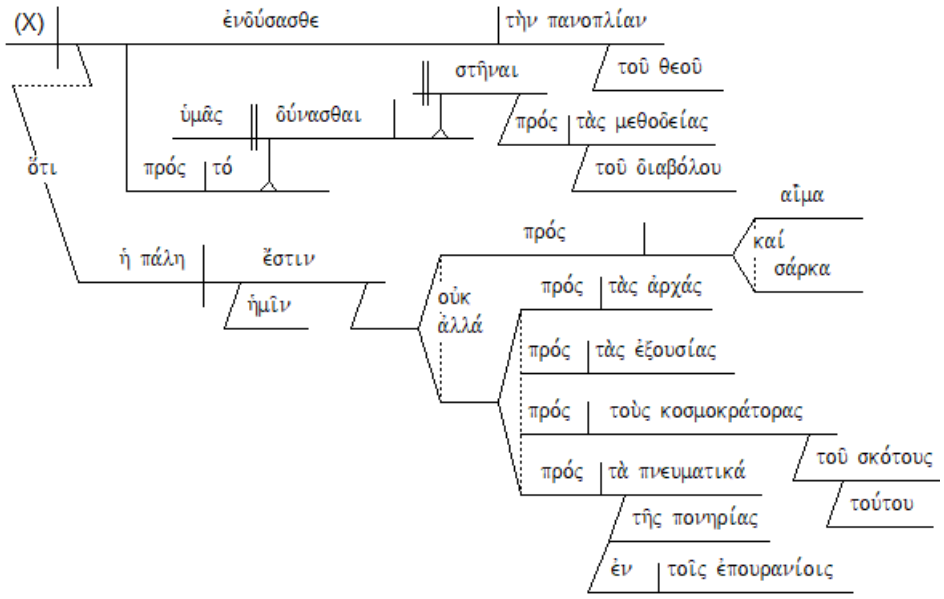
darkness, if his mind is stored with his own theories or with the speculations of other men. Nothing but the truth of God clearly understood and cordially embraced will enable him to keep his feet for a moment, before these celestial potentates. Reason, tradition, speculative conviction, dead orthodoxy, are a girdle of spider-webs. They give way at the first onset. Truth alone, as abiding in the mind in the form of divine knowledge, can give strength or confidence even in the ordinary conflicts of the Christin life, much more in any really "*evil day*."

Leedy Greek Diagram:

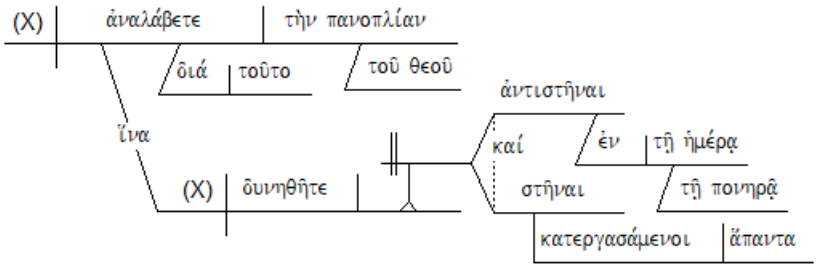
Eph 6:10



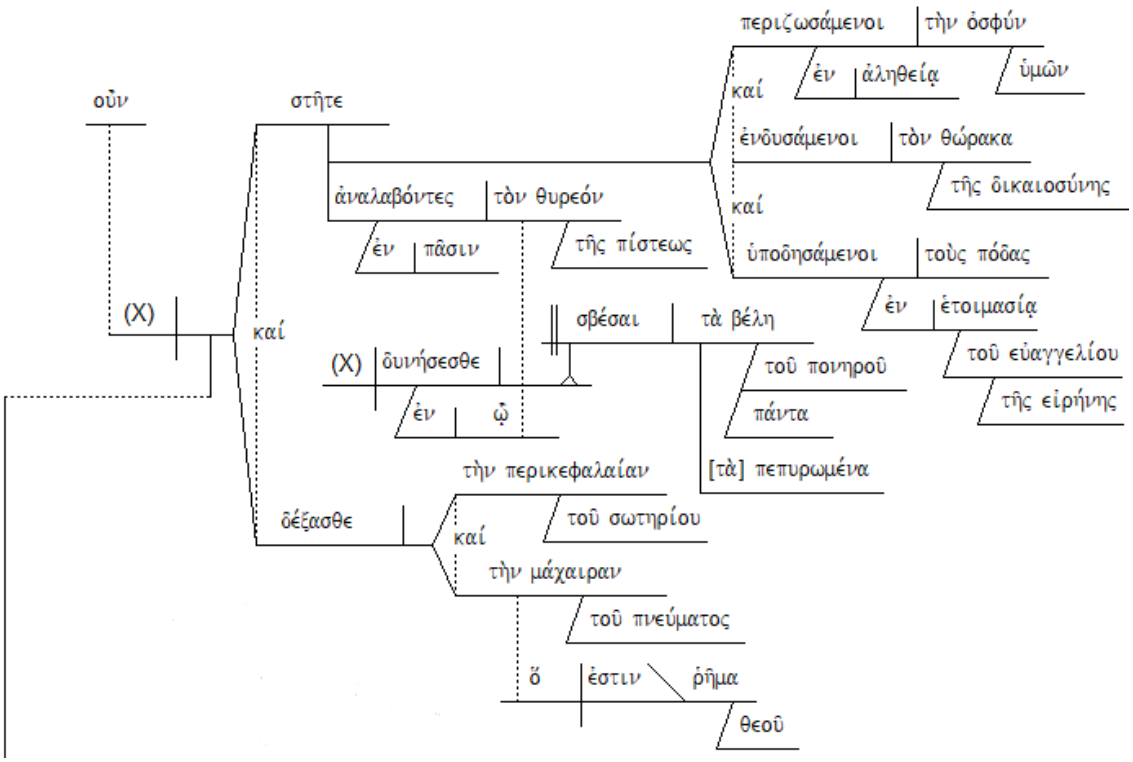
Eph 6:11-12



Eph 6:13



Eph 6:14-17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ὑποδησάμενοι
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TEXT: EPHESIANS 6:18-20

TITLE: PRAYER -- THE FOUNDATION AND ESSENCE OF SPIRITUAL WARFARE

BIG IDEA:
THE PROTECTION OF THE SAINTS AND THE FORWARD PROGRESS OF THE GOSPEL DEPEND ON ALERT INTERCESSORY PRAYER

INTRODUCTION:

Harold Hoehner: It is important to note the **repetition** in this verse. Prayer and petition are mentioned four times. This is not tautology but done for the sake of emphasis. It suggests the thoroughness and intensity in regards to prayer. The adjective πᾶς ("*every*, *all*") is also mentioned four times. As believers take up the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, they should pray at every opportunity, through every prayer and petition, with all persistence and petition for all the saints. In the midst of spiritual warfare Paul emphasizes the vital importance of prayer. Paul certainly modeled this as seen twice in Ephesians (**1:15–23; 3:14–21**).

Kyle Snodgrass: The NIV translation and paragraph division of **6:18–20** loses the sequence of thought. Prayer (**v. 18**) is not just the next command given, and while some translations and editions of the Greek New Testament start a new sentence here, this loses the connection with the preceding ideas. As indicated above, the words translated "*pray*" and "*be alert*" in **verse 18** are **participles**, not imperatives. Some would connect these participles all the way back to "*stand firm*" in **verse 14** and see them as describing how all the armor is acquired. Theologically this makes sense, but grammatically it is unlikely. The most obvious connection is to "*take*" in **verse 17**, which is reinforced by the repetition of "*Spirit*" in **verse 18**. **The intent is to underscore the demeanor of those who take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit**. The well-armed soldier in Christ's army, by definition, is continually praying in the Spirit and alert.

Grant Osborne: Prayer is not a sixth piece of armor but the **enabling force** that governs the effectiveness of the entire set. The armor is bathed in and consecrated by prayer and draws its power from it. The key term is "*all*," which Paul uses four times to stress the all-embracing nature and force of prayer. Prayer is a foundation for all Christian activity, and especially for the holy war against the powers of evil. Prayer becomes a channel through which the presence of God is invited into a situation, and it enhances the almighty power of God that stands behind the individual pieces of armor as they are wielded in spiritual battle.

Andrew Lincoln: Prayer for strengthening from God can be seen as a major way in which believers appropriate the divine armor and are enabled to stand.

Frank Thielman: In order to stand against the strategies of the devil and other evil powers, believers must, in addition to putting on the armor of God, pray with constancy,

devotion, and alertness. This new section is tied grammatically to **6:10–20** by the dependence of the two participles in **6:18** on the imperative δέξασθε (*dexasthe*, *receive*) in **6:17**. Thematically, however, the section begins a new train of thought. The military imagery largely disappears, and Paul now focuses on a straightforward appeal to his readers to **devote themselves to prayer** for all believers, and especially for him.

I. (:18) THE PROTECTION OF THE SAINTS DEPENDS ON INTERCESSORY PRAYER THAT IS ALL ENCOMPASSING

[Note four repetitions of the word "*all*"]

A. All Types of Intercessory Prayer Are Essential

1. General Requests

"*With all prayer*"

2. Specific Requests

"*and petition*"

Harold Hoehner: In the wake of an imminent attack, believers are to take up the last two pieces of armor, the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit. The **manner** in which this is done is to be in a constant state of **prayer and alertness**. This is necessary because the battle is superhuman and needs to be fought with supernatural means and power. . .

In the immediate context, **praying in the Spirit** may well be connected to **the sword of the Spirit**. The sword of the Spirit is, on the one hand, God's spoken word to put his enemies to flight and, on the other hand, the believers' utterance to God in prayer in the power of the Holy Spirit to aid in the struggle against the evil powers. In the larger picture, however, this context relates prayer to the taking of the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, the last piece of defensive armor and the only piece of offensive armor respectively. It is the believers' cry to God on the occasion of assault. Trust in God's wisdom is necessary, for he provides the helmet of salvation and enables them to use their swords effectively in defense against the hosts of the wicked one.

John MacArthur: All the while that we are fighting in the girdle of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shoes of the gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet or salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, we are to be in prayer. Prayer is the very **spiritual air** that the soldier of Christ breathes. It is the **all–pervasive strategy** in which warfare is fought....Ephesians begins by lifting us up to the heavenlies, and ends by pulling us down to our knees.

B. Spirit-Directed Intercessory Prayer Is Essential At All Times / On All Occasions

"*pray at all times in the Spirit*"

Clinton Arnold: To pray "*in the Spirit*" (ἐν πνεύματι) means to seek the Spirit's guidance, direction, and help constantly in prayer. The dative case with the preposition is often interpreted as a dative of sphere ("in the realm of the Spirit"), which leaves us with a rather vague understanding of what the phrase actually means. It is better understood as a **dative of means**, that is, praying "*by the Spirit*." The Spirit stands by the side of believers to prompt them to pray, to direct them whom to pray for and how to pray, as well as to energize them in praying for themselves and others. . . Even when we do not know how we should pray, the Spirit is involved in interceding with God on our behalf (**Rom 8:26–27**).

Andrew Lincoln: The writer is calling for prayer inspired, guided, and made effective through the Spirit. Those who are united in their access to the Father through the Spirit (**2:18**), who are built into God's dwelling place in the Spirit (**2:22**), and who are being filled with the Spirit (**5:18**) can and should pray constantly in and through this Spirit.

R. C. Sproul: All of our warfare and all of our activity must take place in the context of constant, unceasing prayer. Just as a soldier on the battle line has to keep in constant communication with his general headquarters and his commanding officer, so the Christian who is on the battle line must be in constant communication with his Lord. He might be fully equipped with all of the armor, but if he is cut off from personal communication with his own commander, then he will be isolated and vulnerable.

C. All Perseverance and Alertness Are Required

"*and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition*"

Harold Hoehner: Prayer causes alertness and alertness keeps believers in prayer. If they are not alert, they do not see the dangers and thus see no need to pray. With the enemy making his assaults, the believers are to be enveloped with prayer and to this end they are continuing to be alert with all persistence and petition.

Frank Thielman: Paul urges believers to give themselves over to prayer with the kind of enthusiasm and zeal normally associated with the committed practice of a craft or trade (cf. **Col. 4:2; Acts 1:14; 2:42, 46; 6:4**).

Stephen Fowl: Every prayer, offered always in the Spirit, should work to keep the Ephesians alert in all perseverance and prayer for all the saints. The notion of keeping watchful and praying will remind readers of the Gospels of Jesus' admonition to his followers when he presents them with a set of signs for his return. In several textual versions of **Mark 13:33**, Jesus tells his disciples to "*watch and pray*," using the same Greek verbs as in **Eph 6:18**, because they do not know when these things will happen. In **Luke 21:36** Jesus again uses similar vocabulary to advise the disciples to "*watch and pray*" that they may be strengthened. Although different verbs are used, Jesus in Gethsemane also admonishes his disciples to watch and pray that they may be able to resist the "*time of trial*" (**Mark 14:38** par.). Thus, given the nature of the struggle that Paul has outlined in **6:12**, it would be odd if he did not advocate a similar pattern of prayer and watchfulness for the Ephesians.

John MacArthur: Re *agrupneo* -- refers to staying awake or maintaining a watchful sensitivity. This is strategic in prayer to enable one to know what to pray at the right time and not be asleep at the switch. The person praying is to keep this alert vigil "*with all perseverance*" (*proskarterēsis*), a quality of steadfast endurance, literally "a holding fast to."

Early cowboys guarding a herd at night sometimes took drastic measures to keep alert and hold fast to their work. They rubbed tobacco juice in their eyes to keep at their vigil and to stay awake when weary. They did it in the interests of their boss and for the safety of the cattle. Can we keep effectively steadfast in prayer for the sake of our Lord and for the benefit of others?

D. All the Saints Are Standing in Need of Such Prayer

"*For All the Saints*"

Grant Osborne: Finally, this persevering prayer is to be uttered on behalf of "*all the Lord's people*." True prayer will be comprehensive, enveloping the whole church and including all its needs. Of course, this was easier in the ancient house church, with forty or fifty people, than it is in modern churches with hundreds or even thousands of participants. Still, the implication is that the saints are to be deeply concerned for each other and desire to be involved in each other's lives, and this includes interceding for the personal needs of those around us. A church characterized by oneness is a praying church.

II. (:19-20) THE FORWARD PROGRESS OF THE GOSPEL DEPENDS ON INTERCESSORY PRAYER FOR BOLDNESS OF PROCLAMATION

A. Even the Greatest Evangelists Must Depend on the Intercessory Prayers of Others

"*and pray on my behalf*"

Clinton Arnold: Paul ends this section by requesting prayer for himself—that he can resist the temptation to be intimidated by his circumstances and that he will be divinely enabled to declare the gospel with boldness and clarity. . .

The term for "*chain*" (ἅλυσις) "unambiguously indicates the actual chain" by which Paul was manacled to a Roman guard and signaled why he sought prayer for boldness. The insult and shame of imprisonment should be seen as pertinent background to Paul's request for God's empowerment to proclaim the gospel boldly. In principle, Paul never wanted to feel shame for the gospel since it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes (**Rom 1:16–17**). Therefore, close to the end of his life, he urged Timothy to "*not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, nor ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God*" (**2 Tim 1:8**).

B. Boldness in Proclamation is the Key to the Forward Progress of the Gospel

"*that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel*"

Frank Thielman: This refers to the **mystery** defined earlier in the letter and contained in the gospel. It is the revelation that Jews and Gentiles are being brought together as they believe the gospel and become part of Christ's body (**3:3–6, 9–10**). It is also the revelation that this social unity is part of a cosmic unity that will eventually embrace everything in the heavens and on earth (**1:9–10**), including "*all rule and authority and power and lordship*" (**1:21**). This may have been precisely the element of the mystery that Paul was tempted to leave out of any testimony before a government official.

C. Such Boldness is Appropriate

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

Kyle Snodgrass: Because of the gospel, Paul was an ambassador in chains (cf. **2 Cor. 5:20**, where Paul describes himself as "*Christ's ambassador*"). The word "ambassador" was used of a legate of the emperor. Paul's claim to being an ambassador is virtually the same as saying he is an apostle. As the representative of Christ, he has been sent with a message. This emphasizes the dignity of his work, but instead of respect and honor, he has received chains and imprisonment (cf. **Acts 20:28; 2 Tim. 1:16**). M. Barth suggests a play with the word "chain." On festive occasions ambassadors wore ornamental chains as a mark of the prestige of their countries. Paul's chain is a fitting symbol of his crucified Lord, but it also underscores the evil of this world. Implicit in this self-description is a message to the recipients not to misread the situation or be embarrassed by his imprisonment.

Stephen Fowl: The great scandal here is that Paul is an ambassador in chains, on behalf of the mystery of the gospel. One can read this as a mark of Paul's fidelity to his mission. That is, the world, and the powers in particular, is so hostile to God's economy of salvation that it rightly sees Paul as a faithful minister of that economy and focuses its hostility on Paul. In addition, this image reminds the Ephesians that their witness to the powers is not incompatible with being in chains and that witness cannot be thwarted by their imprisonment.

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) What are some examples where you prayed with "*all perseverance*" for some particular needs of the saints? Why do we tend to give up so easily and move away from our petitions before we have received an answer from God?

2) The need for *Boldness* in witnessing seems to be an ongoing universal concern in the church. Do we tend to assume our spiritual leaders are self-sufficient when actually they are in desperate need of our intercession and encouragement as they seek

to depend on the Lord for boldness and strength?

3) How would you define the *mystery of the gospel*?

4) How could Paul have such an effective ministry when he was under house arrest?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Andrew Lincoln: Appropriating the divine armor and standing firm in the battle require a life of dependence on God in prayer. Believers are to pray at all times, and their prayers are to be inspired and guided by the Spirit through whom they have confident access to God the Father. For such a life of prayer they need the alertness which keeps at bay spiritual sleep and complacency and the perseverance which overcomes fatigue and discouragement. Their prayer will not only involve dependence on God for their own strengthening but will also include petitioning on behalf of all believers and, more specifically, on behalf of the apostle that, in the midst of his imprisonment for the sake of the gospel, he may be given the words to proclaim boldly and openly the mystery that is at the heart of his gospel.

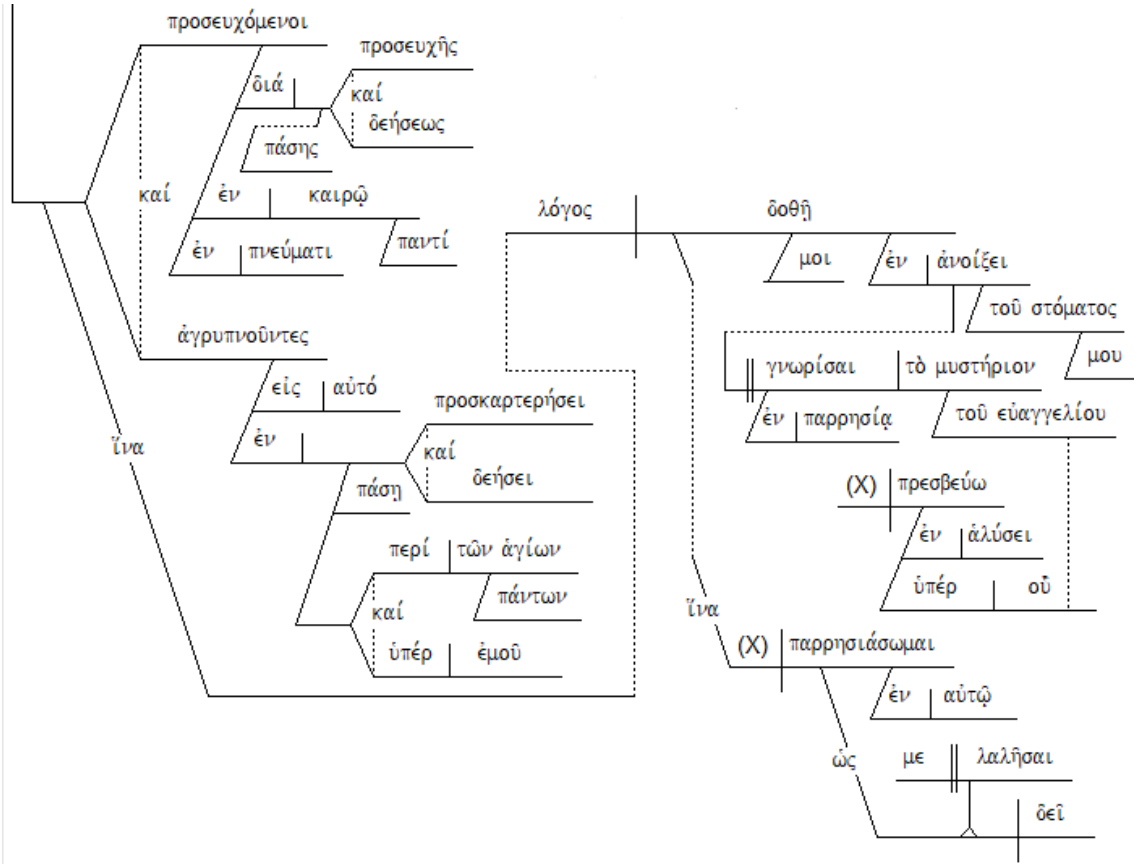
Warren Wiersbe: Prayer is the energy that enables the Christian soldier to wear the armor and wield the sword. We cannot fight the battle in our own power, no matter how strong or talented we may think we are. When Amalek attacked Israel, Moses went to the mountaintop to pray, while Joshua used the sword down in the valley (**Ex. 17:8-16**). It took both to defeat Amalek -- Moses' intercession on the mountain, and Joshua's use of the sword in the valley. Prayer is the power for victory, but not just any kind of prayer. Paul tells how to pray if we would defeat Satan.

Charles Hodge: The importance which the apostle attributed to intercessory prayer and his faith in its efficacy are evident from the frequency with which he enjoins the duty, and from the earnestness with which he solicits such prayers in his own behalf.

John MacArthur: Because the greatest problems are always spiritual, our greatest prayer concern and concentration--whether for ourselves or for others--should be for spiritual protection, strength, and healing. It is certainly appropriate to bring physical needs before our heavenly Father, but our greatest focus should be for spiritual needs--for victory over temptation, for forgiveness and cleansing of sins already committed, for unbelievers to trust in Christ for salvation, and for believers to have greater dependence on Him. The context of Paul's call to prayer is that of spiritual warfare, and the Christian's prayer should, above all, be about that warfare. Our greatest concern for ourselves and for other believers should be for victory in the battle against the enemy of our souls. Our deepest prayers for our spouse, our children, our brothers and sisters, our fellow church members, our pastor, our missionaries, and all others would be that they win the spiritual battle against Satan.

William Hendriksen: Those who are not "*alert*" but listless and indifferent to what is going on in their homes, in the streets of their city, in their state or province, in their country, in their church, in their denomination, or in the world at large will have a very restricted prayer life. Those who do not know the will of God because they devote so little time to the study of the Word will fail to harvest the fruits of prayer. Those who do not know the promises cannot be expected to 'go to the deeps of God's promise' in their devotions. They will not partake of a deep and satisfying communion with God. Consequently, they will perhaps pray now and then only. There will be no "*perseverance*" and little "*supplication*" (petition for definite benefits).

Leedy Greek Diagram: **Eph 6:18-20**



TEXT: EPHESIANS 6:21-24

TITLE: CLOSING REMARKS AND BENEDICTION

BIG IDEA:
GOOD COMMUNICATION FOSTERS FELLOWSHIP IN THE GOSPEL

INTRODUCTION:

Benjamin Merkle: This section contains Paul's concluding remarks to the saints in Ephesus and can be divided into two parts: (1) a commendation of Tychicus and his task (**Eph. 6:21–22**) and (2) a final benediction (**vv. 23–24**). Paul describes Tychicus (probably the bearer of the letter) as a "*beloved brother*" and "*faithful minister*." Tychicus was sent to the Ephesian believers for two main reasons: to explain Paul's current situation and to encourage their hearts. In the final two verses Paul offers a benediction (a prayer invoking God's blessings on others) for the recipients to experience God's peace, love, faith, and grace. This passage is strikingly similar to **Colossians 4:7–8**, suggesting that both letters were authored by Paul at roughly the same time and were carried by Tychicus from Rome to their respective recipients.

Andrew Lincoln: Through thanksgiving and paraenesis the writer has been concerned to reinforce his readers' sense of their calling in Christ, to remind them of the privileges of salvation that are theirs, and to encourage them in the light of these to lead a distinctive life in the world. In such a letter, which has attempted to make Paul's gospel speak again to a new situation among some of the churches of the Pauline mission in Asia Minor, the final grace-benediction is particularly appropriate. The blessing of grace, which was a liturgical form before it was an epistolary form, recalls the language of worship and the liturgical forms which frame the first half of the letter. It also recalls through its content two of the great themes of the first half—that all the privileges of salvation believers enjoy are theirs through God's grace, which has been lavished on them in Christ, and that one of the greatest of those privileges is their share in Christ's resurrection and exaltation, which they experience now but which they will continue to experience in the coming ages. Having exhorted his readers in the second half of the letter to maintain the Church's unity and participate in its growth and to demonstrate the life of the new humanity in society, and having braced them for the battle against the powers of evil which this will involve, the writer comes full circle, as he once again points the readers back to the divine resources that are available and calls on God to bestow his abundant grace and glorious immortality upon them.

Harold Hoehner: The conclusion of this letter (**6:21–24**) illustrates to believers the kind of love and oneness that Paul had been demonstrating throughout the book. Although imprisoned in Rome, his thoughts were for the welfare of the Ephesian believers. In light of this he sent Tychicus to them to report on his situation. His purpose was to comfort them. In addition, he sent a letter (now known as the Book of Ephesians) to instruct them in doctrine and their daily walk. His greetings to them were more

impersonal than the greetings in some of his other letters. This may have been due to great changes in the congregation over the two years since he had seen them or it could have been because the letter was encyclical.

This epistle began with Paul's salutation of grace and peace (**1:2**) and ends with a benediction that also includes grace and peace. Indeed, the believer can have no peace without God's enabling grace.

I. (6:21-22) CLOSING REMARKS -- MISSIONARY REPORTS FROM THE FIELD ENCOURAGE THOSE WHO ARE PARTNERS IN THE GOSPEL

A. Communication from the Field is Necessary

"*But that you also may know about my circumstances, how I am doing*"

B. Faithful Messengers Get the Job Done

"*Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will make everything known to you.*"

Stephen Fowl: In this electronic age in which we pass around ever more trivial information ever faster, it is easy to forget how difficult it would be for an apostle in prison to give and receive news. Emissaries such as Tychicus played an important role in keeping a network of communities both in touch with each other and in touch with Paul.

Andrew Lincoln: Tychicus features elsewhere in the NT as one of Paul's co-workers, who is particularly associated with Asia Minor. In *Acts 20:4* he is one of the representatives from the province of Asia who accompanies Paul on his visit to Jerusalem, while in the Pastorals he is said to have been sent on missions to both Ephesus and Crete (cf. **2 Tim 4:12; Titus 3:12**). He is likely to have been known to the recipients of the letter as one of the leading representatives of the Pauline mission. The designation of him as a "*dear brother and faithful servant in the Lord*" reinforces his intimate relationship with Paul and his proven record of reliable ministry in the cause of Christ. These are excellent qualifications for the tasks with which he is entrusted—to pass on information about Paul's situation and to encourage the hearts of the letter's recipients. The latter task would be accomplished not only by Tychicus conveying news about Paul but also through his own strengthening and exhorting of the readers in a ministry in line with what have been the writer's concerns in this letter.

Clinton Arnold: Paul extols Tychicus in the most glowing terms, describing him as Paul's "*beloved brother*" and as a "*faithful servant in the Lord*." This likely indicates that the Lord has used Tychicus to encourage Paul in his difficult circumstances. Paul also regards Onesimus, Philemon's runaway slave, as a "*dear* [beloved] *brother*" (**Col 4:9; Phlm 16**). The two of them have together been serving Paul during his confinement and will be traveling together back to Roman province of Asia with three letters (Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon). Paul was assisted throughout his years of ministry by many trusted colleagues, but the only other person he refers to as a "*faithful*

minister" (πιστὸς διάκονος) is Epaphras, the man responsible for planting the church at Colossae (**Col 1:7**).

C. Twofold Purpose of Missionary Reports from the Field

"*And I have sent him to you for this very purpose*":

1. Reporting on Paul's Status

"*so that you may know about us*"

2. Reassuring their Hearts

"*and that he may comfort your hearts*"

Benjamin Merkle: Essentially, Paul is informing them that Tychicus will relay to them a firsthand account of Paul's situation in prison. Second, Tychicus is sent to encourage their hearts (**v. 22**). These two purposes are perhaps related, since the Ephesian believers would certainly have been encouraged to learn of Paul's health, his imprisonment, and how God was using Paul to bring the gospel to the Gentiles.

II. (6:23-24) BENEDICTION -- GOD'S BEST FOR THOSE WHO LOVE THE LORD

Frank Thielman: Paul concludes the letter with a double prayer-wish that succinctly reminds his readers of four important themes within the letter. He prays that all believers (not simply the letter's readers) might experience both peace and love, and he connects love with faith. He then offers a separate prayer-wish that those who love the Lord Jesus Christ "*incorruptibly*" might experience God's grace. . .

As interpreters have often noticed, this is the positive counterpart to **1 Cor. 16:22**: "*If anyone does not love* [φιλεῖ, *philei*] *the Lord, let him be accursed*." Moreover, the notion that God's people are obligated to love God is prominent in both Old and New Testaments (e.g., **Exod. 20:6; Deut. 5:10; 6:5; Judg. 5:31; Neh. 1:5; Ps. 145:20 MT, Eng. [144:20 LXX]; Rom. 8:28; 1 Cor. 2:9; 8:3; James 1:12; 2:5**) and in other Jewish literature of the period (Sir. 1:10; 2:15–16; 34:16, 19; Pss. Sol 4.25; 6.6; 10.3; 14.1; T. Iss. 7.6; T. Dan 5.3; T. Jos. 11.1; T. Benj. 3.1; cf. Hoehner 2002: 874–75; Aletti 2001: 319n19). Although this is an unusual statement for a concluding Pauline grace-wish, then, there is precedent for a reference to the importance of loving the Lord Jesus at the end of a Pauline letter, and nothing surprising from the perspective of early Christian theology about defining the people of God in terms of those who love the Lord Jesus.

A. Peace

"*Peace be to the brethren*"

Clinton Arnold: His prayer for *peace* (εἰρήνη) is fitting, given the importance of this concept throughout the letter. The high point of his teaching was the declaration that

"[Christ] *is our peace*," based on the fact that, through his blood, we have been brought near to God (**2:13–14**). Paul, in fact, characterizes his gospel as "*the gospel of peace*" in this letter (**6:15**). This good news of peace with God is what the apostles proclaim through the empowerment of the Spirit, which results in the establishment of the church (**2:14–17**). But this peace is not only a gift from God that believers experience and enjoy; it also unites all believers into one body. The gospel of peace unites Jews with Gentiles, slaves and freedmen, people of different social classes, and folks from all different ethnicities. Paul's prayer is for an ongoing and deeper experience of this peace from God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

B. Love with Faith

"*and love with faith, from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ*"

Andrew Lincoln: All three qualities, peace, love, and faith, have their source in and flow from both God and Christ.

R. C. Sproul: A **benediction** is not a prayer. A benediction means 'a good saying' and is a prophetic utterance. When the apostle gives his apostolic benediction to his readers or to his hearers he is speaking as an ambassador of the King. He is announcing God's benediction upon his people. So when Paul refers to peace and grace and love and faith, he is not saying, 'Grace to you and peace from me.' But he is announcing that the promise of grace, peace, faith, and love comes from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. He is, therefore, speaking for both the Father and the Son.

Klyne Snodgrass: A comparison of other blessings of this type shows clearly that grace, love, and peace—and sometimes mercy—are standard items in blessings and that the reference is to God's gifts and character being conveyed to the recipients. In other words, Paul is saying, "*May God continue to reveal his loving nature to you*." The benedictions are prayers that God or Christ will be present and active in the people's lives (see **2 Thess. 3:16**). With regard to love at least, the benediction is essentially the same as the prayer in **3:19**, that the readers will know Christ's love.

But what does "*with faith*" mean then? It could be an abbreviated way of emphasizing the importance of human faith, but a neglected alternative is more likely. Remember that the word translated "*faith*" also means "*faithfulness*," depending on the context. If the focus is on the love and faithfulness that come from God and Christ, the passage makes better sense. This option would be translated: "*Peace to the brothers and love with faithfulness from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*." This recalls the emphasis in **1:3** that God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Christ as well as the focus on the faithfulness of Christ in **3:12**. If this translation is correct, **verses 23–24** focus on both the faithfulness of Tychicus and the faithfulness of God and on both the love of God and the love of believers.

C. Grace

"*Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with a love incorruptible*.".

Grant Osborne: "*With immortality*" (NIV "*with an undying love*") is the final phrase of the letter, and its meaning is disputed. Depending on which term it modifies, the phrase could be translated:

- "*the immortal Lord Jesus*" or
- "*with undying* [or sincere] *love*" (most versions) or
- "*may grace be experienced for all eternity*."

Frank Thielman: The solution to the puzzle of this closing phrase may lie in comparing the structure and meaning of the entire sentence to an ascription of praise that concludes **Pss. Sol. 6**. This brief psalm describes the blessings that come to the person whose inner character is disposed to call spontaneously on the Lord in prayer at the beginning and end of the day and throughout the vicissitudes of life. It concludes in much the same way that Paul concludes Ephesians:

Psalms of Solomon 6.6	**Ephesians 6:24**
εὐλογητο`ς κύριος ὁ ποιῶν *eulogētos kyrios ho poiōn* Blessed be the Lord who does	
ἔλεος *eleos* mercy	ἡ χάρις *hē charis* Grace be
τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν *tois agapōsin* to those who love	μετα` πάντων τῶν ἀγαπώντων *meta pantōn tōn agapōntōn* with all those who love
αὐτο`ν *auton* him	το`ν κύριον ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦν Χριστο`ν *ton kyrion hēmōn Iēsoun Christon* our Lord Jesus Christ
ἐν ἀληθείᾳ. *en alētheia.* in truth.	ἐν ἀφθαρσίᾳ. *en aphtharsia.* in incorruption.

The two sentences have a **common structure**. They begin with a reference to an abstract quality that God shows to human beings (mercy/grace), continue with a reference to the demonstration of that quality to "*those who love*" the Lord (him/our Lord Jesus Christ), and qualify the reference to love with an adverbial prepositional

phrase of two words, "*in*" (ἐν) and an abstract noun (truth/incorruption) without the article.

Clinton Arnold: "*grace with immortality*" -- Paul is thus praying that God will bless his people not only with grace but with the experience of the immortal life (i.e., eternal life) in the present. This is consistent with the emphasis on realized eschatology throughout the letter. Believers will experience a future life beyond the grave (see **1:10; 4:30**), but they can have a foretaste of that immortal life here and now through their close personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Believers have already been made alive with Christ. The goal now is to experience this life in greater measure. Ephesians begins with an eternal perspective (from time immemorial) and now ends with a focus on life immortal.

Benjamin Merkle: Essentially, Paul is informing them that Tychicus will relay to them a firsthand account of Paul's situation in prison. Second, Tychicus is sent to encourage their hearts (**v. 22**). These two purposes are perhaps related, since the Ephesian believers would certainly have been encouraged to learn of Paul's health, his imprisonment, and how God was using Paul to bring the gospel to the Gentiles.

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) How would we characterize our most valuable ministry partners?

2) How important are missionary conferences and reports from the mission field to keep the communication flowing so that there is true fellowship in the gospel?

3) How does Paul elevate the significance of the basic Christian virtues of love, grace, faith, peace, etc.?

4) If these final verses are not just an empty benediction, but a meaningful prayer for blessing … how do we seek to bless those around us with God's best?

* * * * * * * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Andrew Lincoln: In comparison with Paul's letters, Ephesians has reduced the closing elements to a minimum. Elsewhere, there may be a commendation of an emissary, hortatory remarks, notices about Paul's visits, requests for prayer, a wish of peace, greetings, a command for the recipients to greet one another with a holy kiss, a personal autograph, and a grace-benediction. Here the request for prayer has already been made part of the final section of paraenesis, and so there are simply the commendation of Tychicus, the wish of peace, and the grace-benediction. In Pauline conclusions there is, however, a set sequence of the major items—hortatory remarks, wish of peace,

greetings, and grace-benediction. Whatever elements may be added or omitted, this sequence does not vary.

Frank Thielman: Ephesians does have two unique characteristics, however, that are more surprising in a Pauline letter. First, both the prayer-wish for peace and the prayer-wish for grace are in the third person ("*Peace to the brothers* [and sisters]. . . . *Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ*"), whereas elsewhere in the Pauline corpus the peace wish, where it occurs, is normally in the second person (**Gal. 6:16** is the exception), and the grace-wish is always in the second person. This unusual element is probably yet another sign that the letter was intended for all the Christians in the various house churches in Ephesus, many of whom Paul did not know personally after his nearly seven-year absence from the city.

Blaikie: This serves to explain the absence of personal remembrances, allusions, and messages in the Epistle. Tychicus, who had his full confidence, would tell them all by word of mouth. The concluding words show that it was not to gratify any mere personal feeling that Paul directed Tychicus to make this communication; but knowing how much they felt for him, he believed it would be a comfort to hear how he fared. To pagans the idea of captivity was always dolorous and dreadful; it was well for them to learn how Christians could glory in tribulations (**Rom. 5:3**). Tychicus, the beloved brother, was evidently well fitted to apply to the Ephesians this comforting view of his state.

David Thompson: Just think about this for a moment because here is the ultimate minister's heart. Paul is chained up in prison and he wants the Ephesians who live in their homes and have their jobs and families comforted.

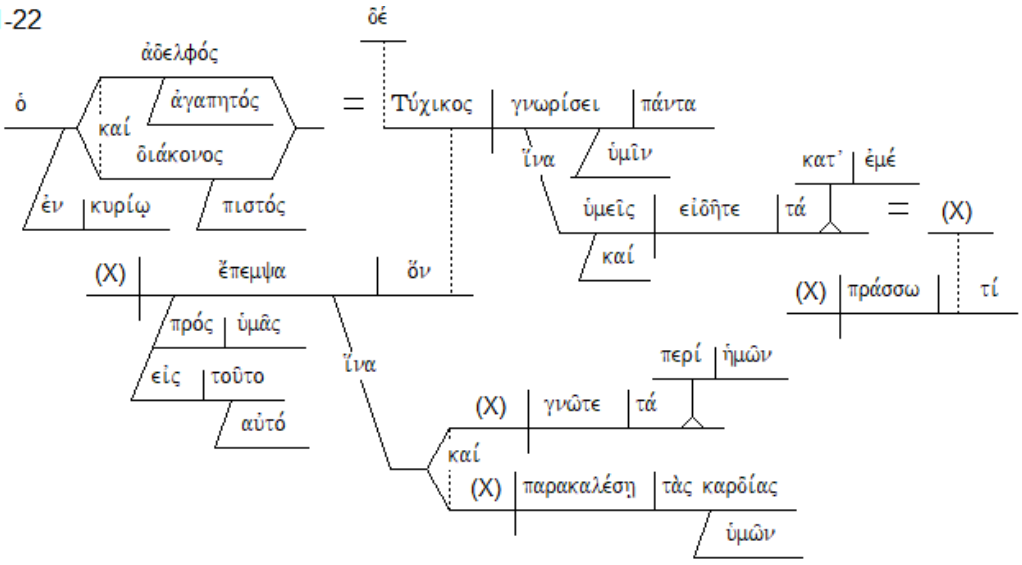
Paul wanted the Ephesians to know his circumstances so they would be comforted. Keep in mind that the last time he sailed by Ephesus he did not go into the city, but sent for the elders to meet him in Miletus (**Acts 20**).

It is possible that some of the Ephesians felt that Paul was no longer interested in them and he wanted to make it clear that not only was he interested, but he was personally sending Tychicus to them to make things known. So not only would Tychicus carry this letter to the Ephesians, he would also give them a report of Paul's situation.

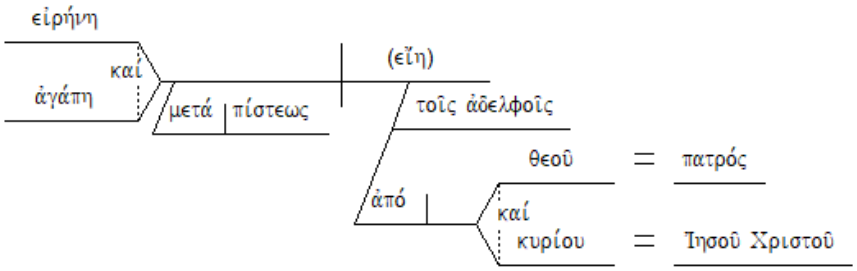
Tychicus was a trusted part of Paul's ministry and life. He was from Asia and perhaps even from Ephesus. Tychicus appears with Paul on his third missionary journey (**Acts 20:4**). Paul put his full confidence in this man. He sent him on various assignments. From **II Timothy 4:12**, we know that Tychicus had been sent by Paul to Ephesus in the final days of Paul's life and from **Titus 3:12** we know that Paul intended to send Tychicus to Crete.

Leedy Greek Diagram:

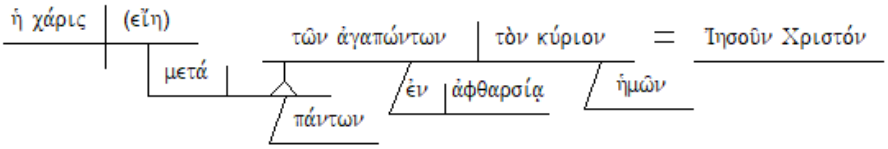
Eph 6:21-22



Eph 6:23



Eph 6:24



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