EPHESIANS

BIBLE STUDY

A Verse-by-Verse Study



Every spiritual blessing in Christ, one body made alive together, and the full armor of God to stand firm

ANDREW DOMINGUEZ

TRINFINITY
Enterprises

Ephesians Bible Study

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Andrew Dominguez

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Ephesians Bible Study: A Verse-by-Verse Study

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A note before you begin. This book is written to teach the Bible and encourage faith. It shares my understanding of Scripture and is offered for study and spiritual growth. It is not counseling, medical, legal, or financial advice. If you are facing a crisis, a health problem, or a legal or money problem, please reach out to a qualified professional as well as your pastor and church family. To the fullest extent the law allows, Andrew Dominguez, Trinfinity Enterprises, and Andrew Dominguez's heirs, estate, successors, and assigns accept no liability for how this material is used.

A Note on the Bible Translation Used in This Study

My preferred Bible for personal study, teaching, and research is the Steadfast Literal Bible (SLB). I chose it because it is a word-for-word translation in today's language, built on the ancient Scripture sources: the Hebrew and Aramaic of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New Testament. I prepared the SLB myself, and the Scripture in this book is taken from it.

Where a literal phrase would mislead an English reader, the SLB gives the writer's meaning in plain words. Words added for sense are set in bold italics so you can see what is in the original and what is not.

The complete Steadfast Literal Bible is free to read, search, download, and print at trinfinityenterprises.com/slb. If you want to check a verse in its full setting or read the translation's preface and principles, that is the place to go.

Above all, my desire is not to promote one translation over another, but to faithfully teach the Word of God, encourage careful examination of the Scriptures, and help readers grow in their knowledge, understanding, and relationship with the Lord.

May every page of this study direct attention not to the translation itself, but to the truth of God's Word and the One whom it reveals.

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Introduction

Welcome, and thank you for taking the time to work through this verse-by-verse study of the book of Ephesians. My purpose in writing this study guide is the same as it was for my study of Revelation: to bring you closer to our Creator and to give you a way to grow in your Christian walk.

I first understood that I am saved by grace when I was young. A neighbor, Pastor Jimmy Carter, took me to church and led me to Christ. I did not earn it then, and I cannot earn it now. Ephesians 2:8-9 is still the foundation.

Ephesians is one of the richest letters in the New Testament. In just six chapters Paul tells us who we are in Christ, what God has done for us, and how we should live because of it. I do not claim to be an authority on the Bible or on Ephesians. I am simply someone like you who wants to grow closer to God and understand what He has given us in His Son. Before you read any part of this book, or any part of Scripture, I ask that you pray, asking God:

- For the Holy Spirit to be present, to help open your eyes and your heart (Psalm 119:18, 119:105)
- For discernment and knowledge (Psalm 119:66, James 1:5)

2 Timothy 2:15 (SLB)

"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker not needing to be ashamed, cutting straight the word of truth."

The Bible is God's Word to us (2 Timothy 3:16), given for training in righteousness. If we cannot understand what it says, we cannot apply it to our lives or help build God's kingdom.

So how do we go about understanding God's Word?

The first rule is context. You may have heard the saying "Context is King," but what does that mean? Every word, sentence, and passage helps explain the ones around it. Before we read any passage, we should ask a few simple questions: Who wrote it? Who was it written to? What came right before it? Knowing the answers gives us a clearer picture of what God is saying, both in general and to each of us personally.

Context matters a great deal in Ephesians. It is a letter, written by a real man to real churches, and it has a clear flow. The first three chapters teach what God has done for us in Christ. The last three chapters tell us how to live because of it. If we jump straight to the commands in chapters 4 to 6 without the truths in chapters 1 to 3, we turn the Christian life into a list of rules. If we stop at chapter 3, we miss how those truths change the way we talk, work, marry, and raise our children.

Exegesis, Eisegesis, and Hermeneutics

People typically interpret the Bible using one of two methods, Exegesis or Eisegesis. Both are explained below, along with a third word, Hermeneutics. Sometimes people use both methods to

"make their case" for the interpretation they want. These definitions are based on www.merriam-webster.com, with my own notes added.

Exegesis means explaining a text, especially a passage of Scripture. Exegesis is reading and interpreting the full text of a passage, and drawing out what it is actually saying.

Eisegesis means reading your own ideas into a text. This happens when we try to find something in the text that really isn't there. It can lead to many errors, especially when we bring assumptions to a passage that aren't actually in it. This method can be used to justify a behavior, position, or belief that goes against what the text originally meant.

Hermeneutics is the study of the principles used to interpret a text, such as the Bible. "Hermeneutics" and "Exegesis" are sometimes used to mean the same thing. The difference is that Exegesis is the work of explaining a passage, while Hermeneutics is the set of principles that guides that work. In Biblical Hermeneutics, the Bible should be read literally unless the text itself gives us a different meaning.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (SLB)

"16 Every Scripture ***is*** God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training which ***is*** in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be complete, fully equipped for every good work."

This passage tells us plainly that the writers of Scripture were inspired by God. Every passage in the Bible came from God and was written down by man. These are not fairy tales or made-up stories. They are God's own breath, given to us so we can be equipped and ready to do good work.

Because every word was inspired and breathed by God, I believe we must let God's Word interpret itself. We must study the Bible using Exegesis, drawing out what the text says, guided by sound Biblical Hermeneutics.

We should study God's Word using the Golden Rule of Interpretation, as Dr. David L. Cooper stated it:

"When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense; therefore, take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages and axiomatic and fundamental truths, indicate clearly otherwise."

(http://www.biblicalresearch.info/page55.html)

I read the Bible as it is written. Ephesians is a letter that teaches plainly, and this study takes Paul at his word: God really did choose, redeem, and seal His people in Christ, Jew and Gentile alike, and He really does expect that truth to change how we live.

This study uses the Steadfast Literal Bible (SLB) unless I note otherwise. To better understand the original Greek, I also used The Interlinear Bible (Jay P. Green Sr., ISBN 1-56563-977-4).

How This Study Is Laid Out

Each chapter of this study follows the same pattern as my study of Revelation:

- Scripture: the full text of the chapter, broken into sections, so you can read it straight through first.
- Preview: a short look at what the chapter covers.
- Study: the chapter again, verse by verse, with my notes on what each verse says and what it means for us.
- Summary: the main points of the chapter in a few lines.
- Study Questions: questions for personal study or a small group, from simple fact questions to questions about how we live. Some of them are personal. In a group, no one should ever have to answer one aloud, and what is shared in the group stays there.
- Old and New Testament links: after many verses you will find a short line in small type that lists the places where the other Testament quotes, fulfills, pictures, or echoes that passage. "Quoted" means the New Testament quotes the Old Testament words. "Fulfilled" means the New Testament tells us a prophecy or promise came true. "Pictured" means the New Testament itself points to an Old Testament person, event, or object as a picture of Christ. "Alluded to" means a clear echo in shared words or pictures. Every link is listed again in a table at the back of the book.

Using This Study With a Group

This study works for one person or for a group. Here are two ways a group can pace it:

- One chapter a week: six weeks. If you like, add a first meeting to read the Introduction and the Background together.
- Half a chapter a week: twelve weeks. The Scripture for each chapter is already printed in two parts (chapter 6 has three), and the start of the second part is a natural place to stop.

For each meeting, I suggest reading the Scripture out loud together first, straight through, before anyone comments. Then walk through the Study section, stopping where the group has questions, and finish with the Study Questions and prayer. The first questions in each list can be answered from the text. The later ones are more personal, and no one should feel pressed to answer them aloud.

Some parts of Ephesians touch painful subjects: anger and forgiveness (4:26-32), marriage and abuse (5:21-33), and parents and children (6:1-4). If you lead a group, read those sections ahead of time and be ready to listen. If someone shares something that puts them or another person in danger, help them get help right away.

I look forward to walking with you through the book of Ephesians. If you'd like to share feedback, please email me at andrew@trinfinityenterprises.com.

May God bless you and your time studying and getting to know Him better.

Overview of Ephesians

Ephesians is the tenth book of the New Testament. It sits between Galatians and Philippians. It is one of four letters, often called the Prison Letters, that Paul wrote while under arrest. The other three are Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon. (Paul wrote 2 Timothy from prison too, during a later imprisonment, but it is usually grouped with 1 Timothy and Titus.)

Many Bible teachers have noticed that Ephesians moves from sitting, to walking, to standing. In chapter 2, God has seated us with Christ in the heavenly places. In chapters 4 and 5, Paul tells us five times how to walk. In chapter 6, he tells us to stand firm against the enemy. That simple pattern is a good way to remember the whole letter. First we rest in what Christ has done. Then we live it out. Then we hold our ground.

Paul gives us the theme of the letter in chapter 1. God's plan is to bring all things together under Christ (1:10), and Christ now reigns as head over all things for the sake of His church, which is His body:

Ephesians 1:22-23 (SLB)

"And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him ***as*** head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of the ***One*** who fills all things in all."

Ephesians has 6 chapters and 155 verses. Here is its structure:

Part One: What God Has Done for Us in Christ (chapters 1 to 3)

- Chapter 1: Every Spiritual Blessing
- Chapter 2: Made Alive Together
- Chapter 3: The Mystery Revealed

Part Two: How We Live Because of It (chapters 4 to 6)

- Chapter 4: Walk Worthy of Your Calling
- Chapter 5: Walk in Love and Light
- Chapter 6: Stand Firm

Background of the Book

Author: The letter names its author twice. It opens with "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ" (1:1), and in 3:1 Paul calls himself "the prisoner of Christ Jesus." The early church accepted Paul as the author without question. Many modern scholars, though not all, believe a follower of Paul wrote it in his name after his death. They point to its long sentences, some words Paul does not use elsewhere, and its close likeness to Colossians. I take the letter at its word. It names Paul twice, speaks of his chains as a present fact (3:1; 4:1; 6:20), asks for prayer for his preaching (6:19-20), and sends news of him by a man the readers knew (6:21-22). Those are the marks of a real letter from a real prisoner.

Who it was written to: Most of our Bibles say it was written to "the saints who are in Ephesus" (1:1). A few of the oldest Greek copies leave out the words "in Ephesus." For that reason, many scholars believe Ephesians was a circular letter, meant to be read in Ephesus first and then passed around to other churches in the area. Either way, the readers were mostly Gentile believers (2:11; 3:1), people who were not Jewish by birth.

The city of Ephesus: Ephesus was one of the largest cities in the Roman province of Asia, on the west coast of what is now Turkey. It was a busy port and trade center, and it was home to the great temple of the goddess Artemis (called Diana in some older Bibles), one of the wonders of the ancient world. Paul spent about three years there on his third missionary journey (Acts 19:1-20; 20:31). The city was full of idol worship and magic. When people came to Christ there, many of them burned their books of magic in public (Acts 19:19).

When and where it was written: Paul wrote as a prisoner (3:1; 4:1; 6:20). Most of those who hold that Paul wrote it believe he wrote from Rome during his house arrest, around A.D. 60 to 62 (Acts 28:16, 30). Tychicus carried the letter (6:21-22), and he also carried the letter to the Colossians (Colossians 4:7-9), and most likely the short letter to Philemon as well. Paul wrote Ephesians and Colossians at about the same time, to churches in the same region, and that helps explain why the two letters share so many themes and phrases.

Purpose: Paul does not write to fix one big problem, as he does in Galatians or 1 Corinthians. He writes to show believers how rich they are in Christ, to show that Jews and Gentiles are now one body in Him, and to call them to live in a way that fits that calling.

Chapter 1: Every Spiritual Blessing

Scripture: The Blessings of Redemption; Paul's Prayer for Wisdom

1:1-14 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ through ***the*** will of God, to the saints who are in Ephesus and faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and ***the*** Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed ***be*** the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly ***places*** in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before ***the*** foundation of ***the*** world, ***for*** us to be holy and blameless before Him in love, having predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to ***the*** praise of ***the*** glory of His grace, in which He graced us in the Beloved, in whom we have the redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of the trespasses, according to the riches of His grace, which He made abound toward us in all wisdom and understanding, having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Him, for ***the*** administration of the fullness of the times, to sum up all things in Christ, both the ***things*** in the heavens and the ***things*** on the earth, in Him, in whom also we were allotted, having been predestined according to ***the*** purpose of the ***One*** who works all things according to the counsel of His will, for us to be to ***the*** praise of His glory, those who had first hoped in Christ; in whom you also, having heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation—in whom also having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is ***the*** pledge of our inheritance, for ***the*** redemption of the acquired possession, to ***the*** praise of His glory.

1:15-23 Because of this I also, having heard of the faith among you in the Lord Jesus and the love toward all the saints, do not cease giving thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding having been enlightened, for you to know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints ***are***, and what ***is*** the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of the might of His strength, which He worked in Christ, having raised Him out from ***the*** dead, and seated ***Him*** at His right hand in the heavenly ***places***, far above every principality and authority and power and lordship, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the coming ***one***. And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him ***as*** head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of the ***One*** who fills all things in all.

Chapter 1 Preview

Paul opens his letter with one of the greatest passages in the Bible. In the original Greek, verses 3 to 14 are one long sentence of praise. Paul can hardly stop to take a breath. He lists what God has done for us in Christ: He chose us, adopted us, redeemed us, forgave us, made known His plan to us, and sealed us with the Holy Spirit.

Then Paul turns from praise to prayer. He asks God to open the eyes of his readers so they would know the hope of their calling, the riches of His inheritance in the saints, and the great power that raised Jesus from the dead. That same power now works for every believer, and Jesus now sits far above every other power, as head over all things to the church.

Chapter 1 Study

1:1 *Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ through **the** will of God, to the saints who are in Ephesus and faithful in Christ Jesus:*

Paul calls himself "an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God," An apostle is one who is sent, a messenger carrying the authority of the one who sent him. Paul did not choose this job. Jesus met him on the road to Damascus and called him "a vessel of choice" (Acts 9:3-6, 15; 26:15-18).

He writes to "the saints." Many people think a saint is a special Christian the church honors after death. In the Bible, every believer is a saint. The word means one who is set apart for God. If you belong to Jesus, God calls you a saint today. Paul also calls them "faithful," meaning those who believe and keep on trusting the Lord.

Some of the oldest Greek copies leave out the words "in Ephesus." That is one reason many scholars think this letter was meant to be passed around to several churches.

1:2 *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and **the** Lord Jesus Christ.*

This was Paul's usual greeting, but it is not empty. Grace is God's favor that we did not earn. Peace is what comes to us because of that grace: peace with God, and the peace of God in our hearts. Notice the order. Grace always comes first. We cannot have real peace until we have received God's grace.

He also puts "God our Father" and "the Lord Jesus Christ" side by side as the one source of grace and peace. A Jewish man like Paul would never do that with a mere man. He knew Jesus is God.

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

"Blessed be" means praised be. Paul starts with worship. Before he tells us anything we should do, he praises God for what He has already done.

Look at how much God has given: "every spiritual blessing." Paul does not say some of them, or even most of them. He says every one. These blessings are "in the heavenly places," which means they belong to the spiritual world where Christ now reigns, and nothing on earth can take them away. And they are all "in Christ." That phrase, or one like it, shows up again and again in this chapter. Every blessing God gives comes to us through our union with His Son. If you have Jesus, you already have everything you need for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3).

1:4 *just as He chose us in Him before **the** foundation of **the** world, **for** us to be holy and blameless before Him in love,*

"He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world." Before God made the first star, He had His people in mind. The goal of His choosing is clear: that we would be "holy and blameless before

Him." God did not save us so we could keep living the way we were. He saved us to make us like His Son.

Bible teachers have long disagreed about how God's choosing works. Some believe God chose specific people for salvation based only on His own will and grace. Others believe God chose, in Christ, all who He knew would believe, based on His foreknowledge (Romans 8:29; 1 Peter 1:1-2). Both sides agree that salvation is God's work from start to finish, and that every person is called to repent and believe (Acts 17:30). I have chosen not to settle this question here. What the verse plainly says is enough to humble us and to give us great confidence: God set His love on His people before time began.

1:5-6 *having predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to **the** praise of **the** glory of His grace, in which He graced us in the Beloved,*

To predestine means to decide ahead of time. What did God decide ahead of time? That His people would be adopted as His sons. In the Roman world, an adopted son had all the rights of a natural-born son. He took the father's name and shared the father's inheritance. That is what God has done for us through Jesus.

God did this "according to the good pleasure of His will." He was not forced to adopt us. He wanted to. And the purpose behind it all is "the praise of the glory of His grace." Our salvation is meant to make God look good, not us. God "graced us in the Beloved," that is, in Jesus, the Son the Father loves (Matthew 3:17).

1:7 *in whom we have the redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of the trespasses, according to the riches of His grace,*

Redemption means buying back by paying a price. In Paul's day, a slave could be redeemed when someone paid the price to set him free. We were slaves to sin, and Jesus paid the price with His own blood. Peter tells us we were not redeemed with silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ (1 Peter 1:18-19).

Paul ties redemption to "the forgiveness of the trespasses." A trespass is a false step, a slip off the path God set for us. Every one of those false steps is forgiven for the believer, and the measure of that forgiveness is "the riches of His grace." God does not forgive us in small portions. He forgives out of riches that never run out.

1:8-10 *which He made abound toward us in all wisdom and understanding, having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Him, for **the** administration of the fullness of the times, to sum up all things in Christ, both the **things** in the heavens and the **things** on the earth, in Him,*

God not only forgives us. He also gives us wisdom and insight, so we can understand His plan. In the Bible a "mystery" is not a puzzle. It is a truth God kept hidden in the past and has now revealed to His people.

Here is the mystery: God's plan is "to sum up all things in Christ, both the things in the heavens and the things on the earth." Right now the world is broken and divided. Sin has set people against God and against each other. But history is going somewhere. One day every rebel power will be put down, and all creation will be brought together under one head, Jesus Christ. "The fullness of the times" points to God's perfect timing. He is never late. As I wrote in my study of Revelation, that day comes when Jesus returns visibly to reign (Revelation 11:15; 19:11-16).

1:11-12 *in whom also we were allotted, having been predestined according to* ***the*** *purpose of the* ***One*** *who works all things according to the counsel of His will, for us to be to* ***the*** *praise of His glory, those who had first hoped in Christ;*

"We were allotted." The Greek word can mean that we were made God's own portion, or that we were given an inheritance. Both ideas are true in Scripture. We have an inheritance in God, and we are His own treasured possession.

Paul is completely sure about God's plan. God "works all things according to the counsel of His will." Nothing catches Him by surprise, not even our suffering. That is the same truth Paul gives us in Romans 8:28.

In verse 12, "those who had first hoped in Christ" most likely means Paul and the other Jewish believers, who believed in Jesus first. In verse 13 he turns to "you also," the Gentile readers. Paul is already laying the ground for chapter 2, where Jew and Gentile are made one.

1:13-14 *in whom you also, having heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation—in whom also having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is* ***the*** *pledge of our inheritance, for* ***the*** *redemption of the acquired possession, to* ***the*** *praise of His glory.*

Paul names three steps in this verse. First, you listened to "the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation." Second, you "believed." Third, you "were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise." The Spirit does not come later as a reward for the extra-spiritual. Every believer receives Him the moment they believe (Romans 8:9).

In the ancient world a seal was a mark of ownership and protection. A king or official would press his ring into hot wax to mark what was his. God has put His seal on His people. The Spirit is also called "the pledge of our inheritance." A pledge is a down payment, the first part of a payment that promises the rest is coming. The Spirit living in us now is God's guarantee that we will receive everything He promised, including the redemption of our bodies when Jesus comes for His church (Romans 8:23; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

Bible teachers disagree on whether a true believer can ever lose their salvation. Some read the seal of the Spirit as a promise that God will keep every true believer to the end. Others point to warnings like Hebrews 6:4-6 and believe a person can turn away. I leave that question open here, as I did in my study of Romans. What this verse makes plain is that God gives the Spirit as His mark and His promise, and He means for His people to rest in that.

1:15-16 *Because of this I also, having heard of the faith among you in the Lord Jesus and the love toward all the saints, do not cease giving thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers,*

Paul had heard two things about these believers: their faith in Jesus and their love for all the saints. Those two always go together. Real faith in Christ shows itself in love for other believers (1 John 4:20). It is easy to love the people in our own church who are like us. Paul praises them for loving all the saints.

Paul did not stop giving thanks for them. He was in chains, but he spent his time praying for others. Prayer was not something Paul did when everything else was finished. It was the work itself.

1:17 *that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him,*

Paul calls God "the Father of glory." Then he prays for "a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him." Notice what Paul does not pray for. He does not ask God to make their lives easier or their troubles smaller. He prays that they would know God better.

That is the greatest need of every believer. We already have every spiritual blessing (1:3), but we often don't understand what we have. Many Christians live like poor people when they are rich in Christ. Paul wants God to show them, by His Spirit, what is already theirs.

1:18 *the eyes of your understanding having been enlightened, for you to know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints **are**,*

"The eyes of your understanding." Many Greek copies read "heart" here in place of "understanding," and the two ideas are close. In the Bible, the heart is not only the place of feelings. It is the center of the whole person: the mind, the will, and the emotions. Either way, Paul prays that God would open that inner eye.

He wants them to know three things. The first two are in this verse. First, "the hope of His calling." Biblical hope is a sure promise that has not yet arrived, not a wish. God called us to something, and that something is certain. Second, "the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints." Think about that. God counts His people as His treasure. You are part of what God considers His riches.

1:19-20 *and what **is** the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of the might of His strength, which He worked in Christ, having raised Him out from **the** dead, and seated **Him** at His right hand in the heavenly **places**,*

The third thing Paul wants them to know is "the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe." Paul piles up words for power here, as if one word is not enough.

How great is this power? It is the same power that raised Jesus from the dead and seated Him at the Father's right hand. The resurrection is the greatest display of power in history. Death is the

one enemy no man can beat. God beat it. And Paul says that same power is at work for "us who believe." When you feel weak, remember that the power that emptied the tomb is working in you.

"At His right hand" is the place of honor and authority (Psalm 110:1). Jesus is not just alive. He reigns.

Old Testament links: Psalm 110:1 (alluded to)

1:21 *far above every principality and authority and power and lordship, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the coming* ***one****.*

Jesus is seated "far above every principality and authority and power and lordship." These words were used in Paul's day for ranks of spiritual powers, both good angels and evil ones. The people of Ephesus lived in fear of spirits, magic, and dark powers (Acts 19:18-19). Paul tells them that whatever powers exist, Jesus is far above them all.

"Every name that is named" covers every title anyone could ever give. And His reign is not only for now, but "also in the coming one." Jesus will never be replaced or outranked.

1:22-23 *And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him* ***as*** *head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of the* ***One*** *who fills all things in all.*

"He put all things under His feet" points back to Psalm 8:6. God gave man rule over creation, but man lost it through sin. Jesus, the perfect Man, has won it back.

And then God "gave Him as head over all things to the church." Jesus is head over everything, and He is given to the church as her head. The church is "His body." A body carries out what the head wants. Jesus works in the world today through His people.

The last phrase is hard to understand fully: the church is "the fullness of the One who fills all things in all." Christ fills all things, and yet He chooses to make His church His fullness, the place where His life and presence are shown. The church is the living body of the risen Christ, far more than a building or a club.

Old Testament links: Psalm 8:6 (quoted)

Chapter 1 Summary

Paul greets the saints and praises God for every spiritual blessing in Christ. The Father chose His people before the foundation of the world, predestined them to adoption, and gave them grace in His Beloved Son. In Christ we have redemption through His blood and the forgiveness of our trespasses. God has made known His plan to sum up all things in Christ. Believers were sealed with the Holy Spirit as a pledge of their inheritance. Paul then prays that they would know the hope of God's calling, the riches of His inheritance in the saints, and the greatness of His power, the same power that raised Jesus from the dead and seated Him far above every power, as head over all things to the church, which is His body.

Chapter 1 Study Questions

1. If someone asked you what a "saint" is, what would you say after reading 1:1?

2. What does it mean to you that God has blessed you with "every spiritual blessing" in Christ? (1:3)

3. What was God's purpose in choosing His people? (1:4)

4. What did adoption mean in the Roman world, and what does it tell us about our place in God's family? (1:5)

5. What price was paid for our redemption? (1:7)

6. What is God's plan for "the fullness of the times"? (1:10)

7. What three steps does Paul give in 1:13, and what does the seal of the Spirit mean?

8. What three things did Paul pray his readers would know? (1:18-19)

9. How does the power that raised Jesus from the dead help you in what you are facing today?

10. Paul prayed for others to know God better. Who could you pray for this way this week?

Chapter 2: Made Alive Together

Scripture: Made Alive in Christ; Jew and Gentile Made One

2:1-10 And you, being dead in the trespasses and the sins, in which you once walked according to the age of this world, according to the ruler of the authority of the air, of the spirit that ***is*** now working in the sons of disobedience, among whom we also all once lived in the desires of our flesh, doing the wishes of the flesh and of the thoughts, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even us, being dead in the trespasses, He made alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised ***us*** up together and seated ***us*** together in the heavenly ***places*** in Christ Jesus, in order that He might show in the coming ages the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this ***is*** not from yourselves; the gift ***is*** of God, not from works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, having been created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we may walk in them.

2:11-22 Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in ***the*** flesh, who are called "Uncircumcision" by what is called "Circumcision" in ***the*** flesh, made by hands, that you were at that time apart from Christ, having been alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of the promise, not having hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have become near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who made both one and broke down the middle wall of the barrier, having abolished the hostility in His flesh, the law of the commandments in ordinances, so that He might create the two in Himself into one new man, making peace, and might reconcile both in one body to God through the cross, having killed the hostility by it. And having come, He preached the gospel, peace to you, the ones far off, and to the ones near. For through Him we both have the access by one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and resident aliens, but fellow citizens of the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being ***the*** cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in ***the*** Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in ***the*** Spirit.

Chapter 2 Preview

In chapter 1, Paul showed us what God has given us in Christ. In chapter 2, he shows us where we were when God found us. We were dead in our sins, following the world, the devil, and our own desires. Then come two of the most beautiful words in the Bible: "But God." Because of His great love and mercy, God made us alive with Christ and seated us with Him. We are saved by grace through faith, not by our works, and we are created in Christ for good works.

The second half of the chapter turns to the great divide of Paul's day, the wall between Jews and Gentiles. Gentiles were once far off from God's promises. Through the blood of Christ they have been brought near. Jesus has broken down the wall, made the two into one new man, and built them together into one holy temple where God lives by His Spirit.

Chapter 2 Study

2:1 *And you, being dead in the trespasses and the sins,*

Paul does not say we were sick in our sins, or weak, or lost. He says we were "dead." A dead man cannot help himself. He cannot hear, choose, or move toward God on his own. That is how Scripture describes every person outside of Christ.

"The trespasses and the sins" are two ways of describing the same problem. A trespass is a false step off God's path. A sin is missing God's mark, like an arrow that falls short of the target. Either way, the result is spiritual death, separation from God, who is the source of life.

This verse is hard to hear, but it is the only way to understand grace. You cannot see how good the good news is until you see how bad the bad news is.

2:2-3 *in which you once walked according to the age of this world, according to the ruler of the authority of the air, of the spirit that **is** now working in the sons of disobedience, among whom we also all once lived in the desires of our flesh, doing the wishes of the flesh and of the thoughts, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.*

Paul names three forces that ruled our lives before Christ. The first is "the age of this world," the way the world thinks and lives without God. The second is "the ruler of the authority of the air," which is Satan. Jesus called him "the ruler of this world" (John 12:31). He is "now working" in those who refuse to obey God. The third is our own flesh, "the desires of our flesh, doing the wishes of the flesh and of the thoughts." Paul includes himself: "we also all once lived" this way.

"By nature children of wrath" means that we were born with a sinful nature, and by that nature we stood under God's righteous anger against sin. God's wrath is His holy, settled opposition to evil, nothing like a human temper tantrum. Paul says this was true of all of us, "even as the rest." No one is born good enough to stand before God on their own.

2:4-5 *But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even us, being dead in the trespasses, He made alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),*

"But God." Everything changes with those two words. We were dead, we were following Satan, we were under wrath. But God stepped in.

Why did He do it? Paul gives three reasons in these verses. God is "rich in mercy." Mercy is God holding back the punishment we deserve. He acted "because of His great love." And He did it by grace, which Paul adds in the middle of the sentence, as if he can't wait: "by grace you have been saved."

God "made" us "alive together with Christ." A dead man needs more than advice. He needs life. Only God can give it. The same power that raised Jesus (1:19-20) raised us from spiritual death.

2:6-7 *and raised **us** up together and seated **us** together in the heavenly **places** in Christ Jesus, in order that He might show in the coming ages the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.*

God did more than make us alive. He "raised us up together and seated us together in the heavenly places." In chapter 1, Jesus was raised and seated at the Father's right hand (1:20). Now Paul says believers are raised and seated with Him. Our bodies are still on earth, but our position is with Christ. We are united to Him, so where He is, we belong.

Why did God do this? "In order that He might show in the coming ages the surpassing riches of His grace." Every saved sinner is a trophy of God's grace. Forever, in the ages to come, God will point to His people and show what His kindness in Christ can do.

2:8-9 *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this **is** not from yourselves; the gift **is** of God, not from works, so that no one may boast.*

These may be the clearest verses in the Bible on how a person is saved. We are saved "by grace," which is God's undeserved favor. We are saved "through faith," which is simply trusting God and receiving what He offers. And it is "not from yourselves." Salvation is a gift, and "the gift is of God."

Some ask whether "this" in verse 8 means faith is the gift, or grace, or salvation. In the Greek, the word "this" points to the whole thing: being saved by grace through faith. All of it is from God.

"Not from works, so that no one may boast." If we could earn our way to heaven, we would have something to brag about. There will be no bragging in heaven. Nobody will say, "I made it because I was good." Every voice will praise Jesus, who did it all (Revelation 5:9-12).

2:10 *For we are His workmanship, having been created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we may walk in them.*

Verses 8 and 9 tell us we are not saved by good works. Verse 10 tells us we are saved for good works. Both are true, and we need both.

"We are His workmanship." The Greek word, poiema, means something made, and it gives us our English word "poem." You are something God made, His handiwork. He "created" us in Christ Jesus. Salvation is a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17).

And God has "prepared beforehand" good works for us "so that we may walk in them." God has already planned the good He wants to do through you. Good works are not the root of salvation. They are the fruit. If someone claims to be saved but shows no change at all, James would ask whether that faith is real (James 2:17).

2:11-12 *Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in **the** flesh, who are called "Uncircumcision" by what is called "Circumcision" in **the** flesh, made by hands, that you were at that time apart from Christ, having been alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of the promise, not having hope and without God in the world.*

Now Paul turns to the Gentiles, people who are not Jewish. He asks them to "remember." It is good for believers to remember where we came from. It keeps us humble and thankful.

The Jews called Gentiles "Uncircumcision" as a put-down. Circumcision was the sign God gave Abraham of His covenant (Genesis 17:10-11). Paul notes that this sign was only "in the flesh, made by hands." It was an outward mark, not a change of heart.

Paul lists five things the Gentiles lacked. They were "apart from Christ," with no Messiah. They were "alienated from the commonwealth of Israel," outsiders to God's chosen nation. They were "strangers to the covenants of the promise," with no claim on the promises God made to Abraham and his descendants, and later to David. They were "not having hope." And they were "without God in the world." They had many gods in Ephesus, but they did not know the true God. That is a sad picture, and it describes every person outside of Christ today.

2:13 *But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have become near by the blood of Christ.*

"But now." Just as "But God" turned everything around in verse 4, "But now" turns things around here. Those who "once were far off have become near."

How? "By the blood of Christ." Not by becoming Jewish, not by keeping the Law, but by the death of Jesus. Isaiah 57:19 spoke of peace to those far off and to those near, and Paul will use that language in verse 17. The cross is the only way anyone, Jew or Gentile, comes near to God.

Old Testament links: Isaiah 57:19 (alluded to)

2:14-15 *For He Himself is our peace, who made both one and broke down the middle wall of the barrier, having abolished the hostility in His flesh, the law of the commandments in ordinances, so that He might create the two in Himself into one new man, making peace,*

"He Himself is our peace." Jesus does not only make peace. He is our peace. Peace is found in a Person.

He "broke down the middle wall of the barrier." In the temple in Jerusalem there was an actual wall that separated the Court of the Gentiles from the inner courts. The Jewish historian Josephus records that warning signs on it told Gentiles they would be put to death if they went any farther (Antiquities 15.417; Jewish War 5.193-194). One of those warning stones was found in Jerusalem in 1871. Jesus has torn down the spiritual wall that the stone wall stood for.

He did it by "having abolished the hostility in His flesh," that is, by His death on the cross. "The law of the commandments in ordinances" means the Law of Moses as a system that set Israel apart from the nations: the food laws, the feast days, circumcision, and the sacrifices. Jesus fulfilled the Law (Matthew 5:17), and its ceremonies no longer divide God's people. God's moral

standard did not change. Paul even quotes one of the Ten Commandments later in this very letter (6:2-3).

The result is "one new man." Not Gentiles turned into Jews, and not Jews turned into Gentiles, but something new: one body in Christ.

2:16 *and might reconcile both in one body to God through the cross, having killed the hostility by it.*

Jesus reconciled both Jew and Gentile "in one body to God through the cross." To reconcile is to bring two enemies back together. Our biggest problem was not that we didn't get along with each other. It was that we were enemies of God (Romans 5:10). The cross dealt with that first. Once we are made right with God, we are able to be made right with one another.

"In one body" most likely means the church, the body of Christ (1:23). Paul says that by the cross Jesus "killed the hostility." The hatred died when Jesus died.

2:17-18 *And having come, He preached the gospel, peace to you, the ones far off, and to the ones near. For through Him we both have the access by one Spirit to the Father.*

Jesus "preached the gospel, peace." He did this through His apostles and His church after His resurrection, carrying the good news to "the ones far off," the Gentiles, and to "the ones near," the Jews. Both needed the same message.

Verse 18 shows the whole Trinity at work in our salvation. The Trinity is the Bible's teaching that there is one God who exists as three Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. "Through Him," that is, Jesus, "we both have the access by one Spirit to the Father." The Son opens the way, the Spirit brings us in, and the Father welcomes us. In the Old Testament, only the high priest could enter the Most Holy Place, and only once a year. Now every believer can come to the Father at any time through Jesus (Hebrews 10:19-22).

Old Testament links: Isaiah 57:19 (alluded to)

2:19 *So then you are no longer strangers and resident aliens, but fellow citizens of the saints and members of the household of God,*

"So then." Here is the result. Gentile believers are no longer "strangers and resident aliens," people living in a country that is not theirs. They are "fellow citizens of the saints" and members of "the household of God." God does not have first-class and second-class children.

This does not mean God has thrown away Israel. Paul makes that clear in Romans 11:1-2 and 11:25-29. God's promises to Israel still stand, and I believe He has a future for the nation of Israel. What Paul is saying here is that Gentiles who believe are now full members of God's family, standing side by side with Jewish believers, on the same footing, through the same Messiah.

2:20 *having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being* ***the*** *cornerstone,*

God's household is pictured as a building. Its foundation is "the apostles and prophets." This most likely means the New Testament apostles and prophets (3:5; 4:11). Whatever we conclude about whether apostles and prophets continue today (see 4:11), their teaching, now written down in Scripture, is the foundation every generation of the church builds on.

"Jesus Christ Himself being the cornerstone," In ancient buildings, the cornerstone was the first stone laid, and every other stone was lined up with it. Isaiah 28:16 and Psalm 118:22 spoke of this stone, and Peter tells us it is Jesus (1 Peter 2:6-7). If the church lines up with anything other than Christ, it is crooked.

Old Testament links: Isaiah 28:16 (alluded to)

2:21-22 *in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in* ***the*** *Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in* ***the*** *Spirit.*

The building "grows into a holy temple in the Lord." In the Old Testament, God's presence lived in the tabernacle and then in the temple in Jerusalem. Now God lives in His people. Each believer is a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19), and together the church is His temple.

"You also are being built together." This is not finished yet. God is still adding stones. Every person who comes to Christ is fitted into the building, and the whole thing is becoming "a dwelling place of God in the Spirit." When you look at your church family, you are looking at the place where God has chosen to live.

Chapter 2 Summary

Before Christ, we were dead in our trespasses and sins, following the world, Satan, and our own flesh, and we were by nature children of wrath. But God, rich in mercy and because of His great love, made us alive with Christ, raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places. We are saved by grace through faith, not by works, and we are His workmanship, created for good works. Gentiles, who were once far off and without hope, have been brought near by the blood of Christ. Jesus is our peace. He broke down the middle wall, made Jew and Gentile into one new man, and reconciled both to God through the cross. Gentile believers are now fellow citizens and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus as the cornerstone, growing into a holy temple where God lives by His Spirit.

The wall I have had to tear down was in me. I thought I was better than others because of my beliefs. Ephesians 2 says Christ broke down the dividing wall. Pride builds walls that grace tears down.

Chapter 2 Study Questions

1. Why does Paul describe people without Christ as "dead" and not just sick or weak? (2:1)

2. What three forces does Paul say controlled our lives before we knew Christ? (2:2-3)

3. What two words changed everything for us, and what does Paul say about God's mercy and love? (2:4-5)

4. In your own words, how is a person saved, according to 2:8-9?

5. If we are not saved by good works, why does Paul say we were created for them? (2:10)

6. What five things did the Gentiles lack before Christ? (2:12)

7. What "middle wall" did Jesus break down, and how did He do it? (2:14-16)

8. What does it mean that Jesus is the cornerstone? (2:20)

9. Are there "walls" between groups of believers in your church or community? What would it look like to live out 2:14?

10. How does knowing that God lives among His people change the way you see your church family? (2:22)

Chapter 3: The Mystery Revealed

Scripture: Paul's Ministry to the Gentiles; Paul's Prayer for Strength

3:1-13 For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles, if indeed you have heard of the stewardship of the grace of God which was given to me for you, that by revelation He made known to me the mystery, even as I wrote before in brief, by which, reading ***it***, you are able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in ***the*** Spirit: ***that*** the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body and fellow partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel, of which I became a servant according to the gift of the grace of God given to me according to the working of His power. To me, the less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach the gospel among the Gentiles, the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to enlighten all ***as to*** what ***is*** the fellowship of the mystery which has been hidden from the ages in God, who created all things through Jesus Christ, so that now the manifold wisdom of God may be made known to the rulers and to the authorities in the heavenly ***places*** through the church, according to ***the*** purpose of the ages which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have the boldness and the access in confidence through the faith of Him. Therefore I ask ***you*** not to lose heart in my tribulations for you, which is your glory.

3:14-21 For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom every family in ***the*** heavens and on earth is named, that He may grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man,***for*** Christ to dwell through faith in your hearts, having been rooted and founded in love, so that you may be fully able to grasp with all the saints what ***is*** the breadth and length and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled to all the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do above all things, far more abundantly than what we ask or think, according to the power that is working in us, to Him ***be*** the glory in the church in Christ Jesus to all the generations of the age of the ages. Amen.

Chapter 3 Preview

Paul starts to pray at the beginning of chapter 3, but he stops in the middle of his sentence to explain his own ministry. God gave him a special job: to make known a mystery hidden for ages. The mystery is that Gentiles are now fellow heirs with Israel, members of the same body, and sharers of the same promise in Christ. Paul calls himself less than the least of all the saints, yet God gave him the grace to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ.

Then Paul picks up his prayer again. He bows his knees before the Father and asks that his readers would be strengthened by the Spirit, that Christ would dwell in their hearts through faith, and that they would know the love of Christ, which goes beyond knowledge. He ends with one of the great praises of the Bible, giving glory to God, who is able to do far more than we ask or think.

Chapter 3 Study

3:1 *For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles,*

"For this reason" points back to everything in chapter 2. Because God has made Jew and Gentile one in Christ, Paul is about to pray. But he stops after one line and does not pick up the prayer again until verse 14. Verses 2 to 13 are a long side note about his ministry.

Paul calls himself "the prisoner of Christ Jesus." He was chained to a Roman guard, but he did not see himself as Rome's prisoner. He saw himself as the Lord's prisoner. And he was in chains "for you Gentiles." Paul was arrested in Jerusalem because a crowd believed he had brought a Gentile into the temple (Acts 21:27-29). That Gentile was Trophimus, a man from Ephesus. His love for the Gentiles cost him his freedom.

3:2-3 *if indeed you have heard of the stewardship of the grace of God which was given to me for you, that by revelation He made known to me the mystery, even as I wrote before in brief,*

"The stewardship of the grace of God" means a trust that God placed in Paul's hands. A steward in Paul's day managed a household or estate for its owner. He did not own what he managed, but he answered for it. God gave Paul the job of carrying His grace to the Gentiles.

Paul received this mystery "by revelation." He did not come up with it, and no man taught it to him (Galatians 1:11-12). God showed it to him directly. When he says "even as I wrote before in brief," he likely means what he just wrote in chapters 1 and 2.

3:4-5 *by which, reading **it**, you are able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in **the** Spirit:*

When the Ephesians read his letter, Paul wanted them to understand "my insight into the mystery of Christ." Remember, in the Bible a mystery is a truth God kept hidden and has now made known.

This mystery "was not made known to the sons of men" in earlier generations the way it is now. The Old Testament did say the nations would be blessed through Abraham (Genesis 12:3) and would come to Israel's God (Isaiah 49:6). What it did not show clearly was how. No one saw that Gentiles would come in on equal terms, without becoming Jews, as one body with Jewish believers. That has now been "revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit."

3:6 ***that*** *the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body and fellow partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel,*

Here is the mystery, stated plainly. Paul uses three words that all begin with the same Greek prefix, meaning "together with." Gentiles are "fellow heirs," sharing the same inheritance. They are "fellow members of the body," part of the same church. And they are "fellow partakers of His promise in Christ," sharing the same promises.

All of this comes "through the gospel." Not through the Law, not through circumcision, not through any other way. The good news about Jesus is the door through which every person enters.

This does not cancel God's promises to the nation of Israel. Paul teaches in Romans 11 that God will still keep those promises. What is new is that believing Gentiles now share in the blessings of the Messiah right alongside believing Jews.

3:7 *of which I became a servant according to the gift of the grace of God given to me according to the working of His power.*

Paul "became a servant" of this gospel. A servant works for someone else. Paul did not take the job for himself. It came as "the gift of the grace of God." And Paul did not do the work in his own strength. It was "according to the working of His power."

Remember who Paul was before Christ. He was a Pharisee who hunted down Christians and threw them in prison (Acts 8:3; 1 Timothy 1:13). God took the church's greatest enemy and made him its greatest missionary. If God can use Paul, He can use you.

3:8 *To me, the less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach the gospel among the Gentiles, the unsearchable riches of Christ,*

"The less than the least of all the saints." Paul does not say he is the least of the apostles here, as he did in 1 Corinthians 15:9. He goes lower. He calls himself less than the least of all believers. That is not false humility. Paul never got over the fact that God saved a man like him.

And yet God gave him the honor of preaching "the unsearchable riches of Christ." Unsearchable means too deep to search out or measure. You can never reach the bottom of what Jesus is and what He has done. Paul spent the rest of his life preaching Christ and never ran out of things to say.

3:9 *and to enlighten all **as to** what **is** the fellowship of the mystery which has been hidden from the ages in God, who created all things through Jesus Christ,*

Paul's job was also "to enlighten all" about this mystery, which God had kept "hidden from the ages." Paul describes God here as the One "who created all things through Jesus Christ." The God who made the whole universe also made this plan from the beginning. He is not making things up as He goes. Bringing Jews and Gentiles together in one body was His plan all along.

3:10-11 *so that now the manifold wisdom of God may be made known to the rulers and to the authorities in the heavenly **places** through the church, according to **the** purpose of the ages which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord,*

Here is one of the most amazing statements in the letter. God uses the church to teach angels. "The rulers" and "the authorities in the heavenly places" are spiritual beings, both good and evil (1:21; 6:12). They watch what God is doing in the church, and through it they see "the manifold wisdom of God." Manifold means many-sided, like a jewel with many faces catching the light.

When former enemies sit together at the Lord's table, when people of every background love one another, the angels see something they have never seen before. Peter says these are things into which angels desire to look intently (1 Peter 1:12).

All of this was "according to the purpose of the ages" God carried out in Christ. Nothing about the church is an afterthought.

3:12 *in whom we have the boldness and the access in confidence through the faith of Him.*

Because of Jesus, "we have the boldness and the access in confidence" to come before God. In the ancient world, coming before a king without being called could cost you your life. Queen Esther risked exactly that at the Persian court (Esther 4:11). Through faith in Jesus, we can come to the King of the universe any time, and we don't have to be afraid. We come not because we are good enough, but because Jesus is.

3:13 *Therefore I ask **you** not to lose heart in my tribulations for you, which is your glory.*

Paul asks them "not to lose heart" because of what he was going through. They might have been tempted to be discouraged, thinking that if God's great apostle was in prison, maybe the gospel was losing. Paul turns it around. His sufferings are "for you," and they are "your glory." Because he suffered, the gospel reached them. Paul saw his chains as part of God's plan, not a failure of it.

3:14-15 *For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom every family in **the** heavens and on earth is named,*

Now Paul goes back to the prayer he started in verse 1. "I bow my knees." Jews usually prayed standing (Mark 11:25), so kneeling showed deep humility and strong feeling. Paul was moved by what God had done.

He prays "to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom every family in the heavens and on earth is named." There is a play on words in the Greek. The word for "Father" is pater, and the word for "family" is patria. Every family, every group of beings God has made, takes its name and existence from Him. He is the Father of them all as Creator, and He is the Father of believers in a special way through Christ.

3:16 *that He may grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man,*

Paul's first request is that God would strengthen them "with power through His Spirit in the inner man." The "inner man" is our spirit, the real person inside. Our bodies grow weaker with age, but Paul says our inner man can be renewed day by day (2 Corinthians 4:16).

And notice the measure of the gift: "according to the riches of His glory." God does not give out of His riches like a rich man tossing a coin to a beggar. He gives in proportion to His riches. That is a lot of strength.

3:17-19 ***for*** *Christ to dwell through faith in your hearts, having been rooted and founded in love, so that you may be fully able to grasp with all the saints what* ***is*** *the breadth and length and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled to all the fullness of God.*

Paul's second request is for "Christ to dwell through faith in your hearts." Christ already lives in every believer. The word "dwell" means to settle down and be at home. Paul is praying that Jesus would be fully at home in every room of their lives, not just a guest in the front room.

Paul uses two pictures: "rooted," like a tree, and "founded," like a building on a solid foundation. Both are deep "in love." Then he prays that they would grasp the size of Christ's love: its breadth, length, height, and depth. It is wide enough for every person, long enough to last forever, high enough to lift us to heaven, and deep enough to reach the worst sinner. Paul prays they would "know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge." We can know it truly, but we will never know it fully. We will be learning it for all eternity.

The goal is "that you may be filled to all the fullness of God." That doesn't mean we become God. It means God fills us more and more with Himself until His life flows through every part of ours.

3:20-21 *Now to Him who is able to do above all things, far more abundantly than what we ask or think, according to the power that is working in us, to Him* ***be*** *the glory in the church in Christ Jesus to all the generations of the age of the ages. Amen.*

Paul ends his prayer with praise. Look at how he stacks up the words: God "is able to do above all things, far more abundantly than what we ask or think." We can ask big things. We can imagine bigger things. God is able to do far more than all of it.

And He does it "according to the power that is working in us." That is the same resurrection power from 1:19-20. That power is working in every believer right now.

The purpose of it all is God's glory, "in the church in Christ Jesus to all the generations of the age of the ages." The church exists to bring glory to God. That is why Paul can end the first half of his letter with "Amen," which means "so be it" or "it is true."

Chapter 3 Summary

Paul, a prisoner for the sake of the Gentiles, explains the ministry God gave him. God revealed to him a mystery hidden in earlier ages: Gentiles are fellow heirs, fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ through the gospel. Paul, less than the least of all the saints, was given grace to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ, so that God's many-sided wisdom would be made known through the church even to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. In Christ we have bold and confident access to God. Paul then bows his knees and prays that believers would be strengthened by the Spirit, that Christ would dwell in their hearts through faith, and that they would know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge. He closes with praise to God, who is able to do far more than all we ask or think.

Chapter 3 Study Questions

1. Why did Paul call himself "the prisoner of Christ Jesus" and not a prisoner of Rome? (3:1)

2. What is a "mystery" in the Bible, and what was the mystery Paul was given to make known? (3:3-6)

3. What three things does 3:6 say Gentiles now share with Jewish believers?

4. How did Paul see himself, and why do you think he described himself that way? (3:8)

5. Who is watching what God does in the church, and what do they learn? (3:10)

6. What does it mean to have "the boldness and the access in confidence" that we have in Christ? How should that change the way you pray? (3:12)

7. How did Paul view his own sufferings? (3:13)

8. What is the difference between Christ living in you and Christ being fully "at home" in your heart? (3:17)

9. Which part of the size of Christ's love in 3:18 means the most to you right now, and why?

10. What is something you have stopped asking God for because it seemed too big? Read 3:20 and talk to Him about it.

Chapter 4: Walk Worthy of Your Calling

Scripture: The Unity of the Spirit; The New Self

4:1-16 I, therefore, the prisoner in ***the*** Lord, exhort you to walk worthily of the calling with which you were called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, being diligent to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace: one body and one Spirit, even as you also were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who ***is*** over all and through all and in you all. But to each one of us the grace was given according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Therefore it says, "Having ascended on high, He took captivity captive, and He gave gifts to men." Now "He ascended," what is it except that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? The One who descended is Himself also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things. And He Himself gave some ***as*** apostles, and some ***as*** prophets, and some ***as*** evangelists, and some ***as*** shepherds and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for ***the*** work of ministry, for ***the*** building up of the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a complete man, to ***the*** measure of ***the*** stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be infants, being tossed by waves and carried about by every wind of teaching, in the trickery of men, in craftiness with a view to the scheming of error; but speaking the truth in love, we may grow up into Him in all things, who is the head, Christ, from whom the whole body, being joined together and held together through every joint of the supply, according to ***the*** working in ***the*** measure of each individual part, makes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

4:17-32 This therefore I say and testify in ***the*** Lord: you ***are*** no longer to walk as the rest of the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, darkened in the understanding, being alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart, who, having become callous, gave themselves over to sensuality for ***the*** practice of every impurity with greediness. But you did not learn Christ this way, if indeed you heard Him and were taught in Him, as truth is in Jesus: ***that*** you put off, concerning the former way of life, the old man, which is being corrupted according to the desires of deceit, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man, which according to God was created in righteousness and holiness of the truth. Therefore, having put off the falsehood, speak truth each one with his neighbor, because we are members of one another. Be angry, and do not sin; let the sun not set on your anger, nor give place to the devil. Let the one who steals no longer steal, but rather let him labor, working with the hands what is good, so that he may have ***something*** to share with the one who has need. Let no rotten word go out of your mouth, but whatever ***is*** good for building up of the need, so that it may give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you were sealed for ***the*** day of redemption. Let all bitterness and rage and wrath and clamor and slander be removed from you, along with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you.

Chapter 4 Preview

Chapter 4 is the turning point of the letter. For three chapters Paul has told us who we are in Christ. Now he tells us how to live. The key word is "walk." Paul calls believers to walk worthy of

their calling, with humility, gentleness, patience, and love, working hard to keep the unity the Spirit has given. There is one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father of all.

Then Paul shows how Christ builds His church. The risen Lord gave gifts to His people: apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers. Their job is to equip the saints for the work of ministry, so the whole body grows up into Christ. In the second half of the chapter, Paul tells believers to stop living like the Gentiles around them. We are to put off the old man, be renewed in the spirit of our minds, and put on the new man. He then gets practical: tell the truth, deal with anger, stop stealing, watch your words, and forgive as God in Christ has forgiven you.

Chapter 4 Study

4:1 *I, therefore, the prisoner in **the** Lord, exhort you to walk worthily of the calling with which you were called,*

"Therefore." Whenever Paul says "therefore," we need to ask what it is there for. It points back to chapters 1 to 3. Because God chose us, saved us by grace, and made us one body, we should now live in a way that fits.

"Walk worthily of the calling." The word for "worthily" was used for a set of scales in balance. Our life on one side should match our calling on the other. We don't walk worthy in order to be saved. We walk worthy because we already are.

Paul calls himself "the prisoner in the Lord," as he did in 3:1. He is not asking them to do anything he is not willing to do himself.

4:2 *with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love,*

What does a worthy walk look like? Paul starts with attitudes, not actions. "Humility" means thinking rightly about ourselves, not too highly (Romans 12:3). The Greeks and Romans did not see humility as a good thing. Jesus showed the world what it really looks like (Philippians 2:5-8). "Gentleness" is strength under control, not weakness. Moses was called very humble (Numbers 12:3), yet he stood before Pharaoh. "Patience" means putting up with people for a long time without blowing up.

"Bearing with one another in love." Let's be honest. Other believers can be hard to live with, and so can we. Love bears with the faults of others because Christ bears with ours.

4:3 *being diligent to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace:*

"Being diligent to keep the unity of the Spirit." We do not create unity. The Spirit already made us one (2:14-18). Our job is to keep it, to guard it, and to protect it from being broken. And that takes diligence, which means effort. Unity in a church does not happen by accident.

"The bond of peace" is like a cord that ties people together. Peace with each other is what holds the unity in place. I have seen more churches hurt by gossip and hard feelings than by false teaching. Guard your church's peace.

4:4-6 *one body and one Spirit, even as you also were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who **is** over all and through all and in you all.*

Paul lists seven "ones" that every true believer shares. There is "one body," the church. There is "one Spirit," who lives in every believer. There is "one hope," the return of Jesus and our future with Him. There is "one Lord," Jesus Christ. There is "one faith," the body of truth handed down by the apostles (Jude 3). There is "one baptism," most likely water baptism, the public step every believer takes to show they belong to Jesus. And there is "one God and Father of all."

Once again the Trinity is here: one Spirit, one Lord, one God and Father. Our unity is built on who God is.

This list also shows us what is worth dividing over and what is not. Believers will disagree on many things. But these seven are the core. Where these are shared, we should work hard to stay together.

4:7-8 *But to each one of us the grace was given according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Therefore it says, "Having ascended on high, He took captivity captive, and He gave gifts to men."*

Unity does not mean everyone is the same. "To each one of us the grace was given." Every believer has a gift from Christ to serve His body.

Paul quotes Psalm 68:18, a psalm about God going up in victory to His holy mountain like a conquering king. In the ancient world, a king who won a battle came home leading a parade of captives and handing out the spoils. Paul applies this to Jesus. He went up to heaven in victory over sin, death, and Satan, and He gives gifts to His people.

The psalm says the king "received gifts," and Paul writes that He "gave gifts." Both ideas belong to a conquering king. He receives the spoils of victory and then shares them with his people. Paul, writing under the Holy Spirit, shows us how the psalm finds its fullest meaning in Christ.

Old Testament links: Psalm 68:18 (quoted)

4:9-10 *Now "He ascended," what is it except that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? The One who descended is Himself also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things.*

Paul explains the word "ascended." If Jesus went up, He must have first come down. He "descended first into the lower parts of the earth." Bible teachers read this phrase in three main ways. Some believe it means Jesus came down to earth at His birth, the earth being lower than heaven. Others believe it means His burial, going down into the grave. Others believe it means He went to the place of the dead between His death and resurrection (1 Peter 3:18-20). Each view has good support, and I won't press one view here.

What is plain is the big picture. The One who came down as low as anyone could go is the same One who went "far above all the heavens." He did it "so that He might fill all things." Jesus' humility and His glory belong together (Philippians 2:5-11).

4:11 *And He Himself gave some **as** apostles, and some **as** prophets, and some **as** evangelists, and some **as** shepherds and teachers,*

Here are the gifts Christ gave. They are not abilities this time. They are people. Christ gave the church leaders.

"Apostles" were men sent directly by the risen Christ, who had seen Him (1 Corinthians 9:1). "Prophets" spoke messages directly from God. Paul has already said the apostles and prophets were the foundation of the church (2:20; 3:5). "Evangelists" carry the gospel to those who haven't heard it, like Philip in Acts 8 and 21:8. "Shepherds and teachers" care for and teach a local church. Many Bibles say "pastors" here, and a pastor is exactly that, a shepherd. The way Paul writes it in Greek ties these two together, so many see them as one office: the shepherd who teaches.

Bible teachers disagree about whether apostles and prophets still exist today. Some believe these gifts ended with the first generation, since a foundation is only laid once (2:20). Others believe they continue in some form today. I am leaving that question open, as I did in my study of Acts. Every side agrees that no one today adds to Scripture, and that the church still needs evangelists, pastors, and teachers.

4:12 *for the equipping of the saints for **the** work of ministry, for **the** building up of the body of Christ,*

Why did Christ give these leaders? "For the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry." This verse changes how we think about church. The pastor's job is not to do all the ministry while everyone else watches. His job is to equip the saints, and the saints do the work of ministry.

"Equipping" was a word used for setting a broken bone or mending a fishing net. Leaders help put believers in shape and get them ready to serve.

The goal is "the building up of the body of Christ." Every believer has a part. If you are sitting on the sidelines, the body is missing something only you can give.

4:13 *until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a complete man, to **the** measure of **the** stature of the fullness of Christ,*

How long does this work go on? "Until we all attain to the unity of the faith." Here the goal is unity in what we believe and in "the knowledge of the Son of God." Paul also wants us to grow "to a complete man," measured by nothing less than "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." The standard for the church is Jesus Himself. We will not reach it completely in this life, but we keep growing toward it until we see Him face to face (1 John 3:2).

4:14 *so that we may no longer be infants, being tossed by waves and carried about by every wind of teaching, in the trickery of men, in craftiness with a view to the scheming of error;*

The opposite of maturity is being a child. Children are easily fooled. Paul pictures a small boat "being tossed by waves." Every new teaching that comes along pushes it in a different direction.

Paul warns that some false teaching comes through "the trickery of men" and "craftiness with a view to the scheming of error." Not every teacher is honest. Some know exactly what they are doing. The best protection against false teaching is not to study every error. It is to know the truth so well that the counterfeit stands out.

4:15-16 *but speaking the truth in love, we may grow up into Him in all things, who is the head, Christ, from whom the whole body, being joined together and held together through every joint of the supply, according to* ***the*** *working in* ***the*** *measure of each individual part, makes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.*

"Speaking the truth in love." Truth without love can be harsh and cruel. Love without truth is soft and empty. We need both. When we hold them together, we "grow up into Him in all things, who is the head, Christ."

Verse 16 pictures the church as a healthy body. Every part is "joined together and held together." Every joint supplies something. Each part does its work. The growth of the body comes from Christ, the head, but it flows through every member doing their part. A body where only one part works is not healthy. And the whole thing grows "in love."

4:17-18 *This therefore I say and testify in* ***the*** *Lord: you* ***are*** *no longer to walk as the rest of the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, darkened in the understanding, being alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart,*

Paul now turns to the second part of the chapter. He says it strongly: "This therefore I say and testify in the Lord." Believers are "no longer to walk as the rest of the Gentiles also walk." By Gentiles here he means unbelievers who live without God.

He describes how they think. Their minds are empty ("the futility of their mind"). Their understanding is "darkened." They are "alienated from the life of God." Why? Because of "ignorance" and "the hardness of their heart." Their ignorance is not innocent. It flows from a heart that has turned hard against God. Romans 1:21 describes the same thing. People who refuse God end up unable to think straight about Him.

4:19 *who, having become callous, gave themselves over to sensuality for* ***the*** *practice of every impurity with greediness.*

The end of a hardened heart is a life with no brakes. "Having become callous" means they no longer feel anything. Their conscience has been seared like skin that has been burned so many times it goes numb (1 Timothy 4:2). They "gave themselves over to sensuality," meaning sin done openly and without any shame. And they practice "every impurity with greediness," always wanting more. Sin never satisfies. It only leaves a person hungrier.

4:20-21 *But you did not learn Christ this way, if indeed you heard Him and were taught in Him, as truth is in Jesus:*

"But you did not learn Christ this way." Paul does not say they learned about Christ. He speaks of learning Christ Himself. The Christian life is knowing a Person, not just learning facts about Him.

"Truth is in Jesus." Jesus does not only tell the truth. He is the truth (John 14:6). If what we have been taught leads us back into the old life, it did not come from Him.

4:22-24 ***that*** *you put off, concerning the former way of life, the old man, which is being corrupted according to the desires of deceit, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man, which according to God was created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.*

Here Paul uses the picture of changing clothes. He tells us to "put off, concerning the former way of life, the old man," like taking off dirty clothes. The "old man" is the person we were before Christ, "being corrupted according to the desires of deceit." Sin always lies. It promises pleasure and pays out death.

"Be renewed in the spirit of your mind." Change starts in the mind. Paul says the same in Romans 12:2. We cannot keep thinking the old way and expect to live a new way. Filling our minds with God's Word is how He renews us.

"Put on the new man," the person God has made us in Christ, "created in righteousness and holiness of the truth." In Colossians 3:9-10, Paul says believers have already put off the old man and put on the new. Here he tells them to keep living that way, day after day.

4:25 *Therefore, having put off the falsehood, speak truth each one with his neighbor, because we are members of one another.*

Now Paul gets very practical. The first old garment to take off is lying. "Having put off the falsehood, speak truth each one with his neighbor." Paul quotes Zechariah 8:16 here.

His reason is simple: "we are members of one another." Lying to another believer is like your hand lying to your foot. When the body cannot trust its own members, it cannot work. Honesty is not only a personal virtue. It keeps the church healthy.

Old Testament links: Zechariah 8:16 (quoted)

4:26-27 *Be angry, and do not sin; let the sun not set on your anger, nor give place to the devil.*

"Be angry, and do not sin." Paul is quoting Psalm 4:4, following the Greek translation of the Old Testament that the early church used. Translated from the Hebrew, Psalm 4:4 reads "Tremble, and do not sin." Not all anger is sin. Mark tells us Jesus looked around at the hard-hearted men in the synagogue "with anger" (Mark 3:5). God is angry at evil. But anger is like fire. It can easily get out of control.

"Let the sun not set on your anger." Deal with it quickly. Don't take it to bed with you. Anger that sits overnight turns into bitterness. Dealing with it does not always mean a quick talk with the

person who hurt you. Sometimes it means bringing it honestly to God that night and asking Him to help you handle it His way. Verse 31 shows where Paul is heading: the settled, simmering wrath is the kind to put away.

Why? Because it gives "place to the devil." The word means a foothold, a place to stand. Unresolved anger hands Satan a key to the door of your life. Many broken marriages and split churches started with anger that was never dealt with.

Old Testament links: Psalm 4:4 (quoted)

4:28 *Let the one who steals no longer steal, but rather let him labor, working with the hands what is good, so that he may have* ***something*** *to share with the one who has need.*

"Let the one who steals no longer steal." Paul doesn't stop there. The thief must "labor, working with the hands what is good." And the purpose of working is not only to provide for himself, but "so that he may have something to share with the one who has need."

This is what real change looks like in the gospel. The sin stops, and the opposite takes its place. The taker becomes a giver. The one who used to take from others now works to give to them.

4:29 *Let no rotten word go out of your mouth, but whatever* ***is*** *good for building up of the need, so that it may give grace to those who hear.*

"Let no rotten word go out of your mouth." The same word was used for rotten fruit or spoiled fish. It means words that are foul, spoiled, and harmful. That includes cursing, but also gossip, put-downs, and crude jokes.

Again Paul gives the opposite. Speak only "whatever is good for building up of the need," the right word at the right time. And speak words that "give grace to those who hear." Before you speak, ask yourself: will this build up, and will it give grace?

4:30 *And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you were sealed for* ***the*** *day of redemption.*

"Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God." This shows us the Holy Spirit is a Person, not a force. A force or a power cannot be grieved. Only a person who loves you can be. This verse sits right in the middle of verses about lying, anger, stealing, and ugly words. Those are the things that grieve Him.

"In whom you were sealed for the day of redemption." Paul brings back the seal from 1:13. The Spirit is God's mark on us until the day our redemption is complete, when Jesus comes for His church and our bodies are raised or changed (Romans 8:23; 1 Corinthians 15:51-52). Paul is appealing to love here, not fear. Don't hurt the One who has made you His own.

Old Testament links: Isaiah 63:10 (alluded to)

4:31 *Let all bitterness and rage and wrath and clamor and slander be removed from you, along with all malice.*

Paul lists six things to be "removed from you." "Bitterness" is a sour, resentful spirit that keeps score. "Rage" is a sudden outburst. "Wrath" is a settled, simmering grudge. "Clamor" is shouting and yelling. "Slander" is speaking evil about others. "Malice" is wanting harm to come to someone.

These often come as a chain. Bitterness often comes first, hidden inside. Then it boils over into rage and wrath, then it gets loud, then it turns to slander, and finally it becomes malice. The best place to stop the chain is at the start.

4:32 *And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you.*

And here is what we put on instead. "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted." Kindness is goodness that acts. "Tenderhearted" is a heart that feels for others. And "forgiving each other."

The reason and the measure are the same: "even as God also in Christ forgave you." We forgive because we have been forgiven. When someone hurts us, we remember how much God forgave us. Jesus told a parable about a servant who was forgiven a huge debt but would not forgive a small one (Matthew 18:21-35). If God forgave you everything, you can forgive others. That doesn't mean what they did was right, and it doesn't always mean trust comes back right away. Forgiveness can take time, and it never means a crime should not be reported or that you must stay where you are being hurt. It means you release them from the debt and leave it with God.

Chapter 4 Summary

Paul urges believers to walk worthy of their calling, with humility, gentleness, patience, and love, working hard to keep the unity of the Spirit. There is one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father of all. The risen Christ gave gifts to His church: apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry and build up the body until it grows into the fullness of Christ. Speaking the truth in love, every part of the body does its work. Believers must no longer walk like the Gentiles in the futility of their minds. They are to put off the old man, be renewed in their minds, and put on the new man. That means telling the truth, dealing with anger quickly, working instead of stealing, speaking words that build up, and not grieving the Holy Spirit. Believers are to put away bitterness and malice and be kind, tenderhearted, and forgiving, just as God in Christ has forgiven them.

Chapter 4 Study Questions

1. What does it mean to "walk worthily of the calling" God gave you? (4:1)

2. Which of the four attitudes in 4:2 is hardest for you, and why?

3. Paul says we are to "keep" unity, not create it. What is the difference? (4:3)

4. What seven "ones" does Paul list in 4:4-6, and why do they matter for unity?

5. According to 4:11-12, what is the main job of shepherds and teachers? What does that mean for the rest of us?

6. What does a spiritually immature believer look like, according to 4:14?

7. What does it mean to put off "the old man" and "put on the new man"? (4:22-24)

8. What does Paul say about anger in 4:26-27? How can you deal with anger before the sun goes down?

9. Before you speak, what two questions does 4:29 teach you to ask?

10. Is there someone you need to forgive? How does 4:32 help you do it?

Chapter 5: Walk in Love and Light

Scripture: Imitators of God; Wives and Husbands

5:1-21 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, and walk in love, even as Christ also loved us and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for an aroma of fragrance. But sexual immorality and all impurity or greediness, let it not even be named among you, as is proper for saints; and filthiness and foolish talk or coarse joking, the ***things*** not fitting, but rather thanksgiving. For you know this, that every sexually immoral person or impure person or greedy person, who is an idolater, has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes on the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them; for you were once darkness, but now ***you are*** light in ***the*** Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit ***is*** in all goodness and righteousness and truth), discerning what is well-pleasing to the Lord. And do not have fellowship with the unfruitful works of the darkness, but rather even expose ***them***. For it is shameful even to speak ***of*** the things being done by them in secret. But all things, being exposed by the light, are made visible; for everything that is made visible is light. Therefore it says, "Awake, you who are sleeping, and rise up from the dead, and Christ will shine on you." Therefore see carefully how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Because of this do not be foolish, but understanding what the will of the Lord ***is***. And do not be drunk with wine, in which is debauchery, but be filled with ***the*** Spirit, speaking to each other with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things in ***the*** name of our Lord Jesus Christ to the God and Father, submitting yourselves to one another in ***the*** fear of God.

5:22-33 Wives, submit yourselves to ***your*** own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ ***is*** head of the church, and He Himself is Savior of the body. But as the church is subjected to Christ, so also the wives ***are*** to ***their*** own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your own wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed ***her*** by the washing of water by ***the*** word, so that He might present her to Himself, the church glorious, not having spot or wrinkle or any of such things, but that she might be holy and blameless. So husbands ought 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 he nourishes and cherishes it, even as also the Lord ***does*** the church, because we are members of His body, from His flesh and from His bones. "Because of this a man will leave his father and mother and will be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." This mystery is great, but I speak with reference to Christ and to the church. Nevertheless, you also, each one individually, let each so love his own wife as himself, and the wife ***must see*** that she fears the husband.

Chapter 5 Preview

Paul keeps telling us how to walk. In this chapter, we are to walk in love, walk as children of light, and walk carefully, as wise people. We are to imitate God the way children copy their father, and to love the way Christ loved us when He gave Himself for us. That means no room for sexual sin,

greed, or filthy talk. Those who were once darkness are now light in the Lord, and they expose the darkness instead of joining it.

Paul then tells believers to be filled with the Spirit. A Spirit-filled life shows up in worship, thankfulness, and a willingness to put others first. That leads straight into the home. Paul teaches wives and husbands how to live together in a way that pictures Christ and the church. Wives are to submit to their husbands as to the Lord. Husbands are to love their wives just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her. Marriage, Paul says, is a picture of a great mystery: Christ and His church.

Chapter 5 Study

5:1-2 *Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, and walk in love, even as Christ also loved us and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for an aroma of fragrance.*

"Be imitators of God." The Greek word gives us our word "mimic." Children copy their parents. They walk like them, talk like them, and pick up their habits. As "beloved children," we are to copy our Father.

How? "Walk in love." And Paul shows us what that love looks like: "even as Christ also loved us and gave Himself up for us." Real love is not just a feeling. It gives itself away. Jesus did not just say He loved us. He went to the cross.

"An offering and a sacrifice to God for an aroma of fragrance." In the Old Testament, some offerings were said to be a soothing aroma to the LORD (Leviticus 1:9). It means God was pleased with them. The death of Jesus was the perfect sacrifice that fully pleased the Father. When we love others in the same self-giving way, that pleases Him too.

5:3-4 *But sexual immorality and all impurity or greediness, let it not even be named among you, as is proper for saints; and filthiness and foolish talk or coarse joking, the **things** not fitting, but rather thanksgiving.*

Paul now names what love is not. "Sexual immorality" is any sexual sin outside of marriage between a husband and wife. "Impurity" covers every kind of moral filth. "Greediness" means always wanting more. Paul says these must "not even be named among you." Not just avoided, but so far from the church that no one could rightly connect them with believers.

Verse 4 turns to our mouths. "Filthiness" is shameful talk. "Foolish talk" is the talk of a fool. "Coarse joking" means dirty jokes and clever double meanings. Paul is not against laughter. He is against humor that drags sin into the conversation.

Instead, he calls for "thanksgiving." A thankful heart does not have much room for dirty talk. When our mouths are full of thanks to God, the filth gets crowded out.

5:5 *For you know this, that every sexually immoral person or impure person or greedy person, who is an idolater, has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.*

This is a serious warning. Paul says that the sexually immoral, the impure, and the greedy have no "inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God." He calls a greedy person "an idolater," because greed puts something else in the place of God.

Paul is not describing a believer who stumbles and gets back up. He is describing people whose whole life is marked by these sins, people who live this way without repentance. He says the same in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, and then adds, "And such were some of you." God changes people. Bible teachers explain this warning in different ways, as we saw at 1:13-14, but they agree it is a real warning. Anyone living in these sins with no sorrow and no desire to change should take it seriously and come back to Christ today. And if you hate your sin and keep running back to Jesus, that sorrow is itself a sign of His Spirit at work in you. Confess it (1 John 1:9) and keep walking.

Paul calls it "the kingdom of Christ and of God," and once again he puts Jesus right beside the Father.

5:6-7 *Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes on the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them;*

"Let no one deceive you with empty words." In Paul's day, as in ours, some people said that what you do with your body doesn't matter. Paul calls that empty talk. God's wrath is coming on "the sons of disobedience" because of these very sins (Colossians 3:6).

"Do not be partakers with them." This doesn't mean believers should never talk to unbelievers. Jesus ate with sinners. It means we must not join them in their sin. We can be friends with people without being partners in what they do.

5:8 *for you were once darkness, but now **you are** light in **the** Lord. Walk as children of light*

"You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord." Paul doesn't say they used to be in darkness. He says they were darkness. And now they don't just live in the light. They are light. Our very nature has changed.

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12), and He also told His followers, "You are the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14). We are light because we are "in the Lord." The moon has no light of its own. It shines by reflecting the sun. We shine by reflecting Jesus.

"Walk as children of light." Live like who you are.

5:9-10 *(for the fruit of the Spirit **is** in all goodness and righteousness and truth), discerning what is well-pleasing to the Lord.*

What does this new life produce? "The fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth." Many Greek copies read "the fruit of the light" here, which fits the light Paul has just

described. Either way, it is God at work in us. Goodness is how we treat others. Righteousness is doing what is right before God. Truth is being honest and real.

"Discerning what is well-pleasing to the Lord." A believer's life is a daily search for what pleases God. We learn it from His Word, by the leading of His Spirit, and through experience. The question is not only "Is this wrong?" but "Will this please Him?"

5:11-12 *And do not have fellowship with the unfruitful works of the darkness, but rather even expose **them**. For it is shameful even to speak **of** the things being done by them in secret.*

"Do not have fellowship with the unfruitful works of the darkness." The Spirit bears fruit in the children of light (5:9). Darkness bears nothing worth keeping.

"But rather even expose them." We do this first by living in the light. When light comes into a room, the darkness doesn't argue. It just goes. A holy life shows sin for what it is. At times, exposing sin also means speaking up. When we do, we speak gently and humbly, remembering that we were once darkness too (5:8; Galatians 6:1).

Verse 12 tells us some sins are so dark it is "shameful even to speak of" them. We are to expose darkness, not dwell on it. Believers do not need to know every detail of evil to stand against it.

5:13-14 *But all things, being exposed by the light, are made visible; for everything that is made visible is light. Therefore it says, "Awake, you who are sleeping, and rise up from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."*

When light shines on something, it is "exposed" and seen for what it really is. And "everything that is made visible is light." When sin is brought into God's light, it can be confessed and forgiven (1 John 1:7-9), and the person who was in darkness can become light too. That is what happened to every believer.

Paul then gives a short saying: "Awake, you who are sleeping, and rise up from the dead, and Christ will shine on you." Scripture doesn't tell us exactly where this came from. Many think it was part of an early Christian hymn or song, based on passages like Isaiah 60:1. It is a call to anyone who is spiritually asleep or dead to wake up and let Christ shine on them.

Old Testament links: Isaiah 60:1 (alluded to); Isaiah 26:19 (alluded to)

5:15-16 *Therefore see carefully how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.*

"See carefully how you walk." The word means to look carefully, like a man walking along a narrow cliff path. Live "not as unwise but as wise."

"Redeeming the time." The phrase means buying up the opportunity, like a merchant who sees a bargain and grabs it before it's gone. Every day God gives us chances to serve Him, love others, and share the gospel. Don't waste them.

Why? "Because the days are evil." The world around us is not neutral. It pulls us toward sin and away from God. If we drift, we will drift the wrong way.

5:17 *Because of this do not be foolish, but understanding what the will of the Lord **is**.*

"Do not be foolish, but understanding what the will of the Lord is." Many believers worry a lot about God's will for big decisions: which job, which house, whom to marry. Those questions matter. But most of God's will is already written plainly in Scripture. This chapter alone tells us a great deal of it. If we do what we already know He wants, He will lead us in the rest.

5:18 *And do not be drunk with wine, in which is debauchery, but be filled with **the** Spirit,*

"Do not be drunk with wine." The Bible does not forbid all drinking of wine, but it plainly forbids drunkenness (Proverbs 23:29-35; Galatians 5:21). Drunkenness leads to "debauchery," which means a wasted, out-of-control life.

"But be filled with the Spirit." Paul compares the two. A drunk man is under the control of the wine. A believer is to be under the control of the Holy Spirit. The verb in Greek is a command, it is plural (for all of us), and it is ongoing. It means keep on being filled. Every believer receives the Spirit at salvation (1:13). Being filled with the Spirit is letting Him lead and control us day by day, a daily surrender more than a one-time experience. There is a big difference, too. Wine takes away a person's self-control. The Spirit gives it, because self-control is part of the fruit He grows in us (Galatians 5:22-23).

Old Testament links: Proverbs 23:31 (alluded to)

5:19-21 *speaking to each other with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things in **the** name of our Lord Jesus Christ to the God and Father, submitting yourselves to one another in **the** fear of God.*

What does a Spirit-filled life look like? Paul gives three signs.

First, worship. We speak to one another "with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." Paul pictures believers "singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." Psalms are the songs of Scripture. Hymns are songs of praise to God. Spiritual songs may be songs of personal testimony. Music in the church is believers teaching and encouraging one another (Colossians 3:16), and it comes from the heart.

Second, thankfulness. "Giving thanks always for all things." Not just the good things. Paul wrote this from prison. We may not thank God for evil itself, but we can thank Him in every situation, because He is working all things for good (Romans 8:28).

Third, humility. "Submitting yourselves to one another in the fear of God." A Spirit-filled believer is not demanding his own way. He is willing to put others first, out of reverence for the Lord. Many Greek copies read "the fear of Christ" here. This verse opens the door to the next section, where Paul shows what this looks like in marriage, family, and work.

5:22-24 *Wives, submit yourselves to **your** own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ **is** head of the church, and He Himself is Savior of the body. But as the church is subjected to Christ, so also the wives **are** to **their** own husbands in everything.*

Paul begins with wives. "Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands, as to the Lord." These are hard words for many people today, so let's read them carefully.

First, this flows from verse 21. Every believer is called to humble themselves and put others first. Second, Paul speaks to wives directly. He does not tell husbands to make their wives submit. It is a choice a wife makes, "as to the Lord," as part of her own walk with Jesus. Third, submission does not mean a wife is less valuable. Jesus is equal with the Father, yet He humbled Himself and came to do His Father's will (Philippians 2:6-8; John 6:38). Submission is about role, not worth. Fourth, it is to "your own husbands," not to all men.

"The husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church." Headship in Scripture means loving leadership and responsibility, not being a boss or a tyrant. A wife's submission does not include following her husband into sin. Our first loyalty is always to God (Acts 5:29).

Submission also never means putting up with abuse. Paul is not telling any wife to stay under violence, threats, or control. A husband who abuses his wife is breaking verses 25 to 29, and the church should stand with her. If you are being hurt, or you are afraid in your own home, please tell a pastor or another believer you trust, and get to a safe place. If you are in danger, call for emergency help.

Bible teachers today differ on how these verses should be lived out. Some believe they teach a lasting pattern of the husband's loving leadership in the home. Others point out that in the oldest Greek copies, verse 22 has no verb of its own and borrows it from verse 21, and they believe the mutual submission of verse 21 shapes everything after it. I have taught the passage as I understand its plain meaning, and I encourage you to study it prayerfully for yourself.

5:25 *Husbands, love your own wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her,*

If wives thought verse 22 was hard, husbands have it harder. "Husbands, love your own wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her." In Paul's world, the husband was clearly the one in charge, and the culture expected him to rule his home. Paul does not tell husbands to rule. He tells them to love.

And look at the standard. Not "love your wife as much as she deserves," or "love her when she treats you well." Love her "even as Christ also loved the church." How did Christ love the church? He died for her. A husband is called to lay down his life for his wife, not only in a crisis, but every day: his time, his comfort, his rights, his preferences. A wife who is loved like that will rarely find submission a burden.

5:26-27 *so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed **her** by the washing of water by **the** word, so that He might present her to Himself, the church glorious, not having spot or wrinkle or any of such things, but that she might be holy and blameless.*

Why did Christ give Himself for the church? "So that He might sanctify her." To sanctify means to set apart and make holy. He has done this "by the washing of water by the word." Many Bible teachers see this as the cleansing God's Word brings to our lives (John 15:3; 17:17). Some also see a reference to baptism. Either way, God uses His Word to make His people clean.

The goal is a bride presented to Christ as "the church glorious, not having spot or wrinkle." In Paul's day, a bride was carefully prepared for her wedding day. One day Jesus will present His church to Himself, "holy and blameless," with no stain of sin. Revelation 19:7-8 describes that wedding.

A husband who loves like Christ will want what is best for his wife's walk with God. He will help her grow, not hold her back.

5:28-30 *So husbands ought 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 he nourishes and cherishes it, even as also the Lord **does** the church, because we are members of His body, from His flesh and from His bones.*

"Husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies." No sane man hates his own body. He feeds it and takes care of it. A husband and wife are so joined that hurting her is like hurting himself. "He who loves his own wife loves himself."

"Nourishes and cherishes" are tender words. To nourish is to feed and help grow. To cherish is to keep warm, like a mother bird with her young. This is how Christ treats His church, "because we are members of His body." Every believer is cared for by Christ in this way.

Old Testament links: Genesis 2:23 (alluded to)

5:31 *"Because of this a man will leave his father and mother and will be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh."*

Paul quotes Genesis 2:24 in the words of 5:31, the first marriage, where God brought Eve to Adam. A man shall "leave his father and mother," meaning his first loyalty changes. He shall "be joined to his wife," like two things glued together. And "the two will become one flesh." Marriage is the closest human relationship God has made. Jesus quoted this same verse to show that God means marriage to last (Matthew 19:4-6).

Old Testament links: Genesis 2:24 (quoted)

5:32 *This mystery is great, but I speak with reference to Christ and to the church.*

"This mystery is great." Now Paul tells us the deepest meaning of marriage. From the beginning, God designed marriage to be a living picture of something greater: Christ and the church. Every Christian marriage is meant to preach a small sermon about Jesus and His bride. When a husband

loves sacrificially and a wife responds with trust and respect, the world gets a glimpse of the gospel.

That is why marriage matters so much to God. It is His design, and it points to Christ.

5:33 *Nevertheless, you also, each one individually, let each so love his own wife as himself, and the wife **must see** that she fears the husband.*

Paul sums it up. Each husband is to "love his own wife as himself." The wife is to see to it that she "fears the husband," which here means a reverent respect. He is to love her. She is to respect him.

Each command is given to one person. A husband is not told to make his wife respect him. A wife is not told to make her husband love her. Each one answers to God for their own part, even when the other falls short. That is about the ordinary failures every marriage has, not abuse. Abuse is a serious sin, and it should be brought into the light (5:11), not quietly endured.

Chapter 5 Summary

Paul calls believers to be imitators of God and to walk in love, just as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us. Sexual sin, impurity, greed, and filthy talk have no place among saints, and those who live that way have no inheritance in God's kingdom. Believers were once darkness but are now light in the Lord, so they are to walk as children of light, expose the unfruitful works of the darkness, and live wisely, redeeming the time. Instead of being drunk with wine, they are to be filled with the Spirit, which shows in worship, thankfulness, and submitting to one another in the fear of God. Wives are to submit to their own husbands as to the Lord, and husbands are to love their wives just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her. Marriage is a picture of the great mystery of Christ and the church.

For me, showing Christ's love in my marriage means living my life as a servant to my wife. Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her. That is the standard, and I fall short of it. I keep aiming for it anyway.

Chapter 5 Study Questions

1. What does it mean to be an imitator of God, and what example of love does Paul point us to? (5:1-2)

2. Why does Paul put "thanksgiving" in place of filthy talk? (5:4)

3. What is the difference between being in darkness and being darkness? What does it mean that we are now light? (5:8)

4. How can a believer expose the works of darkness without becoming harsh or self-righteous? (5:11)

5. What does it mean to be "redeeming the time"? What opportunity might God be giving you this week? (5:16)

6. How is being filled with the Spirit like and unlike being drunk with wine? (5:18)

7. What three signs of a Spirit-filled life does Paul give in 5:19-21?

8. What does biblical submission mean, and what does it not mean? (5:21-24)

9. What standard does Paul give husbands for loving their wives? (5:25)

10. How is marriage a picture of Christ and the church, and how can your marriage, or the marriages around you, show that picture? (5:32)

Chapter 6: Stand Firm

Scripture: Children and Parents; Slaves and Masters; The Armor of God; Farewell

6:1-9 Children, obey your parents in ***the*** Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother" (which is ***the*** first commandment with a promise), "so that it may be well with you, and you will be long-lived on the earth." And fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in ***the*** discipline and admonition of ***the*** Lord. Slaves, obey the masters according to ***the*** flesh with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ, not by way of eye-service as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from ***the*** soul, with good will rendering service as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free. And masters, do the same things to them, giving up the threatening, knowing that your own Lord also is in ***the*** heavens, and there is no partiality with Him.

6:10-20 Finally, my brothers, be empowered in ***the*** Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God so that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil, because our wrestling is not against blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world rulers of the darkness of this age, against the spiritual ***forces*** of evil in the heavenly ***places***. Because of this take up the full armor of God, so that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all things, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod the feet with the readiness of the gospel of peace; above all, having taken up the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is ***the*** word of God, through all prayer and supplication, praying at every time in ***the*** Spirit, and for this very ***purpose*** watching with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints, and for me, that a word may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, with boldness to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in a chain, so that in it I may speak boldly, as it is necessary for me to speak.

6:21-24 But so that you also may know the things concerning me, what I am doing, Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful servant in ***the*** Lord, will make all things known to you, whom I have sent to you for this very ***purpose***, that you may know the things concerning us, and that he may encourage your hearts. Peace to the brothers, and love with faith, from God ***the*** Father and ***the*** Lord Jesus Christ. The grace ***be*** with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in incorruptibility. Amen.

Chapter 6 Preview

Paul finishes his teaching on the home. Children are to obey their parents in the Lord, and fathers are to raise their children in the discipline and admonition of the Lord without provoking them to anger. Slaves are to serve their masters with sincere hearts, as to Christ, and masters are to give up threatening their slaves, knowing they have a Master in heaven too.

Then Paul turns to the battle every believer faces. Our real enemy is not blood and flesh. It is the devil and the spiritual forces of evil. To stand firm against them, we must be strong in the Lord and put on the full armor of God: the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shoes of the gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. All of it is to be worn with prayer. Paul closes by asking for prayer for himself, sending Tychicus with news, and blessing the church with peace, love, and grace.

Chapter 6 Study

6:1 *Children, obey your parents in **the** Lord, for this is right.*

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord." Paul speaks directly to the children, which tells us children were in the church service when this letter was read aloud. They are part of the body of Christ too.

"In the Lord" means that children obey as part of their walk with Jesus. It also sets a limit. A child should never obey a parent who tells them to sin against God. But in all ordinary things, children obey. And "in the Lord" also means no child is ever required to keep quiet about being hurt. If a parent or any other adult is harming you, tell a teacher, a pastor, or another adult you trust.

"For this is right." Sometimes the only reason a child needs is that God says so. It is right in God's eyes, and it is right in the order He built into the family.

6:2-3 *"Honor your father and mother" (which is **the** first commandment with a promise), "so that it may be well with you, and you will be long-lived on the earth."*

Paul quotes the fifth of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16). To "honor" is bigger than to obey. Obedience is what children do while they are young. Honor goes on for life. Grown children still honor their parents by showing respect, speaking well of them, and caring for them in old age (1 Timothy 5:4). If your parents hurt you, honoring them does not mean pretending it didn't happen or putting yourself back in harm's way. It means treating them with the dignity God gives every person, and leaving judgment to Him.

Paul calls it "the first commandment with a promise." The promise was given to Israel about living long in the land God gave them. Paul applies it more widely: "you will be long-lived on the earth." As a general rule, a family where children honor their parents is a stable, healthy family. This is a principle, not a guarantee that every obedient child will live to old age.

Old Testament links: Exodus 20:12 (quoted); Deuteronomy 5:16 (quoted)

6:4 *And fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in **the** discipline and admonition of **the** Lord.*

Now Paul turns to fathers. In the Roman world, a father had near-total power over his children. He could even decide whether a newborn lived or died. Paul gives fathers two commands.

First, "do not provoke your children to anger." Fathers can do this by being harsh, unfair, never pleased, making fun of their children, or by breaking promises. Colossians 3:21 adds that this can make children "become discouraged."

Second, "bring them up in the discipline and admonition of the Lord." Discipline is training by correction and consequences. Admonition is training by words, teaching them what is true and right. And all of it is "of the Lord." A father's main job is to raise children who know and love God, more than to raise successful ones. That job belongs to fathers first, and it cannot be handed off to the church or the school. And if you are a mother raising children on your own, this verse is for you too. God sees the double load you carry, and He will give you the strength for it.

6:5-8 *Slaves, obey the masters according to **the** flesh with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ, not by way of eye-service as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from **the** soul, with good will rendering service as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free.*

In Paul's day, a large part of the people in the Roman Empire were slaves. Many of them were in the church. Roman slavery was not the same as the race-based slavery in American history. People became slaves through war, debt, or birth, and some worked as teachers, doctors, and managers. But it was still a system where one person owned another, and it was often cruel.

Paul does not start a revolt. Instead, he tells slaves and masters that they both answer to the same Lord, a truth that cuts against the whole idea of one person owning another. In his letter to Philemon, he asks a master to receive his runaway slave back "no longer as a slave, but above a slave, a beloved brother" (Philemon 16). In 1 Corinthians 7:21, Paul also told slaves to take their freedom if they could get it.

We should be honest that these verses were later misused in America to defend slavery. Many other Christians, reading the same Bible, saw that every person is made in God's image and fought to end it. Paul's words here were never a blessing on slavery. They were instructions for believers caught in a system they did not create.

To the slaves, Paul says to obey "with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ." Not "by way of eye-service as men-pleasers," like a worker who only works hard when the boss is around. They are to do "the will of God from the soul." Their real Master is Jesus, and He sees and rewards every bit of good work (6:8).

Today, these verses apply to anyone who works for someone else. When you go to work, you are serving Christ. Work hard when no one is looking. Jesus is your real boss, and He will reward you.

6:9 *And masters, do the same things to them, giving up the threatening, knowing that your own Lord also is in **the** heavens, and there is no partiality with Him.*

"And masters, do the same things to them." Masters are to treat their slaves with the same sincere heart toward Christ. They are told to be "giving up the threatening." In a culture where masters could beat or even kill their slaves, this was a big change.

Why? "Your own Lord also is in the heavens." A master on earth is a slave to a Master in heaven. "There is no partiality with Him." God does not care about rank or position. He will judge the rich man and the poor man by the same standard. Every boss, manager, and business owner today should remember this. You will answer to God for how you treat the people who work for you.

6:10 *Finally, my brothers, be empowered in **the** Lord and in the strength of His might.*

"Finally." Paul comes to his last word, and it is a call to battle. "Be empowered in the Lord and in the strength of His might." The strength comes from the Lord, not from ourselves. The words for strength here are the same Paul used in 1:19 for the power that raised Jesus from the dead. We fight with His power, not ours.

6:11 *Put on the full armor of God so that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil,*

"Put on the full armor of God." Paul means all of it, not just the pieces we like. And it is God's armor. He provides it. Our job is to put it on.

Why? "So that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil." The devil is real, and he does not fight fair. A scheme is a crafty plan, a trick. Satan studies us, waits for weak moments, and attacks where we least expect it. But notice the goal: to "stand." We are not told to attack the devil or chase him. Christ has already won the victory (Colossians 2:15). Our job is to hold the ground He has won.

6:12 *because our wrestling is not against blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world rulers of the darkness of this age, against the spiritual **forces** of evil in the heavenly **places**.*

This verse explains the whole Christian life. "Our wrestling is not against blood and flesh." The people who hurt us, oppose us, or mock our faith are not the real enemy. Behind them are spiritual forces. Paul lists them: "rulers," "authorities," "world rulers of the darkness of this age," and "spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places." These are ranks of evil spirits under Satan's command.

This should change how we treat people. The coworker who gives you a hard time, the family member who fights your faith, and the government that persecutes believers are not your real enemies. They are people held captive by the real enemy (2 Timothy 2:25-26). We fight against the devil, and we pray for the people. That does not excuse anyone. People still answer to God for what they do, and seeing the spiritual battle behind them never means ignoring abuse or crime. We pray for them, and we also protect those who are vulnerable.

6:13 *Because of this take up the full armor of God, so that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all things, to stand.*

"Because of this take up the full armor of God." Paul says it again because it matters. He mentions "the evil day." Every day is a battle, but some days are worse than others: a day of strong temptation, a day of great loss, a day when doubts come flooding in. Put the armor on before that day comes. A soldier doesn't wait until the arrows are flying to look for his shield.

"Having done all things, to stand." When the battle is over, the goal is to still be standing.

6:14 *Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness,*

If Paul wrote from Rome, he was chained to a Roman soldier day and night (Acts 28:16, 20), and soldiers and their gear were never far from his eyes. But many of these pictures come first from Isaiah, who describes the Lord Himself putting on righteousness like body armor and a helmet of salvation on His head (Isaiah 59:17).

"Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth." A Roman soldier wore a wide belt that held his tunic in place and kept everything else in position. Truth holds the believer's life together. That means both the truth of God's Word and being honest and real in our own lives. A lying Christian is a soldier with his belt undone.

"Having put on the breastplate of righteousness." The breastplate covered the heart and other vital organs. Our righteousness before God comes from Christ alone (Philippians 3:9). And living rightly each day protects our heart. When Satan accuses us, we point to the righteousness of Christ.

Old Testament links: Isaiah 59:17 (alluded to); Isaiah 11:5 (alluded to)

6:15 *and having shod the feet with the readiness of the gospel of peace;*

"Having shod the feet with the readiness of the gospel of peace." Roman soldiers wore sturdy sandals with nails in the soles, like cleats, so they could hold their ground and march long distances. The gospel gives us firm footing. We have peace with God (Romans 5:1), so we can stand without slipping. And the gospel also makes us ready to go and share that peace with others (Isaiah 52:7).

Old Testament links: Isaiah 52:7 (alluded to)

6:16 *above all, having taken up the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one;*

"Having taken up the shield of faith." The Roman shield was large, about the size of a door, and covered most of the body. Arrows were sometimes dipped in pitch and set on fire, and soldiers soaked their leather-covered shields in water so the flames would go out.

"The flaming arrows of the evil one" are Satan's attacks: lies, doubts, temptations, accusations, and fears. Faith, trusting God and His promises, puts them out. When Satan says, "God doesn't love you," faith answers with what God has said. Notice it says "all" the flaming arrows. Faith in God is enough to stop every one.

6:17 *and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is **the** word of God,*

"Take the helmet of salvation." The helmet protected the head, the place of the mind. The assurance of our salvation guards our thinking. In 1 Thessalonians 5:8, Paul calls the helmet "the

hope of salvation." Knowing that we belong to God, and that our future with Him is secure in His promise, including His coming for us, keeps our minds steady when the battle is hard.

"And the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." This is the only weapon for attack in the list. The sword Paul has in mind was a short sword for close combat. The Spirit gives the Word, and He uses it in our hands. When Jesus was tempted in the wilderness, He answered Satan three times with Scripture, "It has been written" (Matthew 4:1-11). We can only use the sword if we know it. That is one of the best reasons I know to read and memorize God's Word.

Old Testament links: Isaiah 59:17 (alluded to)

6:18 *through all prayer and supplication, praying at every time in **the** Spirit, and for this very **purpose** watching with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints,*

Prayer is not one of the pieces, but the armor is put on and worn in prayer. Paul says, "praying at every time in the Spirit." Look at the words "all" and "every" in this verse: "all prayer," "every time," "all perseverance," and "all the saints." Prayer is how a soldier stays in touch with his Commander, and it should never be a last resort.

To pray "in the Spirit" means to pray led and helped by the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:26). "Watching with all perseverance," Paul says. Like a guard on night watch, stay awake. And don't only pray for yourself. Pray for "all the saints." There are believers around the world who are in the middle of the battle right now.

6:19-20 *and for me, that a word may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, with boldness to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in a chain, so that in it I may speak boldly, as it is necessary for me to speak.*

Paul asks for prayer for himself. But notice what he asks for. Not to be set free. Not to be more comfortable. He asks for boldness, that words would be given to him "in the opening of my mouth, with boldness to make known the mystery of the gospel."

"An ambassador in a chain." An ambassador is a representative of a king to a foreign nation. Ambassadors were supposed to be protected, not chained. Paul was Christ's ambassador to the Roman Empire, and he was in chains for it. Still, his concern was not his chains, but his message. He wanted to "speak boldly, as it is necessary for me to speak." What would happen in our churches if we prayed for that kind of boldness?

6:21-22 *But so that you also may know the things concerning me, what I am doing, Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful servant in **the** Lord, will make all things known to you, whom I have sent to you for this very **purpose**, that you may know the things concerning us, and that he may encourage your hearts.*

Tychicus was one of Paul's trusted helpers from the province of Asia (Acts 20:4). Paul calls him "the beloved brother and faithful servant in the Lord." He carried this letter and the letter to the Colossians (Colossians 4:7-8), and he would give them news about Paul in person.

Paul sent Tychicus so they would know how he was doing, and so Tychicus could "encourage your hearts." Even in prison, Paul was thinking about encouraging others. We don't know much about Tychicus, but God used him to carry two books of the Bible. Faithful helpers like him are a gift to the church.

6:23-24 *Peace to the brothers, and love with faith, from God **the** Father and **the** Lord Jesus Christ. The grace **be** with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in incorruptibility. Amen.*

Paul ends the way he began, with peace and grace (1:2). He prays for "peace," "love with faith," and "grace" for all the believers.

His last line is a prayer for grace on "all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in incorruptibility." An incorruptible love is one that does not decay or fade. That is the mark of a true believer. Not perfection, but an enduring love for Jesus. Do you love Him like that? If you do, Paul's blessing is for you.

Chapter 6 Summary

Children are to obey and honor their parents, and fathers are not to provoke their children but bring them up in the discipline and admonition of the Lord. Slaves are to serve sincerely, as to Christ, and masters are to give up threatening them, because both have the same Master in heaven. Paul then calls believers to be strong in the Lord and to put on the full armor of God so they can stand firm against the schemes of the devil. Our wrestling is not against blood and flesh, but against spiritual forces of evil. The armor includes the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shoes of the gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, all worn with constant prayer. Paul asks for prayer that he would speak boldly as an ambassador in a chain, sends Tychicus to encourage them, and closes with peace, love, and grace to all who love the Lord Jesus Christ.

Chapter 6 Study Questions

1. What is the difference between obeying your parents and honoring them? How can grown children still honor their parents? (6:1-3)

2. What two things does Paul tell fathers to do? Which one do you think is harder? (6:4)

3. What did Paul tell both slaves and masters about their Master in heaven, and how does Philemon 16 show his heart toward a slave who became a believer? (6:5-9)

4. How can you apply 6:5-8 to your own work this week?

5. Where does a believer's strength for spiritual battle come from? (6:10)

6. Who is our real enemy, according to 6:12? How should that change the way we treat people who oppose us?

7. Which piece of the armor of God do you most need to put on right now, and why? (6:14-17)

8. What is the only weapon for attack in the armor of God, and how do we learn to use it? (6:17)

9. What did Paul ask believers to pray for him, and what does that tell you about his priorities? (6:19-20)

10. Paul's last blessing is for those who love Jesus "in incorruptibility." What would help your love for Him grow stronger and steadier? (6:24)

Conclusion

Ephesians is a short letter, but it covers the whole Christian life. In the first three chapters, Paul showed us what God has done. He chose us, adopted us, redeemed us, forgave us, and sealed us with His Spirit. He made us alive when we were dead, saved us by grace through faith, and made Jew and Gentile one new body in Christ. In the last three chapters, Paul showed us how to live because of it: walking worthy of our calling, walking in love, walking as children of light, and standing firm in the armor of God.

As I said at the start of this study, the guiding principle throughout has been to read God's Word plainly, as it is written, and let Scripture explain Scripture. When we do that with Ephesians, the order matters. God does not give us a list of rules so we can earn His love. He first shows us how much He has already given, and then He calls us to live like the rich, loved, and forgiven children we are.

I hope this study has done what I set out to do: bring you closer to God, help you grow in your walk with Him, and encourage you to love His church. The church is not perfect, but it is the body of Christ, the household of God, and the temple where He lives by His Spirit. Find your place in it and do your part (4:16).

Paul's message is the same for us today as it was for the believers in Ephesus. We were dead in our sins, "But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even us, being dead in the trespasses, He made alive together with Christ" (2:4-5). "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not from yourselves; the gift is of God" (2:8). The only thing required of us to spend eternity with God is to receive His Son, Jesus, as our Lord and Savior.

If you haven't yet entered into a relationship with Jesus, or if you want to deepen the one you already have with Him, I invite you to pray this prayer with me:

Lord Jesus, You are the Savior of the world, and You forgive all who come to You. I come before You to confess that I have sinned against You. I have rebelled against You and put myself first above You and all others. I want to have a deep, meaningful relationship with You where I can show others by my demeanor and character that You are first in my life. I am asking for Your forgiveness for all my sins. You died for me on the cross so that I could be forgiven and made right with God. Please help me not forget that You gave Your very life for me. I am asking that You take control of my life and make a new creature out of me and into the person You want me to be. I thank You, Lord, and I love You. Amen.

If you prayed this prayer, tell another believer, ask a pastor about being baptized, and find a church where you can grow and serve as part of the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11-16).

Old and New Testament Links in Ephesians

This table lists every Old and New Testament link printed in this study, in verse order. I took the links from the Treasury of Scripture Knowledge, with help from the OpenBible.info cross-references, and I checked each one by reading both passages in the Steadfast Literal Bible. Where I was not sure of a link, I left it out.

Verse in this study	Old Testament passage	Kind
1:19-20	Psalm 110:1	alluded to
1:22-23	Psalm 8:6	quoted
2:13	Isaiah 57:19	alluded to
2:17-18	Isaiah 57:19	alluded to
2:20	Isaiah 28:16	alluded to
4:7-8	Psalm 68:18	quoted
4:25	Zechariah 8:16	quoted
4:26-27	Psalm 4:4	quoted
4:30	Isaiah 63:10	alluded to
5:13-14	Isaiah 60:1	alluded to
5:13-14	Isaiah 26:19	alluded to
5:18	Proverbs 23:31	alluded to
5:28-30	Genesis 2:23	alluded to
5:31	Genesis 2:24	quoted
6:2-3	Exodus 20:12	quoted
6:2-3	Deuteronomy 5:16	quoted
6:14	Isaiah 59:17	alluded to
6:14	Isaiah 11:5	alluded to
6:15	Isaiah 52:7	alluded to
6:17	Isaiah 59:17	alluded to

Bibliography

The following sources were consulted for this study. The Jewish historian Josephus is named in the text where his work is used. The commentary reflects my own study and convictions, and any direct quotation from an outside source is identified and cited at the point where it appears.

Green, Jay P., Sr. (ed.). The Interlinear Bible: Hebrew-Greek-English. Hendrickson Publishers, 1986 (2nd ed.; printing used 2005). ISBN 1-56563-977-4.

Treasury of Scripture Knowledge. London: Samuel Bagster and Sons, about 1830. Public domain.

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