

INTRODUCTION TO EPHESIANS

Authorship: No one in the early church questioned that Paul wrote this epistle. However, some modern scholars argue that another author wrote in Paul's name. They say: (1) Ephesians has a different style and vocabulary than Paul's letters. (2) Ephesians goes beyond Paul's theology in its view of church and marriage, and fails to include his characteristic emphasis on Christ's future coming. (3) Ephesians is somewhat similar to Colossians, thus proving that it was written by someone imitating Paul's style. (4) Another author could have used Paul's name in order to honor him, employing a pseudonymous style acceptable among early Christians.

In response to these arguments, we can say that: (1) An author can be quite versatile in his style and vocabulary as he writes on different occasions. Writings as short as the New Testament epistles do not give us a large enough sample of an author's writings to draw fine lines about distinctive style and vocabulary. (2) No single epistle of Paul captures all of his teachings, so we should not be surprised that Ephesians adds some insights to what we find in his other writings, while not contradicting them. Nor does it neglect Paul's great themes. For example, this epistle says much about the hope of Christ's coming (1:10–11,14,18; 2:7; 4:4,10,13,30; 5:5–6,27; 6:8). (3) The similarities of Ephesians to Colossians are fascinating, but can be explained by the same author addressing two churches in different situations. (4) Impersonating an apostle was not acceptable in the early church. Both Tertullian and Serapion of Antioch bore witness that the church rejected writings falsely claiming to be written by apostles.

The epistle itself testifies that it was written by "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ" (1:1). In the midst of the epistle, the author refers to himself as "I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ" (3:1). He also writes of his supernatural calling as an apostle to the Gentiles (3:5–8). If the author was not the apostle Paul, then he was guilty of gross deception. Indeed, he would be a hypocrite of the worst kind, for he urged the Ephesians to put away lying and speak the truth (4:25). Such accusations are unworthy of this noble epistle. On the contrary, Ephesians bears the marks of being divine revelation, the Word of the God who cannot lie (Rom. 3:4; Titus 1:2). Therefore we have every reason to accept it for what it claims to be: the epistle of the apostle Paul.

Date: Paul said that he wrote as a prisoner in chains (3:1; 4:1; 6:20). Paul was imprisoned many times (2 Cor. 11:23), but his major imprisonments took place in Caesarea from AD 57 to 59 (Acts 23:33; 24:27), and in Rome from AD 60–62 (Acts 28:30). Tradition holds that he wrote this epistle from Rome. It seems likely that Ephesians was written during the same imprisonment as Colossians, since they have similar messages; both speak of his imprisonment (Col. 4:3,10,18), and both were delivered by Tychicus (6:21; Col. 4:7).

Theme: God's riches of grace in Christ for His body.

Purpose: To teach believers about the glorious riches which belong to them by their union to the crucified and resurrected Lord Jesus, and to call them to walk worthy of their privileges by vital church membership, lifelong repentance, well-ordered households, and spiritual combat against the devil. Unlike some epistles, Paul does not address any specific spiritual dangers threatening the church. Instead, he writes to strengthen a healthy church. If we may deduce Paul's purpose from his prayers for the church, then he wrote to the Ephesians in order to lead them into a richer experiential knowledge of their Savior in the context of their everyday lives in a fallen world.

Synopsis: *This Epistle's Contribution to Redemptive Revelation*

Ephesians presents theology as doxology, that is, the truth of God for the worship of God. It is a book resounding with praise for the riches of God in Christ. His death (1:7; 2:13–16; 5:2,25) and exaltation (1:20–22; 2:5–6; 4:8–10) are the means to salvation for all those united to Him. In Him believers have every spiritual blessing (1:3), riches of grace (1:7,18; 3:8) overflowing from God's great love for His people (2:5). Paul strains language to express the inexpressible glory of God (1:19; 2:7; 3:20), which comes through Christ in fullness (1:23; 3:17; 4:10,13; 5:18). God's riches for His people consist particularly of the Holy Spirit in all His gifts and fruit (1:13–14,17; 2:18,22; 3:5,16; 4:3–4,30; 5:9,18; 6:17–18). The book is profoundly shaped by the doctrine of the Trinity, as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit operate in harmony to save a people for God's glory.

Thus Ephesians has much to say about the church, the body and bride of Jesus Christ (1:1,18,23; 2:19–22; 3:6,15,21; 4:4–16; 5:23,25–27,29–32; 6:18). They are nothing less than the temple of the living God and the showcase of God's glory. As a people of amazing privilege, they have a high calling to fulfill (4:1). This calling places ethical obligations upon every dimension of life, as Paul makes clear in the second half of the epistle. The body must be united in love and the saints must be holy in conduct (chs. 4–5). The church must be a light exposing the corruptions of the world (5:7–14) and a spiritual army standing in righteousness against the demonic forces of evil (6:10–18).

This strong moral thrust finds its footing in the doctrines of salvation by grace alone (chs. 1–2). Though Christians were once as the rest of the world, dead in sin, dwelling in spiritual darkness, and doomed to suffer God's wrath (2:1–3; 4:17–19; 5:5–6), God has given His people forgiveness and life, a life shaped and energized by the gospel of Jesus Christ. They are the people in union with Christ, and this union, expressed in the frequent "in him" or "with him," is central to Paul's message. It is the "mystery of the gospel" (6:19), that is, the secret truth planned by God in eternity and now revealed. The mystery is that God is joining people from all nations to His Son in order to enjoy His redemptive love and share in His exaltation as head over all things (1:9–10; 3:3–6,9; 5:29–32). Thus Ephesians reveals the riches of God's grace in Christ to Christ's body, the elect from Jew and Gentile. It is a book of salvation by grace alone in Christ alone for the glory of God alone.

Outline:

- I. Greetings: Grace and Peace (1:1–2)
- II. The Doctrine of God's Grace in Christ for His Body (1:3—3:21)
 - A. The Praise of God's Grace in Christ (1:3–14)
 - B. The Power of God's Grace in the Risen Lord (1:15—2:10)
 - C. The Peace of God's Grace in the Crucified Lord (2:11–22)
 - D. The Purpose of God's Grace Revealed in Christ (3:1–21)
- III. The Calling to Walk as the Body of Christ (4:1—6:22)
 - A. Walk Worthy as One Body (4:1–16)
 - B. Walk in the New Man, Not the Old Ways of Sin (4:17—5:14)
 - C. Walk in God's Wisdom for Relationships (5:15—6:9)
 - D. Walk in the Lord's Armor for Spiritual Warfare (6:10–22)
- IV. Concluding Blessing: Peace and Grace (6:23–24)

EPHESIANS

CHAPTER 1

PAUL, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus:

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

3 Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ:

4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,

6 To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

7 In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;

8 Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence;

9 Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself:

10 That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; *even* in him:

11 In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:

12 That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.

13 In whom *ye* also *trusted*, after that *ye* heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that *ye* believed, *ye* were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,

14 Which is the earnest of our inheritance until

Chapter 1: Paul greets the saints, exults in the grace of the triune God, and prays for greater illumination for God's people to know Him better.

GREETINGS: GRACE AND PEACE (1:1–2)

1:1 By God's sovereign *will*, Christ sent Paul as an *apostle*, an eyewitness of the risen Lord, authorized by Him to work miracles and proclaim the Word revealed directly to him by God (3:4–5; Matt. 10:1–8; 1 Cor. 9:1; Gal. 1:12). All God's people are *saints*, made holy by grace.

1:2 *Grace*. God's loving purpose and power to save sinners and bring them to Himself. *peace*. Not just a feeling of safety, but relationships of harmony with God, oneself, and other people.

THE DOCTRINE OF GOD'S GRACE IN CHRIST FOR HIS BODY (1:3–3:21)

The Praise of God's Grace in Christ (1:3–14)

1:3 *Blessed*. We worship the triune God because of His grace to us. *God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*. A title of covenant relationship, like "the God of Abraham," *in Christ*. Through our union with Christ, who is already exalted *in heavenly places* (1:20). *spiritual*. By the Holy Spirit.

1:4 Before we chose God, He chose us. *in him*. God made Christ our representative in the covenant. *that we should be holy*. God's election produces holiness, not hypocrisy (2 Thess. 2:13).

1:5 *adoption*. Gift of the status of sons to outsiders. Predes-

tinuation arises from God's fatherly love. *according to the good pleasure of his will*. Not based on anything in us, but only because of His love (Deut. 7:7–8; Rom. 9:11–13).

1:6 *praise of the glory of his grace*. God's incomparable glory shining in His saving grace, moves His people to worship Him. *beloved*. Christ is God's beloved Son (Matt. 17:5).

1:7–8 *redemption*. Gift of freedom by the payment of a ransom price (Ex. 21:30), the sacrificial death (*blood*) of Christ (Mark 10:45). Christ redeemed elect sinners by satisfying God's justice (Rom. 3:24–26). God's forgiveness is not stingy, but *hath abounded in the riches of his grace*.

1:9 *mystery*. Secret known only to God and those to whom He reveals it (3:3–5; Matt. 13:11). The gospel reveals God's eternal plan that centers upon Christ (1:10; 3:11).

1:10 *dispensation*. Economy, administration, organized plan. *gather together in one all things*. Sum up the entire universe under Christ as its risen and ruling head (1:20–22).

1:11 *obtained an inheritance*. Given the right to enjoy God's kingdom as God's adopted sons (1:14, 18; 5:5; Rom. 8:17). *worketh all things*. God's providence controls every event according to His plan (*counsel*) so that His elect will be saved and enter glory (Rom. 8:28–30).

1:12 Believers exist for *the praise of his glory* (Isa. 43:7, 21).

1:13–14 Salvation ordained by the Father and purchased by the Son is applied by the Holy Spirit. Literally, "hearing the word of truth . . . and believing, you were sealed." Legal documents were authorized by the impression of a seal upon wax.

the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

15 Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints,

16 Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers;

17 That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him:

18 The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,

19 And what *is* the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,

20 Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set *him* at his own right hand in the heavenly *places*,

21 Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is

named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:

22 And hath put all *things* under his feet, and gave him *to be* the head over all *things* to the church,

23 Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

CHAPTER 2

AND you *hath he quickened*, who were dead in trespasses and sins;

2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:

3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,

The Spirit impresses the gospel on the heart so that we give our Amen to God's promises and are marked as His people (2 Cor. 1:19–22; 3:3). *Spirit of promise*. Spirit promised by the prophets (Isa. 44:3; Ezek. 36:27; Joel 2:28). *earnest*. Down payment, a legally binding pledge of full possession in future. *until the redemption*. Until Christ's purchased people enjoy total freedom (Rom. 8:21–23).

The Power of God's Grace in the Risen Lord (1:15–2:10)

1:15–16 We should thank God for *faith* and *love* because they are His gifts.

1:17 Paul calls upon the Trinity so that believers would know their Savior better. *the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him*. The Holy Spirit gives wisdom (Isa. 11:2) and reveals truth (1 Cor. 2:10–12) so that believers increase in the experiential knowledge of God.

1:18 *enlightened*. Believers need more spiritual light in their minds and hearts (Ps. 119:18), so they appreciate the *riches* of God's grace. *hope of his calling*. Future glory to which God calls us.

1:19 *believe, according to the working of his mighty power*. God creates faith by applying the divine power of Christ's resurrection to His elect (1:20; 2:5; 2 Cor. 4:6; 1 Peter 1:3).

1:20 God's power comes to us in *Christ*, through our union with Him in His resurrection. *at his own right hand*. The position of Lordship above all kings and angels (Ps. 110:1; Heb. 1:13).

1:21 *every name that is named*. Ephesus was full of idolatry and magic that invoked cosmic powers by name (Acts 19:11–20, 27,35). Christ is infinitely greater than all spirits, good or evil.

1:22 *put all things under his feet*. Quoting Ps. 8:6. Christ, the exalted God-man, restores mankind even higher than our former dignity by ruling as *the head* over all creation (Heb. 2:5–10).

1:23 The church is *his body*, joined to Christ by the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:12–13). *the fullness of him that filleth all in all*. Christ is filling His church with His Spirit in order to fill all creation with the glory of the Lord (3:19; 4:10; 5:18).

until we first somehow discover that we are elect. John Calvin said that the way to know that God elected us is by believing in Jesus Christ alone for salvation.

2. Election empowers holiness. Since God chose "that we should be holy," we must never isolate election from obeying God's laws. Those who say they can sin freely because they are elect have rejected the God who elects sinners unto holiness. Believers can pursue holiness confident that God's decree will give us all we need in Christ to attain it.

3. Grace fuels heartfelt praise. If your heart is sluggish in the aim for which we were made, it is the amazing grace of the triune God to sinners that you need most of all. Meditate on this chapter, and then make sure you take time to seek His face and sing His praises.

4. The gospel whets our appetite for God. Take Paul's prayer in this chapter and make it into your prayer for yourself and other believers. Stir up your heart with the glory of God's grace to desire to know Him better. Pray fervently for the Spirit of wisdom and revelation to give you more illumination about the riches of Jesus Christ.

Chapter 2: Paul teaches the saints to remember who they once were and how God saved them in Christ so that they might marvel at God's grace to them.

2:1 *quickened*. Made alive. *dead in trespasses and sins*. Like a corpse, unable to do any spiritual good, and unclean and offensive in God's sight (Rom. 8:6–8). Not just lacking life but an enemy to God's life (4:18).

2:2–3 *prince of the power of the air*. Satan, the invisible ruler of the world since our fall (2 Cor. 4:4; Rev. 12:9). *children of disobedience*. People characterized by disobedience. *conversation*. Conduct or lifestyle. *children of wrath*. People liable to suffer God's anger (5:6). All people outside of Christ are ruled by Satan, motivated by selfishness, and cursed by God.

2:4–5 *by grace ye are saved*. We are saved *sola gratia*, by grace alone. Saving grace is motivated only by God's magnificent mercy and love, not any worthiness in us (Titus 3:5). Salvation comes from God's power, not by any good decision or act of ours, for it is a supernatural resurrection from the dead by union with Christ (*quickened us with Christ*).

Thoughts for Personal/Family Worship: Chapter 1

1. The doctrine of election calls us to Christ. All of election's blessings are in Him. We dare not wait to come to Christ

5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)
 6 And hath raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus:
 7 That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in *his* kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.
 8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God:
 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.
 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.
 11 Wherefore remember, that ye *being* in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands;
 12 That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:
 13 But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes

were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.
 14 For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition *between us*;
 15 Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, *even* the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, *so* making peace;
 16 And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:
 17 And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.
 18 For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.
 19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God;
 20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner *stone*;
 21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:

2:6–7 The believer's union *in* and *with Christ Jesus* implies that he already shares Christ's exaltation *in heavenly places* and one day will experience that glory (1:3,20; Rev. 3:21). *shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness*. God will glorify Himself by showering love upon His people forever.

2:8–9 Salvation *by grace* is received only *by faith* in Christ, and *not of works* as if one could have any merit (Rom. 3:28; Gal. 2:16). *it is the gift of God*. Since believers were once dead in sin (2:1), both faith and the blessings it receives must come from God. *lest any man should boast*. To reserve all glory for God alone (1 Cor. 1:31).

2:10 God's grace changes people so that they do the *good works* to which God predestined them (1:4). *created in Christ Jesus*. The risen Lord was the first to rise from the dead with a resurrection body (Col. 1:18), and those united to Him are new creations (2 Cor. 5:17).

The Peace of God's Grace in the Crucified Lord (2:11–22)

2:11 *remember*. Meditate on your former condition to stimulate love for the Savior. *called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands*. Mere externals are not true religion (Rom. 2:28).

2:12 *aliens*. Foreigners outside God's covenant people. *without God*. Non-Christian Gentiles worship many gods, but have no relationship with the only true God (1 Cor. 8:5–6; 10:20).

2:13 *sometimes*. At one time. *far off*. Not the distance of location, but of broken relationship and alienation. *made nigh*. Brought near to God in reconciled relationship by union with Christ and His sacrifice (*blood*).

2:14–16 *peace*. Harmony in relationships, with the well-being it brings. Christ became "our peace" when He *made both* Jews and Gentiles, who were two (*twain*), into *one*, united with each other and reconciled to God *by the cross*. Christ's death *abolished . . . the law*, not in its moral directions (6:2), but in its ceremonial rules such as circumcision and temple worship (2:11,21) that divided Jews from Gentiles. He also abolished the law in its divine curse against sinners so as to bring them near to God (2:13,18; Gal. 3:10,13). *one new man*. Mankind created anew (2:10) in the last Adam (1 Cor. 15:45).

2:17 *preached peace to you which were afar off*. See Isa. 57:19.

Jesus never visited Ephesus, but in His Spirit the risen Lord speaks wherever the gospel is preached (John 10:16).

2:18 A directory for trinitarian, evangelical corporate worship. We together draw near *unto the Father* in prayer and praise *through Jesus Christ*, enjoying God's presence *by one Spirit*.

2:19 *Now therefore*. Paul completes the contrast begun in v. 12. Gentiles once *strangers and foreigners* are now *fellow-citizens* in Israel and members *of the household* under God's promises. Christ has constituted a new Israel in fulfillment of the covenant of grace (Gal. 3:29; 6:16).

2:20 On *apostles*, see note on 1:1. *Prophets* are gifted by the Spirit to receive and declare new revelations from God (Deut. 18:20–22; 1 Cor. 14:29–31). The *apostles and prophets* are the *foundation* because they proclaimed the truths now written as the New Testament (see note on 3:4–5). Christ is *the chief cornerstone* for all depends upon Him (Isa. 28:16).

2:21–22 God's *holy temple* is no longer a building in Jerusalem but a people who assemble for worship in many locations (1 Peter 2:5–6). Union with Christ (*in whom . . . in the Lord*) holds the building together. Members *are builded together* in love (4:16). God dwells with them and works in them *through the Spirit* (1 Cor. 3:16).

Thoughts for Personal/Family Worship: Chapter 2

- 1. The gospel demands humility. What reason do true Christians have to boast? We were dead in sin and distant from God. Satan ruled us, and God's wrath burned against us. If we have spiritual life, it is entirely due to God's grace in Christ. Why then do we look down on others? Who makes us to differ? Let us prostrate ourselves before the Lord Jesus, give all glory to God, and learn the meekness of the dove-like Spirit.**
- 2. Believers are richer than kings. We are joined with none other than Jesus Christ, seated with Him in heavenly places. We are re-created with the risen Christ as our Adam. God will show how great He is by pouring out kindness upon us for all eternity. All of this is by grace through the great sufferings of Christ on the cross.**

22 In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

CHAPTER 3

For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles,

2 If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward:

3 How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words,

4 Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)

5 Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;

6 That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:

7 Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power.

8 Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the

Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;

9 And to make all *men* see what *is* the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:

10 To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly *places* might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,

11 According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:

12 In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.

13 Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.

14 For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

15 Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,

16 That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;

17 That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,

18 May be able to comprehend with all saints what

Surely, we should bless God and sing His praises all our lives. Praise Him now.

3. All nations are one at the foot of the cross. Despite our tendency to exalt ourselves and judge others based on race or culture, we are one with all believers and Christ is all. Let us therefore repent of our arrogance and welcome one another.

4. There is no sweeter place on earth than the gathered church. She is the temple of the living God, the dwelling place of His Spirit. Love the church. Serve the church. Stop complaining about the church. She is still under construction—as are its members.

Chapter 3: Paul explains how his suffering arises from his calling as God's special messenger, and prays for God to fill believers with Christ's love.

The Purpose of God's Grace Revealed in Christ (3:1–21)

3:1 Paul begins a sentence here but breaks it off to resume it later (3:14 or 4:1). *prisoner of Jesus Christ*. He was a prisoner of the Roman Empire, but Christ is Lord over suffering saints and wicked sinners.

3:2–3 Paul interrupts himself to write about his apostolic office. His suffering was no tragedy, but part of God's stewardship entrusted to him (*dispensation*), a gift he did not deserve (*grace*). *by revelation*. God directly revealed to Paul the *mystery* (see note on 1:9) of Christ (Gal. 1:11–12). Christianity is built upon divine revelation, preserved as the Holy Scriptures. *afore*. A little before.

3:4–5 God gave new revelation *by the Spirit* to a group Paul called the *holy apostles and prophets*. In the New Testament church, these are two distinct offices (4:11) that God used to lay a foundation of revealed truth (2:20). Paul was the last apostle appointed as an eyewitness of the risen Christ (1 Cor. 9:1–2; 15:9). After the apostles died, new revelation ceased and is no longer needed because the church has the Holy Scriptures.

3:6 The Old Testament reveals Christ (Rom. 1:2; 16:25). But God revealed to the apostles the mystery that believing Gen-

tiles would be *fellowheirs* in Israel by union with Christ as His *body*.

3:7 *minister*. Here a servant of the gospel of God. On *the effectual working of his power* to call Paul, see Acts 9; Gal. 1:11–17.

3:8 *less than the least of all saints*. Not less in knowledge, gifts, authority, or integrity, but less because of his past sins of ignorance (1 Tim. 1:13–15) and present heart sins against knowledge (Rom. 7:7,17,23). *unsearchable*. Beyond our ability to comprehend (1:7,19; 2:7; 3:19).

3:9 *fellowship*. Communication.

3:10–11 *manifold*. Literally, "plentifully multicolored"—with great abundance of variety. *purposed*. Performed. God created the world with this *eternal purpose*: to reveal His complex *wisdom* to the angelic *powers* by uniting many nations *in Christ*. The angels learn about God's glory as He saves the *church* through Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 4:9; 1 Peter 1:12).

3:12 *access*. Close and confident friendship with God the Father (2:18). God's plan is to display His glory by lavishing His love upon His multiethnic spiritual family in Christ (1:3–6; 2:7).

3:13 The *tribulations* of Christ's servants are God's plan to bring the elect to enjoy eternal *glory* (2 Tim. 2:10). Therefore, the suffering of ministers should not discourage the church.

3:14–15 *For this cause*. Repeated from 3:1, possibly resuming the thought Paul started there. *bow my knees*. Posture of reverence (Rom. 14:11). Confident access to the Father does not make the fear of God obsolete (2 Cor. 6:18–7:1). *the whole family*. Or "every clan," perhaps declaring that He is the Father of all His worshippers among the nations (Ps. 22:27; 96:7).

3:16–17 Paul asked the heavenly King to share His *riches* and *glory* with His adopted children. But he did not request health and wealth, but inward strengthening *by his Spirit*. The Spirit strengthens *faith*, by which *Christ* is present in the heart or inner man (Gal. 2:20). This makes believers strong and stable (*rooted and grounded*) in their assurance of God's *love*.

3:18–19 *the breadth, and length, and depth, and height*. The infinite *fullness of God* which *passeth knowledge* (Job. 11:7–9). God gave believers Himself as their covenant God in Christ, so Paul asks the triune God that they *might be filled* with ex-

is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;
19 And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

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

21 Unto him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

CHAPTER 4

I THEREFORE, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,

2 With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;

3 Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

4 *There is* one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;

5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism,

6 One God and Father of all, who *is* above all, and through all, and in you all.

7 But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

8 Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.

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

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

11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a

periential knowledge of Him (1:16–19). He particularly asked for them to know *the love of Christ*, for God displays His glory most excellently in Christ's grace for us (Rom. 3:26; 5:8; 1 Cor. 1:23–24).

3:20–21 The ultimate purpose of God's infinite *power that worketh* in every member of *the church* is His *glory* forever in *Christ Jesus*.

Thoughts for Personal/Family Worship: Chapter 3

1. Don't take the Bible or preaching for granted. It is an amazing gift of grace that God would reveal Christ to us. We never would have known the mystery of the gospel. But God has given it to us through the apostles and prophets so that His people might know His love. Furthermore, God's servants have suffered greatly through the ages to proclaim Christ's riches to the nations. Treasure the Word, read it often, and thank God for it.
2. In Christ believers have boldness and access with confidence to the Father. Do you experience that freedom in your prayers? The Father welcomes sinners into His presence with joy when they come in Jesus' name. God desires that His children pray with absolute confidence that He will be good to them (Luke 11:13).
3. Pray for great spiritual blessings for believers. God has given every blessing to us in the exalted Christ. The Spirit has already done a supernatural work of resurrection in everyone who now believes. Yet there is more of God's fullness for us to know. God is able to do far more than we can ask or imagine. John Newton said, "Thou art coming to a King; large petitions with thee bring; for His grace and power are such, none can ever ask too much." Begin by taking Paul's prayer in this chapter and praying it for your church.

THE CALLING TO WALK AS THE BODY OF CHRIST (4:1—6:22)

Chapter 4: Paul exhorts Christians to live worthy of their calling as Christ's body, and begins to admonish them to put off sin and put on Christ.

Walk Worthy as One Body (4:1–16)

4:1 *therefore*. Doctrine in chs. 1–3 leads to practice in chs. 4–6. *the prisoner of the Lord*. Perhaps resuming the thought of 3:1. *beseech*. Urge or exhort. *walk*. Conduct yourself in daily attitude and actions. *vocation*. God's effectual calling of the elect through the gospel (2 Thess. 2:13–14). The Spirit powerfully calls sinners so that they trust Christ (1 Cor. 1:24; 2:4), and follow Him into holiness and glory (Rom. 8:29–30; 1 Thess. 2:12; 4:7; 5:23–24; Rev. 17:14). Given the privileges of grace, believers must *walk worthy* of their calling, not in the sense of deserving it (2 Tim. 1:9), but worthy in the sense of conduct fitting to the gospel (Luke 3:8).

4:2–3 *all lowliness*. Humility in every relationship and situation. *longsuffering*. Patience. *forbearing*. Enduring pain and annoyance with self-control. *endeavoring*. Making effort.

4:4–6 The church must keep unity because we are really *one* in God the *Father*, the *Lord Jesus*, and the *Holy Spirit*. *hope of your calling*. See 1:18. *Father of all*. In context, of all believers.

4:7 *grace*. Here not salvation, but the gift of power to serve God (3:8; 1 Peter 4:10). *according to the measure*. God gave each believer ability according to His will (1 Cor. 12:11,18).

4:8 Paul quoted Ps. 68, which speaks of the God's victory for Israel, and applied it to Christ, who is God. *gave gifts*. Ps. 68 says, "received gifts" (v. 18) but also says God "giveth strength and power unto his people" (v. 35). Paul thus summarized the psalm.

4:9 *ascended*. Christ went up into heaven (1:20). *descended*. Before ascending, Christ *first* came down to earth to be a man and save sinners (John 3:13–16). *lower parts of the earth*. Not hell, but death and the tomb (Ps. 63:9–10).

4:10 *fill all things*. Christ shares His victory with us so that, as each church member uses his spiritual gifts (4:7), Christ's kingdom is filling the earth (1:23; Ps. 72:8,19).

4:11–12 These offices of proclaiming the Word are the gifts of the ascended Christ to His church. On *apostles* and *prophets*, see notes on 1:1; 2:20; 3:4–5. *evangelists*. Rare word used only of two men in the New Testament (Acts 21:8; 2 Tim. 4:5). Scripture only gives directions for appointing the fourth group (*pastors and teachers*) listed here (1 Tim. 3:1–7; Titus 1:5–9), the ordinary ministry defined by shepherding (*pastors*) and instructing (*teachers*). This is the labor of the elders of the church (Acts 14:23; 20:17,28).

perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

14 That we *henceforth* be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, *and* cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, *even* Christ:

16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

17 This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind,

18 Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart:

19 Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

20 But ye have not so learned Christ;

21 If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus:

22 That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;

23 And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;

24 And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

25 Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.

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

27 Neither give place to the devil.

28 Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with *his* hands the thing

4:13–14 *children*. Immature in the faith. *a perfect man*. The Greek is specifically masculine and singular, pointing to Christ, the last Adam. The goal of pastoral ministry is that every member (*we all*) of the church reaches a full *stature*, or maturity in the *Son of God* and likeness to Him. This gives the church *unity*, maturity, and stability to resist false *doctrine*. *sleight*. Deceitfulness.

4:15–16 *compacted*. Bound together. The church must use both biblical *truth* and *love* in its pursuit of Christ. As its mighty *head* (1:21–22), He gives growth (*increase*) to the body. Christ works by the Word (v. 11) and also through the friendships by which members are *joined together* and the *working of every part* of the body in active service (1 Cor. 12:12–19).

Walk in the New Man, Not the Old Ways of Sin (4:17–5:14)

4:17 *walk*. See note on 4:1. *Gentiles*. Unbelievers outside of Israel. *vanity*. Futility, uselessness. Though believers once acted like the world, they must no longer follow its worthless thinking.

4:18 *alienated from the life of God*. Hating the holy life God gives through Christ's resurrection (2:5; Col. 1:21). *ignorance*. Not knowing God (2:12; 1 Thess. 4:5). *blindness*. "Hardness" or "stubbornness." The root cause of mankind's foolishness is a stubborn refusal to know God (Rom. 1:20–21).

4:19 *past feeling*. Callous to sin and guilt (Prov. 10:23; Rom. 1:32). *lasciviousness*. Sexual wantonness (Rom. 1:24–27). *Greediness*. Lust for either more pleasure or more possessions.

4:20–21 *learned Christ*. Received the Word about Christ. *the truth is in Jesus*. Believing the gospel unites us to Christ (1:13), including the holiness of His human nature (*Jesus*). The gospel message calls us to repent of sin and follow Christ in obeying God's will (Acts 26:20).

4:22–24 *old man . . . new man*. Not just an individual's past and present, but the old humanity in Adam and the new creation of mankind in Christ (2:10,16). *holiness*. Probably covenantal piety and devotion to God (Ps. 4:3; 50:5). The pattern of repentance is twofold (Col. 3:9–10): (1) to *put off* sin both in outward conduct (*conversation*) and its inward lies and evil desires (*deceitful lusts*), and (2) to *put on* the image of God (*after God*) by renewing the *mind* through *truth* (v. 24). In the next verses Paul applies the *put off–put on* pattern to the moral law.

4:25 *Wherefore*. Therefore. *speak every man truth with his neighbor*. Quoting Zech. 8:16. See the ninth commandment (Ex. 20:16). *members*. Christians are parts of the same body (4:16).

4:26–27 *Be ye angry and sin not*. Quoting Ps. 4:4. This is not

a command to get angry (4:31), but a warning not to let anger move you to sin (Matt. 5:22). *let not the sun go down*. Turn that very day (Deut. 24:15) from anger to mercy. *devil*. Literally, slanderer. *give place*. Sinful anger gives Satan a foothold in the heart.

4:28 See the eighth commandment (Ex. 20:15). Christians must not only put off theft, but also put on hard work, doing good (2 Thess. 3:12–13), and giving generously to the needy.

4:29 *corrupt communication*. Literally, "rotten talk." *edifying*. Literally, "building up of the need" (4:16). This requires listening (Prov. 18:13) and speaking the truth in love (4:15) about Christ's *grace*.

4:30 *Grieve* implies that the Spirit is a person with emotions. The words *holy Spirit of God* (only here in the Bible) and the quotation of Isa. 63:10 suggest His fearsome majesty and judgments against sin (Acts 5:3–5). *sealed unto the day of redemption*. Marked by the Spirit as belonging to God until total freedom arrives (1:13–14). The Spirit gives joy and hope (Rom. 15:13; Gal. 5:22). If a believer persists in sin, the Spirit will wither his comfort (Ps. 32:4–5; 51:11–12).

4:31–32 Believers must *put away* all selfish and bitter anger and put on the forgiveness, tender compassion, and love that the Father shows them *for Christ's sake*.

Thoughts for Personal/Family Worship: Chapter 4

1. **Doctrine demands action, and a living faith produces works.** It is presumptuous to rest in our knowledge about God if we do not walk in a manner fitting to that knowledge. Even the demons believe, and tremble. The first response the gospel requires is humility. Those who believe the doctrines of grace should of all people be most humble. Therefore, let us examine ourselves, grieve over pride, pray for humility, and meditate on the gospel.
2. **The life of the church revolves around Christ.** Our unity springs from our union with God through Christ. Our abilities to serve flow from Christ's victory. Knowing Him and being like Him are our maturity and stability. He is the head from whom all members and relationships in the body draw life. Therefore, pray often for your church that Christ would be central in its worship and fellowship.
3. **Repentance is fundamental to the Christian life.** Turning from sin toward the Lord is the ABCs of the faith from

which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.

29 Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

30 And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

31 Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:

32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

CHAPTER 5

BE ye therefore followers of God, as dear children;

2 And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.

3 But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints;

4 Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks.

5 For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor

unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

6 Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.

7 Be not ye therefore partakers with them.

8 For ye were sometimes darkness, but now *are ye light* in the Lord: walk as children of light:

9 (For the fruit of the Spirit *is* in all goodness and righteousness and truth;)

10 Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.

11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove *them*.

12 For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret.

13 But all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light.

14 Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.

15 See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,

16 Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

17 Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord *is*.

which we never graduate. All Christians must continually put off sin and put on the image of Christ. Repentance is specific, and so the Bible's commandments address specific areas of life. Of the commands in this chapter, what is one area where you need to repent? What must you put off? Put on?

Chapter 5: Paul continues to exhort believers to put off sin and put on holiness, and explains their calling to be light in the world and to follow God's wisdom in relationships.

5:1 Knowing He loves them *as dear children*, they are set free to imitate Him (4:32; Col. 3:12).

5:2 *hath given himself*. So Christians should give themselves away to love others. *offering and a sacrifice*. Price to appease God's holy anger (Heb. 10:5,10). *sweetsmelling savour*. Pleasing to God for His devotion and obedience. People cannot ransom themselves from sin, but they do sacrifice themselves to reach people with the gospel—and God is pleased (Phil. 4:18).

5:3–4 *fornication*. Sexual activity outside of marriage. *uncleanness*. Sexual sin. *covetousness*. Greed. *filthiness*. Obscene or shameful talk. *jesting*. Humor cleverly hinting at sexual matters—see the seventh and tenth commandments (Ex. 20:14,17). Lustful or greedy talk is unfit (*not convenient*) for God's holy people (*saints*). Instead, they should use God's good gifts with *thanks* to God (1 Tim. 4:4).

5:5–6 *whoremonger*. Fornicator, person having sex outside marriage. He who lives for pleasure or possessions is an *idolater*, for whatever masters you is your god (Matt. 6:24; Phil. 3:19). All such persons will be shut out of *the kingdom* and will suffer *the wrath of God* (Gal. 5:19–21; Rev. 21:8). *Let no man deceive you* (1 Cor. 6:9–10; Gal. 6:7). Satan always tries to deceive people that God will not punish sin (Gen. 3:5). *children of disobedience*. See note on 2:2–3.

5:7 *partakers with them*. God's people are not to share with sinners in their lust, greed, and disobedience.

5:8 *sometimes*. At one time; once. While unconverted, they were once not only in the darkness, but they *were darkness*. But union with Christ (*in the Lord*) changed them into light.

5:9 The light is explained as *all goodness and righteousness and truth*. The *children of light* are people shining with God's light (Isa. 60:1–3), in *the fruit of the Spirit* (Gal. 5:22).

5:10 *Proving*. Testing in order to discern God's will (Rom. 12:2). Those who walk as children of light make it their ambition to please the Lord, not the world (2 Cor. 5:9; Gal. 1:10).

5:11 *have no fellowship*. Do not participate. *unfruitful*. Sin does no good (4:17), unlike the *fruit* God produces in believers. *reprove*. Expose their evil by bringing the light of Christ to them.

5:12 *a shame even to speak*. Even talking about sin is distasteful (5:3–4) and should be avoided except insofar as is necessary. Cultivate wise innocence (Matt. 10:16; Rom. 16:19).

5:13 May be translated: *but all things exposed by the light are visible, for everything made visible is light. Overcome the darkness of evil by shining the light of God's goodness*.

5:14 Perhaps a song based on Scriptures (Isa. 9:2; 26:19; 60:1). Through the gospel call, God raises sinners to life in Christ (2:5), so that His light shines in them (5:8; 2 Cor. 3:18; 4:6). If God's children walk in holiness (5:9), they help to bring people from darkness to light by the gospel (Acts 26:18).

Walk in God's Wisdom for Relationships (5:15–6:9)

5:15 *walk circumspectly*. Paul exhorts them to walk worthy of their calling (4:1) in a wise and careful lifestyle, particularly in the local church (5:18–21) and the home (5:22–6:9).

5:16 *redeeming*. Buying up each opportunity (*time*) as at a market or auction before it is lost. *days are evil*. Stay alert, there is a war against the forces of evil (6:12–13).

5:17 *unwise*. Not lack of intelligence, but lack of biblical wisdom. *understanding what the will of the Lord is*. Christians must

18 And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;
 19 Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;
 20 Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;
 21 Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.
 22 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.
 23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.
 24 Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so *let* the wives *be* to their own husbands in every thing.
 25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;
 26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,
 27 That he might present it to himself a glori-

ous church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

28 So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.
 29 For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:
 30 For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.
 31 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.
 32 This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.
 33 Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife *see* that she reverence *her* husband.

CHAPTER 6

CHILDREN, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.

always be learners, students of Christ (Matt. 11:29; 17:5).

5:18 Intoxication with *wine* or other drugs aims at happiness but results in a foolish, wasted, and shameful life (*excess*, Prov. 23:29–35), not careful wisdom (5:15–16). Being *filled with the Spirit* results in obedience, faith, wisdom, and joy (Luke 4:1; Acts 6:3,5; 7:55; 11:24; 13:52). The present imperative form of the verb *be filled* implies a continual duty. It is a daily drinking deeply of Christ through faith in the word of Christ (3:17,19; John 7:37–39; Col. 3:16).

5:19–20 The church should sing *psalms and hymns and spiritual songs*, terms most often used of the biblical psalms. The church's worship should be trinitarian, empowered by the Spirit (5:18) to sing to the *Lord Jesus* and to give *thanks to the Father* through our *Lord Jesus Christ* (2:18).

5:21 *Submitting yourselves*. Voluntarily subjecting oneself to honor and obey proper authority. *one to another*. Not everyone to everyone (Matt. 24:10; Mark 4:41), but as appropriate in each relationship, which Paul explains further (5:22–6:9). *in the fear of God*. Submission to authority is motivated by love for God's majesty, and so limited by God's law. This means submission to another cannot ever be a license to disobey God's commandments.

5:22 *Wives, submit*. The first application of the principle of Spirit-filled submission to authority (5:21). *your own husbands*. Not to all men generally. *as unto the Lord*. To serve and obey Christ.

5:23–24 *head*. Authority (2 Sam. 22:44). *as the church is subject unto Christ*. A wife should obey her husband's leadership as the church obeys its *head*, and depend on her husband's care as the church depends on its *savior*. *in everything*. In every area of life, yet limited by God's laws.

5:25–27 *as Christ also loved the church*. A husband should give his special love exclusively to one woman as Christ loved *the church*, sacrifice his resources for her as Christ *gave himself*, and labor for her holiness as Christ aimed to *sanctify* His people. *washing of water by the word*. Spiritual purification by the Holy Spirit through the Word of Christ (Titus 3:5–6), symbolized once in washings (Lev. 14:8; 15:13) and now baptism (Acts 22:16). The Son's death has the same goal as the Father's

election: that the elect become *holy and without blemish* (1:4). **5:28–30** *as their own bodies*. A husband ought to be as attentive and sympathetic to his wife as to the needs and feelings of his own body, for she is a part of him (5:31). *nourisheth*. Provides what is needed to live and flourish. *cherisheth*. Protects from danger and harm. *we are members of his body*. Believers are joined to Christ in a living bond by His Spirit (1 Cor. 6:17; Col. 1:18; 2:19).

5:31–32 *one flesh*. Husband and wife are joined together by God in a lasting union (Matt. 19:5–6). Paul quotes Gen. 2:24 about Adam and his wife, but surprisingly applies it to *Christ and the church*. Adam was a type of Christ (Rom. 5:14), and marriage is a picture of the believer's union to Christ.

5:33 *let every one of you in particular*. Each person must make particular application of God's Word to his own case. *reverence*. Wives are to show respect and honor to their husband as their head (5:23).

Thoughts for Personal/Family Worship: Chapter 5

1. **Christians must not be like the world.** Too often the church wants to blend in, either to avoid persecution or to attract new members. But how can light blend into darkness—without ceasing to be light? Our mission requires that we be different. The most effective outreach program consists of producing people who radiate goodness, righteousness, and truth. Such Christians by their very lives convict sinners, validate God's law and judgment, and confirm the power of the gospel.
2. **Pray for the Spirit to fill your church.** Ask God to make your congregation a people who daily go to Christ and drink deeply of the intoxicating joy of the Holy Spirit. Seek the Spirit's grace for heartfelt singing of the psalms, profound thanksgiving to the Father through Christ, and humble submission to authority in the home, church, and state.
3. **Marriage exists to show the glory of Christ.** It is not a social contract formed when and how we please. It is not just a convenience for satisfying our desires. It is God's display case for the beautiful relationship between Christ and the church. Husbands and wives have a high call-

2 Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;)
 3 That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.
 4 And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.
 5 Servants, be obedient to them that are *your* masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ;
 6 Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart;
 7 With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men:
 8 Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether *he be* bond or free.
 9 And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him.

10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.
 11 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.
 12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high *places*.
 13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.
 14 Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;
 15 And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;
 16 Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.
 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:
 18 Praying always with all prayer and supplication

ing. Commit yourself to serve your spouse as God commands in His Word—whether your marriage is sweet or sorrowful.

Chapter 6: Paul concludes his description of wisdom in the household and calls believers to stand against the devil with the full equipment Christ provides.

6:1 Submission (5:21) is now applied to the parent-child relationship. *Children* are addressed as responsible individuals who must willingly obey. *in the Lord*. By Christ's grace and for His glory.

6:2–3 *Honour*. Quoting the fifth commandment (Deut. 5:16). Though Christ abolished the law in its ceremonies and condemnation (2:15), the Ten Commandments still direct Christians in obedience to the Lord (1 Cor. 7:19; 9:21). *promise*. Rebellion against authority brings danger and God's wrath (Prov. 20:20; 30:17); honoring authority brings His blessing (Prov. 1:7–8; 3:1–4).

6:4 *fathers*. The father bears primary responsibility as head of the household (5:23). *nurture*. Training and discipline. *admonition*. Teaching with appeals for action (1 Thess. 2:11–12).

6:5–9 *Servants . . . masters*. Not the same as the enslavement of Africans in America. Slavery was not a matter of race, for slaves were of various races and colors. In cities of the Roman Empire 20–30 percent of the population consisted of slaves. A typical household included father, mother, children, and slaves. Slavery was the legal status of being bound to serve a master, but the work of slaves varied from field labor to serving as doctors, teachers, and accountants. Some slaves saved money and bought their freedom. Paul is not condoning slavery but commenting on a social institution of his day.

6:5–7 *fear and trembling*. Sensing the dangerous consequences of laziness. *singleness*. Sincerely committed to do a good job. *eyeservice*. Working hard only when someone is watching. *as servants of Christ*. Cheerfully doing all to please the Lord (Col. 3:23).

6:8 All good work will receive of the Lord its due reward (Matt. 25:21; Mark 9:41; 2 Cor. 5:10).

6:9 *masters, do the same things unto them*. Give them the same justice and reward as the Lord (same Greek word as *masters*)

does His servants (Col. 4:1). *Forbearing*. Desisting from, leaving off. *neither is there respect of persons*. The Lord will judge all people, and He plays no favorites (Rom. 2:11; Col. 3:24–25).

Walk in the Lord's Armor for Spiritual Warfare (6:10–22)

6:10 *be strong*. Be courageous for God (Deut. 31:6). Christianity demands courage; the fearful go to hell (Rev. 21:8). *the power of his might*. Drawing on Christ's strength as Lord (1:19–20).

6:11–13 *Put on*. Same word used in 4:24. Put on the character of Christ by faith and repentance. *whole armour of God*. Putting on Christ (Rom. 13:12–14), a believer puts on the very armor of the Divine Warrior (Isa. 59:15–20). *wiles of the devil*. Satan's crafty tactics (4:14). Christians need divine armor because their battle is not against weak mankind (*flesh and blood*), but a vast army of powerful, evil, invisible spirits who control the unsaved world (2:2; Mark 5:9; Rev. 12:9). Clothed with Christ's power, Christians are *able to withstand* all the forces of the devil.

6:14 Meditation on the *truth* of the Bible, like a belt that ties up a loose robe (*loins girt about*), makes one's mind ready for action (Luke 12:35,40; 1 Peter 1:13). Doing *righteousness* (4:24; 5:9) protects one's soul from the wounds of sin as a *breastplate* protects the heart and lungs.

6:15 Renewing one's faith in *the gospel of peace*, like putting on a soldier's boots (*feet shod*), gives one firm footing to face Satan so he does not slip into fear, guilt, and spiritual bondage.

6:16 Satan tempts God's people with burning arrows (*fiery darts*) that aim to ignite and consume their souls with deceitful desires. *Faith* in God's promises is like a large Roman *shield* (4 ft. by 2.5 ft.), which covers the body; it can overcome *all* temptations (1 John 2:14; 5:4–5).

6:17 The hope of one's future *salvation* from all evils (1 Thess. 5:8–9) protects one's mind like a *helmet* from being stunned or broken. Christians can strike back at Satan's kingdom by speaking *the word of God*, which is like the short, nimble, and sharp Roman *sword*. It has the power of the *Spirit* to pierce the heart (Heb. 4:12), for it is the Word of Christ the prophet (Isa. 49:2).

6:18 *Praying always . . . all prayer . . . all perseverance . . . all saints*. Prayer is the universal weapon of warfare, needed at all times. *in the Spirit*. The Spirit directs prayers through the Word

in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;
 19 And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel,
 20 For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.
 21 But that ye also may know my affairs, *and* how I do, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faith-

ful minister in the Lord, shall make known to you all things:
 22 Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that ye might know our affairs, and *that* he might comfort your hearts.
 23 Peace *be* to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
 24 Grace *be* with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.

(6:17) so that Christians experience bold and joyful access to the Father through the Son (2:18; 3:12; 5:18–20).

6:19–20 *mystery of the gospel*. See notes on 1:9; 3:2–3. *ambassador in bonds*. Paradoxically, Paul was both the authorized representative of the Lord (2 Cor. 5:20), and a prisoner of men. Believers must pray for preachers (Rom. 15:30; Col. 4:3–4), especially that they would preach the gospel *boldly* (vv. 19–20) by the Holy Spirit (Acts 4:8; 6:5,10).

6:21–22 *that ye also may know . . . that ye might know*. Churches need reports from missionaries to inform their prayers and to encourage (*comfort*) them by news of perseverance and progress (2 Cor. 1:3–11). For such reports to be credible, they must be brought by *a beloved brother and faithful minister*.

CONCLUDING BLESSING: PEACE AND GRACE (6:23–24)

6:23–24 *Peace* is a typical Jewish blessing (“shalom”). Just as Paul opens his letter with grace and peace, so he closes by blessing them with yet more—a deeper experience of Christ. Grace belongs only to those who *love our Lord Jesus Christ*, for all others are God’s accursed enemies (1 Cor. 16:22). *in sincerity*. Or perhaps, “with immortality,” that is, undying love.

On the one hand, this is because the hardest thing about being a father or mother is doing what you know that you should do: be kind and just, not angry and unfair; train and discipline your children consistently; teach them the Word of God. On the other hand, Paul’s few words to fathers stand upon two broad bases. First, the book of Proverbs offers a wealth of wisdom for training children. Second, the rest of Eph. 4—6 reminds us that successful parenting requires us to walk worthy of our calling in every area of life: church, daily repentance, avoiding worldliness, and marriages of love and respect. If we are faithful in these four areas, we have laid a solid foundation for raising our children.

2. No Christian is a spiritual civilian. We are all soldiers on the front lines. Therefore we must live in a state of battle readiness, always alert for our enemy. Believers, however, need not live in bondage to fear. Christ is our armor, and He is sufficient to overcome a legion of fallen angels. Let us therefore make walking with Christ into our lifestyle, by meditating on the truth, doing what is right, resting on Christ’s blood for peace of conscience, trusting God’s promises, hoping in total salvation, speaking God’s Word, and praying always for ourselves, other Christians, and the preachers of the gospel. By God’s grace in Christ, we can overcome the Evil One.

Thoughts for Personal/Family Worship: Chapter 6

1. Paul’s instructions for parenting are surprisingly simple.