

Ephesians 1

Chapter 1

Ephesians 1:1 – Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God,
To God’s holy people in Ephesus,^[a] the faithful in Christ Jesus:

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

While some ancient copies of this letter omit ‘in Ephesus’, it would have been very likely that Paul corresponded with the church in Ephesus. He spent a significant amount of time in Ephesus. He arrived there sometime in the year 54, and spent a little longer than three years there.

This introduction is almost word for word the same introduction that Paul gives in the opening verses of Colossians. Tradition tells us that they were delivered by the same person at the same time – so there really shouldn’t be any controversy there.

As in Colossians – Paul writes to God’s holy people. Your translation may have saints. That was the Greek word used. Saints meant holy – set apart. Set apart for God to use.

Grace to you was used by Paul in the opening of all his letters except the pastoral letters.

The phrase peace from God our father is found in the introductions of nine of Paul’s letters.

1:3 – Praise be to / blessed the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

This verse begins the first major section of Paul’s letter. This section goes through verse 14.

We have been blessed with every spiritual blessing. What are those specifically? The following verses tell us.

1:4 – For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.

Throughout this section, we will be dealing with the thought of predestination, and what that means for us – and what it means for all of humanity, and for those who are not Christian.

As I have said before in Bible Study – what is predestined is God’s plan. Consider verse four this way –

Before anything was ever created, God chose that those who would be in him were to be holy and blameless in his sight.

What was preordained is that those who chose Jesus would be holy and blameless –

What was not preordained is God choosing some to be make a decision to be a Christian and selecting others to never consider Christianity.

And – verse 4 & 5 is another fine example that someone without a lot of Bible knowledge put in the chapter and verses. In love is part of verse five.

1:5 – In love ⁵he^[b] predestined us for adoption to sonship^[c] through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—

Again – what is predestined is God’s plan of salvation.

When Paul writes – he predestined us – read it as – he predestined those in Christ.

We happen to be a part of that group, so we are included in the us. The good news is that anyone can be included in the us because the us is not predestined – the process to be a part of the us is predestined.

What’s more – those who accept God’s preordained plan are adopted into God’s family.

1:6 – to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.

The fact that God had – from the beginning – chosen a way for those who believe to be adopted into God’s family is worthy of our praise.

This grace has been freely given. Grace, heaven, eternity, is a free gift. There is nothing we can do to earn it. Paul will emphasize this again in one of my favorite passage in this letter. In fact, Paul mentions grace twelve times, and much of chapter two and part of chapter four focuses on grace.

1:7 – In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace ⁸ that he lavished on us.

Through his blood, obviously speaking about the cross. The word that we translate as redemption can also be translated as ransomed. Sin held us captive. Jesus’ sacrifice for us paid the ransom and we have been released!

Grace that God lavished on us. The word meant exceeding the ordinary. Grace goes beyond the ordinary. Grace is extraordinary.

1:8b – With all wisdom and understanding, ⁹ he^[d] made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ,

In Colossians 1:26 Paul wrote – the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the Lord’s people.

Here in verse nine Paul again writes about a mystery.

In Romans 16:25, Paul also called the word of God a mystery that had now been revealed.

How had it been a mystery? Before Jesus came to earth, no one knew exactly how God planned to fulfill the prophecies of the messiah. Certainly, Paul hadn’t understood. He lived his life expecting a different kind of Messiah, that is why he spent some years persecuting the church.

But, by the grace of God, Paul came to understand the mystery.

1:9 – he^[d] made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, ¹⁰ to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.

Verse ten is translated in various ways. The KJV has dispensation, others have the word plan. The NIV here simply has ‘to be put into effect’.

I believe that the RSV is the most true to the Greek – “a plan for the fulness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.”

Paul touched on this briefly in Colossians – that Jesus came to unite all things – all powers – including spiritual powers. The unity that Jesus came to bring is not just unity here on earth – but in all things.

Paul will write more about such spiritual powers in chapter six.

1:11 – In him we were also chosen,^[e] having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will,

Again, this use of of the Greek word (pro-or-id'-zo) gets misused and misinterpreted.

The plan is what is predestined or preordained. God had a plan all along – it was preordained.

So, once we surrender to Christ we are in him. This verse begins – In him we were also chosen. Before we are chosen we have to make a choice. Are we in Christ or not?

God has chosen those in Christ according to God’s plan, a plan that was preordained, preplanned.

This preordained plan will work out everything according to the will of God.

In other words folks – it’s all going to pan out in the end. It really will!

Now, it will become clear in verse 13, but Paul here in verse 11 & 12, is talking about the Jews who first accepted Jesus before the good news was brought to the Gentiles.

1:11 – In him we were also chosen,^[e] having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, ¹² in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.

Again – Paul is talking about the Jewish converts to Christianity – they who were the first were ‘for the praise of his glory’.

Glory to God, the Jews who were chosen to bring the Messiah into the world, did not totally reject Jesus. Even today, there are messianic Christians – Christians who hold onto their Jewish heritage, just as Paul did.

The next verse makes it clear that Paul was referring to Jewish Christians.

1:13 – And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel/good news of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit,

Paul notes three things that took place in the lives of the Ephesian believers – or any Gentile believers, us included.

First, they heard –*you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel/good news of your salvation.*

Second – they believed – *When you believed.*

Third – once they believed they were sealed – *When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit.*

In those days a seal was placed on a letter or scroll to indicate two things. First, that it was complete, finished. Second, it identified who the letter or scroll belonged to.

When we believe we are marked by the Holy Spirit, which completes us, and signifies that we belong to Christ Jesus.

Speaking of the Holy Spirit in verse 13, verse 14 continues that thought.

1:14 – who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of his glory.

In verse 13, the Holy Spirit was called God’s seal, here it is called our guarantee, or a deposit guaranteeing. Paul uses a banking term meaning we have been given an advance.

An advance of what? An advance of glory, of heaven, of eternity. As in verse 12, we are told that we have been given this to the praise of his glory.

Have you praised God for the gift of the Holy Spirit?
Have you felt, prayed to, relied upon the Holy Spirit?

Verse 15 begins a new section. A thanksgiving and a prayer that runs to the end of chapter one. .

1:15 – For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God’s people, ¹⁶I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.

Remember, Paul spent a long time in Ephesus. Perhaps as long as three years. Here, he points out two things that he has heard about them since his departure, and he gives thanks for it.

He has heard about their faith. He knew about their faith when he lived there, but to hear others speak of it brought him joy. Most likely, he’s heard of their faith from those who have visited him in Rome.

Who has heard about our faith? Who is speaking of our faith?

He has also heard of their love for all people. Wow! Are people talking about your love for all people? Remember what Jesus told us –

John 13:34 – “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

1:17 – I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit^[1] of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.

Paul has already mentioned wisdom in verse eight. Here, he mentions wisdom and revelation. The word that we translate as revelation meant to uncover something. Paul is praying that the things of God, and the things about living a godly life, will be uncovered and made plain to them.

To know God better – that should be our goal. As we know God better we grow in the likeness of God.

1 Corinthians 11:1 (RSV) – Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.

This can happen when we know God/Christ better.

And we can know God / Christ better through what we are doing – studying the Bible, and through the Holy Spirit. We should pray and ask what Paul was praying for here, for wisdom and revelation so that we would know Christ better.

1:18 – I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people,

In verse 17, Paul prayed that they would have wisdom and revelation. Here, he prays that they would also receive enlightenment and knowledge. This is that so they would come to fully understand what God has already done and already provided for them.

Many, still today, know the facts about salvation, but we must move past the facts to an understanding of the importance of such blessings.

I believe many Christians are not passionate about the Lord because the eyes of their hearts are not opened and they do not fully understand the depth of their blessings.

I'm not talking about such supposed blessings as houses and cars and possessions. No, I'm talking about the true blessings of Christ – the forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

This is why Paul wants them to know “the riches of his glorious inheritance .”

1:19 – and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength ²⁰ he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms,

Here is a verse that the average Christian just doesn't comprehend. It says what it says! For those who believe, we have access to the same mighty strength that God used to raise Christ from the dead.

Now, what exactly does it mean that Jesus is seated at the right hand of God? I mean, isn't Jesus with us? Isn't Jesus God? Does all that Jesus do is sit next to God all day?

Jesus himself told the chief priests, **Luke 22:69** – “But from now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God.”

Peter preached that Jesus was seated at the right hand of God in the Book of Acts. Stephen saw Jesus at God's right hand before his death.

Paul mentions Jesus at God's right hand in Romans and Colossians.

So, what does the right hand of God mean? Jesus said that God was spirit. Do spirits have right hands?

In the ancient world, to be seated at the right hand of a king or emperor signified power above all others in the kingdom.

When Paul writes in verse 20 that Jesus is seated at the right hand of God in the heavenly realms would mean that Jesus has power over all creation. Not just we on earth, but over the heavenly – spiritual – realms.

Verse 21 emphasizes this thought.

1:21 – far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.

Being seated at the right hand of God meant what Paul writes here – he is far above all rule and authority and power and dominion.

Paul said in **Colossians 2:10** – in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority.

What exactly is the age to come? Well, there has certainly been plenty of debate and plenty of ink spilled over this question.

Is it a messianic age? Is it a time of tribulation?

Here's the things friends – Are you in Christ? Is Christ your Savior? Is Christ your hope? Then it really doesn't make much sense to speculate about the future because no matter what it holds, Jesus holds you in the age to come.

No that is good stuff!

1:11 – And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

Here, the church is not used in Paul's usual manner. He's not writing about a local assembly that meets in someone's home. He's speaking of all Christians collectively, which make up the Body of Christ.

Paul often calls the Church the Body of Christ, that is inferred here, as he calls it his Body.

The important thing here is that Jesus is the head of the Church. Until Christ returns, until we meet in glory, the church is administered by fallen human beings – but Jesus is the head. As such, those who lead in the church must be vigilant about seeking their direction from the head, Christ.

In chapter four, Paul will write more about the church. There are Christians who don't believe that they need the church, that they can be a Christian without the church.

The Church is God's plan. As we will see in chapter four, the church is God's plan for Christians spiritual growth.

Plus, the church is God's plan for evangelism and works of service.

Chapter 2

Verses 1-10 in chapter two looks at the relationship between our sin, the grace of God, and our salvation. It is only by mercy and Grace that God forgives. Paul will emphasize the fact that human effort has no impact on salvation. Therefore, no one can brag about what they have achieved.

2:1 – As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins,² in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.

“You were dead in your transgressions and sins.” Paul is not telling them they were worse than anyone else. He is stating a fact for all people. We all sin. The impact of sin is death, therefore all are dead in their sin.

Romans 6:23 – the wages of sin is death.

Paul uses two words in verse one – transgressions and sins. In the Greek, the word for sin meant something willful. We knew it was wrong but we did it anyway.

The word for transgressions, or trespasses, could mean a slip, something unintended. Both intentional and unintentional sin make us less than holy, and anything less than holy cannot be in the presence of a holy God, therefore they leave us dead.

In verse two we have a profound verse, one in which most Christians don't pay enough attention to – the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air. In the Greek it is literally the ruler / chief/ the authority of the air.

This, of course, refers to Satan.

The kingdom of the air is literally of that which we breath.

So, Satan controls the world around us. His spirit is at work in those who are disobedient to God.

Jesus controls the universe. Which is the greatest power?
In the final battle – which is death – Jesus has defeated Satan.

Therefore we should follow the one who controls our eternal destiny, and not the one who merely controls the temporal.

We should note – This passage speaks of following the ways of the world as past tense for believers. Is following the ways of the world our present tense or past tense?

2:3 – All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh (human nature) and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.

Romans 3:23 tells us that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Here, Paul says that another way, and includes himself.

Now, some would say – hey I wasn't a bad person before I put my faith in Jesus. Well, all of us followed our human desires. Those human desires should be put to death – that is taking up our cross. Remember, a cross is where things goes to die.

Our lives, our thoughts, our actions, should be noticeably different when we follow Jesus.

At the very least, our motivations should be different when we are in Christ. This is the new creation Paul writes about in other letters.

Those who's motivation is self deserve judgement, here spoke of as wrath.

2:4 – But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.

Here's what we must all understand – the difference between a Christian and a non Christian is not about what the Christian has done, it's not about the Christian being better. It's about God. It's about the power of God to forgive those who repent.

It's about God who is rich in mercy and who has great love for all.

The Apostle John put it this way – **1 John 4:10** – This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

Verse five tells us that God has made us alive. Two things about this. First, we didn't do that – God did.

Secondly, this is eternal life. If you are in Christ you already have entered into eternal life. It doesn't begin when your body dies, it begins now when we live under the grace and authority of Jesus Christ.

The next verse will speak about this new eternal life.

Paul wrote something very similar in **Colossians 2:13** – When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you^[d] alive with Christ.

2:6 – And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus,

God has raised us up – it's already been done. Eternal life has already begun! The same power that raised Jesus from the dead has raised us up for eternity.

So confident was Paul about being in glory with Jesus, he states that we are seated with him in the heavenly realms.

Heaven awaits and you have reserved seats!

2:7 – in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

Verse six said that we were seated with Christ in the heavenly realms – here we are told this will take place in the coming ages.

We know of God's grace now, but then we will know of the incomparable riches of God's grace!

This grace has been given – or as it says in this verse – expressed to us in Christ Jesus.

2:8 – For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.

Paul returns to what he said in verse five, and expands on it in this well known passage. Paul clarifies that we had nothing to do with earning salvation. He wants there to be no mistake – it's all about God's Grace.

Good deeds are important, and Paul certainly writes a lot about generosity, compassion, encouragement, etc. – but those things do not earn us anything. They reflect God's glory.

We can't brag about ourselves – we can and should brag about God!

So, we are saved by grace, not by works, but Paul wants us to know that works have their place.

2:10 – For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

People pay a lot of money for hand crafted works of art. We are hand crafted works of art created by the master artist!

Just as God's plan of salvation was preordained – so are the works that God has for us to do. We are now partners with God through the power of the Holy Spirit to do the things that God has planned for us to do.

Ephesians

Last week we finished with Ephesians 2:10. Those first ten verses of chapter are absolutely profound – we are saved by Grace, not by works. Praise God!

Yet, we were also told that having been saved by grace we are then created to do good works which God has prepared for us.

Ephesians 2:11-22 explains how those who are saved by grace have become part of a family. Keep in mind, most of the church in Ephesus would have been Gentile converts.

Paul will transition from his discussion on salvation by grace alone to an explanation of our unity in Christ.

2:11 – Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called “uncircumcised” by those who call themselves “the circumcision” (which is done in the body by human hands)—¹² remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

For generations – centuries – the Gentiles were seen as outsiders from the Jews. The Jews had derogatory names for them – the uncircumcised being the least demeaning. The point being – the Jews had believed them to be unworthy of being in God’s family.

But, those attitudes were manmade. That’s what Paul’s remark in verse 11 is about – circumcised and uncircumcised being things merely done with human hands.

But now in Christ Jesus they have been brought near.

Are there folks we believe to be unworthy of being in God’s family? Do we allow anything to separate us from others who are in Christ?

Verse 13 – But now in Christ – Christ changes everything! We should not let anything separate those who are covered by the blood of Christ.

2:14 – For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility,

Any hostility that we ever had towards another group – race – ethnicity – should have already been destroyed. If we are in Jesus, then any barriers, any hostility, should have been destroyed.

This is powerful stuff! Don't ever gloss over this. The hostility between Jews and Gentiles ran both ways, and was a deep prejudice. Yet the early churches consisted of both groups, worshipping, and sometimes living, as one.

2:15 – by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace,¹⁶ and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.

The NIV has – by setting aside – your translation may have by abolishing. The Greek word literally means to remove all power from, or to render inoperative. Does that mean that the law has lost its power?

Well, yes – because the purpose of the law has been fulfilled through Christ. The purpose of the law was to bridge the gap between humans and God. That gap – that barrier – has been bridged.

With that barrier broken down, now the barriers between humans can be broken down. Through Christ, a new humanity has been made. If we are one new humanity, then we should have peace between all.

I've talked about the cross a bit lately from the pulpit. I've said that the cross is where things go to die. Verse 16 – and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.

The hostility between peoples should have been put to death on the cross.
We must take up that cross daily!

2:17 – He came and preached peace to you who were far away (meaning Gentiles) and peace to those who were near (meaning Jews).¹⁸ For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

Jesus preached peace and is our peace.

Matthew 5:9 – Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.

John 14:27 – Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you.

When one studies the Old Testament, it is clear to see that God has always been concerned with non Jews. The Jews being chosen was not about the Jews being better. It was about how the message of salvation would be brought to humanity.

2:19 – Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household,²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.

Fellow citizens – Paul is not talking about being fellow citizens of the Roman empire. They were fellow citizens of God's kingdom. Likewise, we are fellow citizens with all Christians of God's kingdom, and in God's family.

This household was built upon the apostles and prophets. Paul will refer again to apostles and prophets in chapter three, and chapter four. Prophets refers to the Old Testament prophets who looked forward not only to the day of the messiah, but to the day when Gentiles would be included.

Isaiah 49:6 – “It is too small a thing for you to be my servant
to restore the tribes of Jacob
and bring back those of Israel I have kept.
I will also make you a light for the Gentiles,
that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.”

The apostles were those personally associated with Jesus, who were the first to share the message of salvation.

The apostles and prophets were important as a foundation, but Paul notes that Jesus himself was/is the chief cornerstone.

2:21 – In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord.

This whole building – this family of God – is the Church. Sometimes called the body of Christ.

2:22 – And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

Two important things in this verse.
First, we – the church – is a dwelling place where God lives.

Second, God lives in God’s church through the Holy Spirit.

Chapter 3

Verses 1-13 of chapter 3 explains Paul’s ministry in the context of God’s revealed mystery.

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

If you read verse one, it seems a little awkward with verse two. Remember that Paul dictated his letters. As such, sometimes a thought would come to him and he would then take a short detour and then come back to what he had started to say.

With that in mind, when you read verse one – look down at verse 14 – “For this reason I kneel before the Father.”

3:2 – Surely you have heard about the administration of God’s grace that was given to me for you,

Those who debate the authenticity of this letter, or debate that it wasn’t originally sent to Ephesus, use this verse among others for their cause. If Paul spent three years there, why go over what they surely would have known?

Not sure that's really pertinent. Time had passed. New Christians were part of the church in Ephesus. Maybe not all had heard Paul's testimony.

3:3 – that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly.

Paul has already written briefly in chapter 1 and 2 about the mystery. He mentions this mystery in other letters, as well. Remember, the mystery is God's plan of salvation which has come to light through Jesus.

3:4 – In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, ⁵ which was not made known to people in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets.

While Paul often wrote of the mystery, here and in Colossians 4:3 are the only places he calls it the mystery of Christ, although that is inferred. Actually, what is inferred in the mystery of salvation through Christ.

While the prophets wrote and preached to other generations, the mystery of Christ had not been revealed.

And again, in this verse, we have Paul emphasizing that this revealing by the Holy Spirit.

3:6 – This mystery is that through the gospel/good news the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.

Paul makes it clear that the mystery of salvation was always intended for Jews and Gentiles alike. This idea would have been comforting to Gentile Christians and challenging to Jewish Christians.

Likewise, today, some Christians are challenged in that all ethnicities are included in the mystery in which we find salvation.

Paul wrote in **Romans 1:16** – I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.

When Paul used the word Gentile it meant any and all ethnic groups other than Jewish. We are Gentiles.

3:7 – I became a servant of this gospel/good news by the gift of God’s grace given me through the working of his power.

Paul writes – I became a servant. Some translations have minister. The word that Paul uses is diakonos, and we get the word deacon from that word. It meant servant, a lowly servant that waited on their master’s table.
I like that picture. We should all wait on our masters table.

Paul recognized that all he was doing for the good news was a gift from God. God has given to you and I this same gift – to serve the good news.

3:8 – Although I am less than the least of all the Lord’s people (saints), this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the boundless riches of Christ,

Paul did not feel entitled to the position of an apostle. Indeed, Paul didn’t ask for his calling. Think about this for a moment. God directed him to be a missionary to Gentiles. For most of his life he despised Gentiles. Through the power of the Holy Spirit he came to love Gentiles and sought their salvation.

However, there was a time when it was not the ministry that he would have chosen.

We should pray about the ministry that God has for us. Maybe to talk to someone that you really aren’t thinking about talking to.

Maybe serving someone you really have never thought about serving.

The NIV has the boundless riches of Christ. Not a bad translation, but unsearchable is better. It is beyond what we can find in this reality, this world, but we are heirs of those riches! That’s good stuff!

3:9 – and to make plain to everyone the administration / stewardship of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things.

And to make plain to everyone – Paul’s mission was to the Gentiles, but he preached to everyone, Jews as well as Gentiles.

Paul saw himself as a steward or an administrator of the good news.
We are not only recipients of God’s grace, we are stewards of God’s grace!

3:10 – His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, ¹¹ according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.

This is very important! The Church – which means the people of the church – are the means by which God has chosen to reveal to the world the mystery of God, that is salvation through Jesus Christ.

If this is God’s plan for the church – how is the church doing?

However, this verse carries a deeper meaning. The activity of the church would be a sign even to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms. Many believe that Paul is speaking of angels. Or that even the demons would take notice of what the church – the body of Christ – is doing.

Verse eleven tells us that God’s plan was accomplished through Jesus Christ our Lord. The plan – the mystery – these both refer to salvation. More specifically – how we are reconciled with God.

3:12 – In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.

Here are two amazing benefits to those who believe in Jesus.
The NIV that I am reading has freedom and confidence. Other translations has boldness and confidence. I prefer freedom over boldness.

The Greek word could sometimes be used as boldness, but more often as freedom, as in the freedom to speak.

God hears us. God wants to hear from us. God wants us to be in constant communication with God. So, we have that freedom. I suppose that takes boldness to talk to God and expect God to hear.

The second benefit is confidence. We don't have to worry that God won't listen. We don't have to worry that God is too busy. We have the freedom to speak to God when we want, and the confidence to know we are heard.

3:13 – I ask you, therefore, not to be discouraged because of my sufferings for you, which are your glory.

Therefore – we have confidence and freedom to approach God, so – therefore – do not be discouraged that Paul was suffering. What do we make of that?

Well, his readers had the freedom to pray for Paul and the confidence to know that God was hearing those prayers.

They also had the confidence to know that God is using Paul's sufferings for the glory of God.

Paul says that this has been for their glory. That is, for the benefit of the Gentiles – for that is what he was imprisoned for, preaching to the Gentiles.

Remember the first verse of this chapter – **3:1** – For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles—

He sort of got off on a tangent explaining what the reason was. He finished explaining in verse 13 that his sufferings were so that the Gentiles could know salvation.

Now he continues.

3:14 – For this reason I kneel before the Father,

Paul now transitions to a prayer.

3:14 – For this reason I kneel before the Father,

3:15 – from whom every family^[a] in heaven and on earth derives its name.

Paul uses a word play, as he often does, but it doesn't translate into English.

Paul kneels before the Father from whom every family – the word for Father and family are from the same root.

But, what is truly interesting about this verse is that Paul mentions every family in heaven and on earth. I don't think Paul is referring to angels, he usually calls them spirits of the heavenly realm.

He is referring to those who have died.

Are we still in family units in heaven? What does that look like?

That's not what Paul is trying to explain.

He is simply stating that God is the Father of the living and the dead. That is significant. If we don't live after we die we don't need a God in heaven.

Praise be to God that we do and we do!

3:16 – I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

One thing I have not pointed out, but that we have over and over again in this letter, and in others – and that is the reference to the trinity.

Here, Paul prays that God would strengthen them through the Spirit (Holy Spirit), so that Christ would dwell in their hearts.

Paul mentions their inner being in verse 16. This is our spirit. He prays that the Holy Spirit would strengthen our spirit.

3:17b – And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, ¹⁸may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ,

Rooted and established in Love. This is the life of a Christian, to be rooted and established in love. The word for rooted is rhizo – we get the word rhizome from.

A rhizome is a particularly difficult root to remove because it grows horizontally under ground. If a plant has a rhizome root system, it's solidly in the ground.

Rooted and established – or rooted and grounded in some translations. The Greek word for grounded or established meant a foundation,

When we are rooted and grounded in love we are better able to begin to understand something of the love of Christ.

I think it's significant that Paul is praying that they might better understand the love of Christ. Why? Because it changes us when we know and understand that the creator loves us more than can be expressed. In fact, that's pretty much what he says in the next verse.

3:19 – and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Paul wants his readers to experience the love of Christ in a way that goes beyond mere information. This does not imply that knowledge is unimportant. Instead, Paul wants the Ephesians to understand that God's love is ultimately beyond our comprehension. We will never completely understand it. Echoing the sentiment of James, he suggests that true, godly love is not limited to mere knowledge; it must be expressed in action (James 2:17–23). Paul called love "the greatest of these [gifts of God]" (1 Corinthians 13:13). Scripture often speaks of God's love, saying "God is love" (1 John 4:8).

In contrast, the Pharisees were said to follow the law, in their actions, yet neglected the "love of God" (Luke 11:42) and did not have the love of God in them (John 5:42). So, action without love is just as invalid as love without action.

Paul's desire for his readers to grow in God's love has a specific purpose. This "fullness of God" is mentioned only one other time in Scripture, in Colossians 1:19: "For in [Jesus] all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell." There, the focus is on the greatness of God which exists in Jesus, clearly labelling Jesus as divine. In a similar manner, Paul wants his audience to be filled with Jesus as much as possible. He knows that love, in both thoughts and actions, is the key to this taking place in the life of a believer (Ephesians 3:18).

²⁰ Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

The Holy Spirit can do more in us than we can imagine! Really, like what?

Like love the unlovable.

Like forgive those who have offended us.

Like serving others with love and compassion.

We tend to think that this verse – immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine – is about extraordinary things, and it is! To live like Christ is extraordinary! And that's what the Spirit can do in and through us.

Similar is **2 Corinthians 9:8** – And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

Since this takes place for those who open themselves to God's Spirit – we give the glory to God. We give God the glory for God's life in the church, the very Body of Christ at work in the world!

Ephesians

Chapter 4

Here in the first part of chapter four, Paul will write about Christian unity. Every believer, regardless of skill, regardless of race or gender, is saved by the same faith in Jesus.

Therefore, each believer is part of a family – the same family.

At the same time, God gives different gifts to different people, so that God's purposes can be fulfilled here on earth.

4:1 – As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.

Much of chapter two and chapter three were about the Grace of God. Now, Paul is calling for those who have received that grace to live a life that honors such an indescribable and unfathomable gift.

This is a common theme in several of Paul's letters.

Philippians 1:27 – Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.

1 Thessalonians 2:12 – encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.

2 Thessalonians 1:11 – To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his call, and may fulfil every good resolve and work of faith by his power

In the following verses, Paul will outline several ways to live life honoring God's grace.

4:2 – Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.

We are called to live with humility – be completely humble!

Matthew 18:4 – whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 23:12 – For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.

We are called to live with gentleness. Gentleness is actually a part of the fruit of the Spirit that we find in Galatians 5:23.

Likewise, patience is part of the fruit of the spirit. However, in 4:2, Paul describes how this patience should be displayed.

By bearing – literally enduring – with one another. We do this in love. That means we don't endure someone and roll our eyes – we do so in love.

1 Corinthians 13:4 – Love is patient.

4:3 – Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace (Also part of the fruit of the spirit).

In addition to humility, gentleness, patience & love, we should strive for unity. Perhaps unity is often lost in churches – in relationships – because one or more people lack humility, gentleness, patience and love.

Unity has been an ongoing topic of discussion in this letter. Remember from last week when we read from Chapter **2:14** – For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility.

Paul writes – the bond of peace. An interesting choice of words given that he was in prison when this was written. There are different types of bonds. There are bonds that hold us back, and then there are bonds that give us encouragement, as in the bond of peace.

Paul is writing about unity. In verses 4 – 6 he has a repetition of the word one. He is stressing oneness, unity, to emphasize the closeness and the harmony we (Christians) should be displaying to the world.

4:4 – There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called;

One body and one spirit.

The body that Paul is referring to is the church. Not a local home church as they would have had – but all of the believers.

In our early service we recite the Apostles Creed, and in it we say that we believe in the holy catholic church. That is catholic with a small ‘c’, not the Roman Catholic church.

Catholic means universal, and this is what Paul is referring to in verse four.

One Spirit – The Holy Spirit is the only thing that can unite all believers.

Paul mentions the spirit here in verse four, the Lord in verse five, and God the Father in verse six. Again, we have the trinity.

4:5 – one Lord, one faith, one baptism;

We – all Christians – are members of a single universal community of believers for three reasons.

We all have the same one Lord.

We all have faith in the same Lord. Salvation has come for each of us in the same way. No one has been more deserving than anyone else.

Remember from chapter two, salvation is not by works, so that no one can boast.

Next, baptism is mentioned. Baptism was, and is for most churches, a public sign of faith in Jesus. The Greek word – *baptisma* – literally meant the result of a dipping or sinking.

Was it by immersion? Well, the early church – for a couple of centuries – met in homes. Water was a precious commodity. Most believers would be baptized on the very day that they professed faith in Jesus.

Therefore – it is doubtful that immersion was a requirement. Most likely they did what they could do under the circumstances.

4:6 – one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

The last ‘one’ mentioned is God the Father of all. Paul writes that God is over all, through all, and in all. This emphasizes, as Paul often does in all of his letters, the sovereignty of God. There is nothing higher than God.

4:7 – But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. ⁸This is why it says:

“When he ascended on high,
he took many captives
and gave gifts to his people.”

We just had three powerful verses about the unity Christians can experience in Christ. Now, we are told that every believer is saved by the same grace, through the same faith, given by the same Lord and Savior.

Some have wondered about the phrase – as Christ apportioned it. Do some get more than others? No. Think of that phrase to mean – Christ has given it personally.

Christ has personally given each one of us grace.

In verse eight Paul quotes from Psalm 68:18. It is translated in various ways, and can be a bit confusing. Let's consider the three parts to this verse.

First, the ascension of Jesus. This refers to the physical act of ascension of Jesus as recorded in Luke 24 & Acts 1.

Next it says he took many captives. The Greek would be better translated as he led many captives. Who were / are the captives? We are! Before Jesus we were captives to sin.

In our communion liturgy it says – he freed us from slavery to sin and death. The grace given by Jesus makes us no longer captives – Jesus has taken us from captivity.

And he gave gifts to his people – This would speak to the gifts of the spirit that are given to all.

1 Corinthians 12:7 – To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

4:9 – (What does “he ascended” mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions / depths of the earth? ¹⁰ He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.)

Verses 9 & 10 is an interesting little side note in Paul's main flow of the passage. The change is so abrupt that most translations put these verses in parentheses. Perhaps this had been a point on some people's mind, and since Paul quoted from the Psalms about Jesus ascending on high, he spoke to the matter.

Does this speak of Jesus descending into hell, or simply leaving heaven and coming to earth? We have several places in the Bible which would indicate that Jesus would and did descend into hell.

1 Peter 3:19 – After being made alive, he went and made proclamation to the imprisoned spirits.

Zechariah 9:11 – As for you, because of the blood of my covenant with you, I will free your prisoners from the waterless pit.

Well, the Greek says – He went down from on high to the lower portion of the land.

I think in this context, I believe that Paul is simply saying Jesus came from heaven and returned to heaven. However, either interpretation is fine as both would portray Jesus as divine.

Certainly verse ten makes it clear that Jesus is divine and above all else.

Verse 11-16 are about the gift of spiritual leadership within the church and the importance of mature, unified Christians. Let's read verses 11-13, then we will break it down.

4:11 – So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, ¹² to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

4:11 – So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers,

Paul mentions some of the spiritual leaders that Christ gives – Christ gives the spiritual gifts for this type of leadership.

This is not a list of every type of church leader. Paul gives various types of list in various letters, and they most always differ slightly. The point is here is that there are a variety of leaders within the church that have received gifts for their leadership.

In this particular passage, Apostles would refer to those who had first hand knowledge of Jesus, and who generally church planters, like Paul.

Prophets would be preachers. In those days – a pastor and a preacher were often two separate positions within the church. Pastors often dealt with administrative and

missionary work. Were the people fed? Were the people in a home? Did they need medical attention?

The Greek word for pastor meant Shepherd. Many other languages are the same in that the word for pastor is the same word they use for shepherd. A shepherd makes sure the flock is safe and healthy.

Evangelists were usually those who traveled and shared the good news. In fact, the Greek word for evangelist is built upon the Greek word for Gospel / Good news. The word literally means the bringer of good news.

Teachers would have been those who taught the scriptures.

4:12 – to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up

His people is – as many translations have – the saints. Again, saint meant a person set apart by God for God, holy.

The overall mission of all church leaders should be the same – training believers to serve God, which in turn builds the church – the Body of Christ.

It is not the duty of the pastor, the teacher, the evangelist, to do the work of the church for everyone else. They train everyone else to do the work of the church.

Of course, that doesn't make a church leader exempt from works of service. Indeed, a good leader also leads by example.

4:13 – until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

In addition to equipping believers to serve and therefore build up the body of Christ, this work of the leaders will help believers reach a level of unity and grow in the knowledge of Jesus.

John 17:3 – Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

Paul wanted mature Christians. That's my goal! I am not an evangelist. I certainly appreciate and pray for evangelist, but my work – my calling & my gift – is to lead believer towards maturity in the faith.

To be a biblical Christian is to be growing towards spiritual maturity. Well, what happens when a Christian reaches spiritual maturity? They lead others towards spiritual maturity.

4:14 – Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming.

Lord have mercy! There are so many believers who are led by the winds of teaching of crafty and deceitful preachers!

Folks, be careful who you listen to. Be very careful. There were in Paul's day, and there have been in every day, preachers and teachers who have perverted the message of the good news.

4:15 – Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.

While speaking the truth in love is for all Christians, here it specifically speaks to the leadership of the spiritual leaders given to the church. When spiritual leaders speak God's truth in love, the church – the people of the church – will grow into a mature body.

For all of us – speaking the truth in love applies to the way that we speak to believers and non believers alike.

1 Peter 3:15 – Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.

There is never a good reason for a Christian to be mean spirited in their speech.

Verse 15 ended with noting that Christ is the head of all believers. Verse 16 begins with ‘from him.’ Him refers to Christ Jesus, the head of the church.

4:16 – From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

A healthy church is a healthy body. In a healthy body, each part does its work. Different functions with the same goal, growth.

The best church growth method is to grow spiritual Christians. This will lead to multiplication.

Church health, not church size, is the measure of a successful congregation.

Verses 17-32 is a practical explanation of how to live out a Christian life as a unified and mature church.

4:17 – So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking.

This word insist – Paul uses it only three times in his letters. When he insists on something, it’s something he feels very strongly about, and Paul felt very strongly that our lives should be different from the surrounding worldly culture.

How were the Gentiles living? Paul explains in the following verse.

4:18 – They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.

Separated from God. This is the difference between the Gentile converts and those who did not convert. Paul will go on to mention some specific behaviors, but this is essentially the difference between Christians and non Christians. We are no better (although we have repented), but we are not separated from God.

When Paul writes that those apart from God are ignorant, it has nothing to do with intelligence. It has to do, as he points out, with their hearts hardened towards God.

In today's world – why would someone's heart be hardened towards God? There are, to be sure, many reasons. I pray that one reason is not the judgmental attitudes of Christians that they have known. Remember, we speak the truth in love.

4:19 – Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed.

Paul mentions several things in this verse to consider. First, the non believers have lost all sensitivity. Other translations have they have become callous.

The NLT says they have no sense of shame. While that is a paraphrase, it's a good one. The Greek literally says that they have ceased to feel pain. What Paul is getting at is that they ignore the distinction of sinfulness.

They have become desensitized to sin. It doesn't bother them. They have no conviction of wrongdoing.

Then we are told that they have given themselves over to sensuality. The Greek word simply implied outrageous conduct, or conduct that would shock public decency.

Every kind of impurity. The Greek word is interesting - (ak-ath-ar-see'-ah) – anti Cathartic. The word literally implied some kind of ritual impurity.

Then we have – they are full of greed. When we think of greed we think in terms of money. The Greek implies – they are always wanting more.

4:20 – That, however, is not the way of life you learned ²¹ when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. ²² You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires;

A life in Christ – the life of a Christian – is a markedly different life. Paul says that we should have an old self and a new self.

What if we weren't an evil person or an immoral person before we came to faith in Jesus? There should still be a difference. We should continually move forward in Christ likeness. Verse 23 speaks of this renewal –

4:23 – to be made new in the attitude of your minds;

Other translations have – be renewed in the spirit of your minds. The Greek does say the spirit of your mind – or the spirit of your understanding.

I believe what Paul is saying is to let the Holy Spirit direct our thoughts.

Romans 8:5 – Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.

Romans 12:2 – Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

4:24 – and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

In verse 22 we were told to put off the old self, now we are told to put on the new self. This new self is actually created to be like God in righteousness and holiness.

This new self has a purpose! To reflect the very image of God. Paul says something similar in ...

Colossians 3:10 – put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.

4:25 – Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body.

Verse 25 begins with a therefore – so it's always important to remember what came before because what will follow hinges upon what came before.

What came before is the new self, created to be like God in righteousness and holiness. If we are a new creation, then the things Paul is writing about will be characteristics that we grow into as a Christian.

Paul begins this list with putting off falsehood. The Greek word is pseudos, which we get the word pseudo from. Pseudo means something not genuine. Christians are to be genuine with all people.

Who we are with one person or group of people is who we are to be with all people or all groups.

Paul writes that we are all members of one body. The word for members actually meant body parts. We're all parts of the same body – the church – the body of Christ.

4:26 – “In your anger do not sin”^[d]: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, ²⁷ and do not give the devil a foothold.

In your anger do not sin is a loose translation of Psalm 4:4. Regardless, this teaches us that anger is not necessarily wrong, it is not a sin. There are some things Christians should be angry about. Uncontrolled anger is a sin.

The best way to control our anger is given by Paul. Don't let anger go unresolved. The focus of this verse is not the literal sunset. Instead, it's about not letting too much time pass before dealing with anger.

As Christians, we should make dealing with our anger a priority. Unresolved anger leads to bitterness, or a desire for vengeance.

Anger can be a helpful emotion, but unresolved anger leads to what we are told in verse 27 – unresolved anger leads to a foothold for the devil.

Do not give the devil a foothold – Foothold can be translated in various ways. The KJV has a place. The RSV has an opportunity. Both are good translations.

1 Peter 5:8 – Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

4:28 – Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need.

In a large city like Ephesus, where the majority lived in poverty, and many in extreme poverty, stealing was simply a way to survive for many. It's no doubt that a good portion of the Christians in Ephesus were living in extreme poverty, and stealing was a way of life for them.

Personal moral and ethical choices were not common in that time. Or – perhaps I should say that moral and ethical choices based on Judeo – Christians values were not common.

Paul tells them to work and earn. What we don't realize is that this most likely meant selling yourself into servitude to someone. That was more desirable than living a life of thievery.

Yet even those who lived the life of a bondservant would have a little something to share with others – as Paul mentions in verse 28.

4:29 – Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

Several years ago, I preached an entire sermon series built around this verse! It's a verse with a profound message for all Christians, especially in this time in which we live.

Being a Christian means that we live each moment with an awareness of our relationship with others. We put the needs and interests of others above ourselves.

Philippians 2:3 – Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, ⁴not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

Here, in Ephesians 4:29 – instead of just telling us not to say wholesome things, Paul tells us to speak in ways that are beneficial to others – building them up according to their needs.

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

Many have wondered what Paul meant when he wrote do not grieve the Holy Spirit. Let's put this into context. He is writing about living a Christian life. A life in which we live differently than before.

A life where we honor and build up others by our words. A life where we work hard and help others as we are able.

A life where we don't let anger and other emotions move us away from a Christ like life. A life where we don't give the devil a foothold.

What in the world can enable and empower us to live such a life? The Holy Spirit, of course. When we ignore the Holy Spirit's power, and we fail to live up to the ideals of a Christian life, we grieve the Holy Spirit.

The Greek word for grieve can mean to make sorrowful. When we ignore the Holy Spirit – God's gift to us to live a Christ like life – it causes the Spirit sorrow.

Folks, the Spirit is with you to give you strength. Do not make the spirit sorrowful.

Paul wrote – the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

Ephesians 1:13 – When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit,

Consider **Romans 8:37** – No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons,^[k] neither the present nor the future, nor any powers,³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

This tells us that we do not ever need to fear losing the Spirit. The Spirit will always be with us, nothing can separate us from the Holy Spirit. However, we should not cause the Spirit sorrow.

Turn to the Spirit – rely on the Spirit – walk in the Spirit!

4:31 – Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.

Paul in rapid succession lists six areas of sin in which we should make every to avoid.

Bitterness – (pik-ree'-ah) – bitterness, harshness.

Rage/wrath – (thoo-mos') – an outburst of passion. Temper.

Anger – (or-gay') – impulse. Uncontrolled.

Brawling/clamor or outcry – (krow-gay') – shouting. Making a commotion.

Slander – (blas-fay-me'-ah) – Abusive language. 4:29 – unwholesome talk. Putting others down. Belittling others.

Malice – (kak-ee'-ah) – wickedness, trouble. Evil intent is implied.

4:32 – Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Kind – chréastos – useful to others.

Compassionate / tenderhearted – (yoo'-splangkh-nos) – tenderhearted, compassionate. But remember – not really the heart. This word comes from splankna, which we translate as heart, but really meant intestines. The seat of emotions.

Forgiving as Christ forgave us.

Ephesians

Chapter 5

Chapter five begins with an admonition to imitate Christ. Paul then tells us some of the things that we should avoid as we seek to imitate Christ.

5:1 – Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children ² and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

The NIV says to follow God's example. Quite literally, the Greek says to imitate God. Not only does he write to imitate God, in the Greek it is in the imperative mode.

How do we imitate God? The first thing we must do is get to know God better! We can know God better through reading God's word.

Paul helps out somewhat with how to know God better by stating that we should walk in the way of love. To walk in the way of something was a Jewish way of saying live your life by something.

Walking in the way of love was living a life of love. The Greek phrase walk in love is continual. It's not a destination, it's a lifelong journey.

In verse two Jesus' sacrifice is described as a fragrant offering. This refers to the Jewish temple sacrifices, but the pagan converts to Christianity would have also been familiar with the term as they also had given fragrant offering to their gods in their former lives as pagans.

5:3 – But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people.

After commanding us to imitate God, Paul transitions to condemning certain sinful behaviors. First we have sexual immorality. Older translations have fornication.

The Greek word is porneia. While the word was often used to imply fornication, it literally meant to surrender one's sexual purity.

Next we have 'any kind of impurity'. The KJV uses uncleanness, which is also a good translation. Paul used this word in chapter four, and we looked at it last week. The word is akatharsia – anti catharsis – anti cleansing.

In the context in which it is used here, coming right after sexual immorality, it most likely refers to what we might call the gray areas of sexual purity. Perhaps the things we look at, or watch, or read.

Christians should strive to be free of such things.

Next, Paul mentions greed. He had used this same word in chapter four. The word meant 'wanting more.' Perhaps, in this context it referred to things of a sexual nature.

Regardless, the desire for more of something in order to find happiness is driven by the world, not by the spirit.

5:4 – Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.

While verse three addressed sins of a sexual nature, here we have sins of inappropriate speech.

First we have obscenity, sometimes translated as filthiness. The Greek word is usually defined as baseness, which in our language is defined as a lack of moral principles, or more simply, bad character.

Next we have foolish talk. The Greek word is a compound word – mórologia.

Moros – dull or stupid.

Lego – to speak.

Then we have coarse joking. Jestng or levity are other translations. The Greek word, eutrapelia, referred to lewd or crass humor.

Instead of spending our time in such talk, thanksgiving should fill our time.

When you gather with friends, maybe you should spend a bit of time at the beginning just sharing what you are thankful for.

5:5 – For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a person is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

Some have taken this verse – used it as a stand alone proof – that backsliding or falling into sin will make one lose their salvation. Be very careful about taking single verses to build your doctrine of salvation.

Keep in mind the context, and Paul has been writing about an old way of life and a new self. We had that in chapter four. So, here Paul is giving the characteristics of the new self.

Paul is talking about a lifestyle, and he is contrasting the lifestyles of those who either do not know Jesus or reject Jesus to those who have accepted God's grace. For those who have accepted Gods grace, remember **Ephesians 4:1** – I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.

Will those who have accepted God's grace ever sin again. Of course.

1 John 1:8 – If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

5:6 – Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. ⁷ Therefore do not be partners with them.

Empty words – we can understand this in two ways. First, the empty words of others can lead us to destruction. “Oh, what's the harm in that ...”

However, we must be careful not to deceive ourselves with empty words. “Oh, how I love Jesus,” yet then live as if we don't know Jesus.

In verse 7 Paul tells us not to be partners with those who offer up empty words. Again, as we have seen several times in Paul's letters, this is not a call to never associate with those who do not follow the ways of Christ.

He tells us not to be partners – literally partakers – with them. Don't join in with their unchristian behavior.

5:8 – For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light ...

An interesting passage. “For you were once darkness.” Not in darkness, but darkness. The Greek word can refer to physical or moral darkness, and probably Paul's intent was to highlight both.

“But now you are light in the Lord. Live as Children of light.” The word for light is phos – we get the word phosphorus. The Greek word could be used for the source of light.

Because we are ‘in’ the Lord – we should be a source of light for others. This is the same word for light that Jesus uses in Matthew 5 when he tells us that we are to be the light of the world.

5:9 – (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) ¹⁰ and find out what pleases the Lord.

As in Ephesians 4:9-10, most translations have verse 9 in parentheses. Here, Paul is expanding on what it means to live as children of the light.

The fruit of light – the result of light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth. In other words, the new self / new life in Christ is found in all that is good, and right and true.

Verse 10 flows from verse 8, because verse 9 was in parentheses, or an afterthought.

5:8 – For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light, ¹⁰ and find out what pleases the Lord.

Find out. Some translations have test and prove. Perhaps a good translation would be, ‘distinguish what pleases the Lord.’

How do we make this distinction? How do we find out? How do we test and prove? Remember Paul’s prayer at the beginning of this letter.

Ephesians 1:17 – I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit^[1] of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.

Pray for this spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may distinguish what pleases the Lord.

Now, for us, we have an advantage over the Christians in Ephesus. We have the New Testament. This helps us to better distinguish what pleases the Lord.

5:11 – Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. ¹² It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret.

Keep in mind, Paul in this chapter is speaking about proper and improper Christian behaviors. In this verse, while he says have nothing to do with fruitless deeds of darkness, but instead expose them.

Folks, he's talking about holding fellow Christians accountable for their actions. Paul is not telling them or us to go out into our communities and expose the sins of non believers.

And – and this is a big and – we should be willing to open up ourselves to the same scrutiny with which we hold other Christians.

5:13 – But everything exposed by the light becomes visible—and everything that is illuminated becomes a light.

Sin must be exposed in order to be defeated. We cannot overcome sin until we admit and confess our sin. Sometimes, we may need help from trusted Christian friends. We may need them to come to us so that our sinful behavior may be exposed.

For instance, maybe we have grown comfortable using language that does not build other up according to their needs. So comfortable that we no longer see what we are doing as sin. When a trusted Christian friend helps us see our sin, it is exposed and the light can once again illuminate us.

Again, **1 John 1:9** – If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

John 3:20 – Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. ²¹ But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God.

1 John 1:6 – If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth. ⁷ But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

5:14 – This is why it is said:

“Wake up, sleeper,
rise from the dead,
and Christ will shine on you.”

Many have wondered where this saying comes from. Some say he is paraphrasing from Isaiah 60.

Isaiah 60:1 – Arise, shine, for your light has come,
and the glory of the LORD rises upon you.

² See, darkness covers the earth
and thick darkness is over the peoples,
but the LORD rises upon you
and his glory appears over you.

However, it is likely that verse 14 is from an early Christian hymn, known to the Ephesians. The Greek words sleeper and dead share the same ending, and rhymed in the Greek.

Regardless, the saying indicates that that when we turn from our sins to the Lord, Jesus brings us to life and shines on us.

5:15 – Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶ making the most of every opportunity (or make the most of the time), because the days are evil.

Most translations have walk instead of live. The Greek is walk, but the implication is, of course, our life and how we live.

When we look carefully to our spiritual walk, we are being wise. This wisdom comes from reading the Bible? It comes from God. Remember Paul’s prayer in chapter one – that they would receive the spirit of wisdom.

The Spirit of wisdom will make us wise in our Christian life / walk.

Verse 16 says the days are evil. They still are.

We are told in **Ephesians 6:12** – our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

Those spiritual forces of evil are still around us. So, let us be wise and make the most of our time.

5:17 – Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is.

We’ve been told to be careful how we live, making the most of the time. We can do this, and avoid foolishness, by knowing what the Lord’s will is.

All too often when we think of God’s will for us, we worry about the big things – should I buy this car, this house, or take some new job.

God’s will is that we love others, show mercy, display the fruit of the Holy Spirit in our relationships.

Now, a spirit of wisdom and revelation will help us determine God’s will for specific interactions. For example – how do we best show love and mercy in a particular relationship.

According to this verse – if we don’t seek that spirit and seek God’s will, we are foolish.

The Greek word for foolish used here is *aphrone* – and can be translated as inconsiderate. Remember, we are to display the light to others. Therefore, it is, as a Christian, inconsiderate to fail to display God’s will in all of our relationships.

5:18 – Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹ speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord,

We aren’t sure if drunkenness was a particular problem at Ephesus, or not. The word translated as debauchery – the KJV has *excess* – literally means wastefulness. The word probably referred to an unproductive lifestyle.

This relates to the teaching on making use of the time, or of every opportunity as we were told in verse 16.

The use of alcohol in a Christians life has always been a running debate. Verses such as this – and most verses pertaining to alcohol are like this verse – do not speak against the outright use of alcohol, but to limit its intake.

Regardless, the positive alternative to being drunk is to be filled with the Spirit. Just as alcohol can take control of a person, so we must seek to have the Spirit take control.

What does being controlled by the Spirit look like? Verse 19 gives us a good idea. It leads to worship.

What exactly were songs from the Spirit? Perhaps something spontaneous. Regardless, verse 19 speaks of worship.

5:20 – always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 19 gave us several examples of how a life filled with the Spirit is lived. Verse twenty gives us another example – an attitude of thanksgiving.

Now verse 21 is sometimes included in the section that includes verse 20. Such Bibles have a new section beginning with verse 22. I don't believe that is correct.

I believe, and many translations and biblical scholars believe, that verse 21 is the start of a new section (not verse 22 as the start of the new section).

Regardless, verses 22-33 is a frequently misunderstood passage. In this section Paul explains who Christian husbands and wives should apply Christian principles to their marriage.

5:21 – Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

The section that begins with this verse consists of instructions for husbands and wives. At the start of it he gives the command to submit to one another.

Submitting to someone is not allowing them to run all over you. It is not allowing anyone to abuse you. It is putting the needs of the other above your own. This, of course, is not the only place that Paul writes something like this.

Ephesians 4:2 – Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love

Philippians 2:3 – in humility value others above yourselves, ⁴not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

Matthew 23:12 – those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.

5:22 – Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord.

This, and the following instructions to wives, is often taken way out of context, and made to say things that it does not say.

First – note that this does not say that women are to be subservient to all men. This is specifically instructions for marriage.

Plus, we have already been told that believers should submit to one another – so a wife submitting to her husband is not different than what we had in the previous verse.

But again – this verse applies to marriage. This is not some call to keep all women in lowly positions in life.

Perhaps more importantly, note it says – as to the Lord. Why do any of us submit to the Lord? Because of the Lord's love for us! And, this will be made evident when we get to the instructions for men.

I would hope that it would go without saying – but unfortunately for many it does not – but this deals with marriage, not abuse. An abusive spouse has already broken the marriage vows.

Anyone in an abusive situation should seek personal safety as their top priority – and if the church can help to make that a reality, then by all means it should do so.

5:23 – For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. ²⁴Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

First of all, please keep reading! Let's work through what may be a couple of culturally difficult verses, and we will discover that Paul lifts the position of women higher than ever before, and perhaps ever since.

Let's note that verse 23 does not say that the husband is the head of the wife, and that's all. No! The husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church. So, if we want to properly understand the way that Paul is lifting the place of women in society at that time, let's consider what it means that Christ is the head of the church.

Did Jesus "Lord" it over on anyone?
Did Jesus boss people around?

Jesus humbled himself before others, to the point of death!
Husbands, this is what Paul – the Bible – is calling on husbands to model.

Jesus is the source of every good and perfect relationship. Only through Jesus can we have a perfect relationship with God, and with others.

Jesus was and is the model of selfless loves.
Jesus was and is the model of doing everything possible for the betterment of others.
This is what it means that the husband is the head of the wife.

There is more in verses 23 & 24 about men than women! Yes, it assumes that the husband will be like Christ to their wives, and Paul even says so in the following verses.

Now, clearly there was a societal norm that we should consider. Women were, for the most part, uneducated.

Women were, for the most part, unable to work outside of the homes, and therefore could not provide monetarily towards her family.

Therefore, men had an even greater need to be their head – but only as Christ is the head of the church.

I propose to you that if husbands truly were like Jesus to their wives, they'd be head over heels in submission to their husbands.

And keep these verses, that might be culturally troubling for some, in context of the rest of the chapter.

If there was any doubt what Paul meant by the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, Paul makes it clear in the next verse.

5:25 – Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her

In the context of the Greek culture of that time, this was revolutionary. Not only were husbands to love their wives, but an action was required – as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.

Doesn't that sound like mutual submission on the part of husbands and wives?

For husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the church requires a lifelong commitment, and a willingness to sacrifice for her.

Verse 26 is often taken out of context and more often than not interpreted to be about the husband making his wife holy, when in fact it is a continuation of what Jesus has done for us.

5:25b – just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, **to make her holy** (the her here is the Church), cleansing / sanctify her by the washing with water through the word,²⁷ and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

The sacrificial love of Jesus for we his church has the power to make us holy. Please don't interpret this as husbands are supposed to make their wives holy. That's Jesus' work.

Paul returns to husbands. As much as Jesus loves his church, so husbands should love their wives.

5:28 – In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.

In the same way – in other words – total love and total commitment. This was a radical change for the culture of that time. Not that committed love was uncommon, but there wasn't condemnation for men who had other lovers.

Of course, the word that Paul uses for love is agape – a love without conditions. A love that is displayed through actions, as will see in the following verse.

5:29 – After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church—

Agape – biblical love – always carries the assumption of action. Here, the action is a husbands care for his wife, once again compared the the care that Christ has for the church.

5:30 – for we are members of his body. ³¹“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.”^[e]

Paul often uses the metaphor of the body made up of individual parts. We are part of the Body of Christ, and a husband and wife are members of one body.

Of course, the quote is from Genesis 2:24.

5:32 – This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church.

Now marriage isn't the mystery – although some who have not based their marital relationship on the example of Christ may think so!

The mystery is not marriage, the mystery is the relationship between Christ and the church, as Paul clearly states in this verse.

The chapter ends with Paul summarizing what he has said above.

5:33 – However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

I do not think that love and respect are exclusive, love being of the husband and respect being of the wife. Paul is simply summarizing.

Chapter 6

Last week we finished chapter five. In that latter part of chapter five, Paul had specific instructions for husbands and wives. Instructions on how to honor God in their marriage.

Paul's instructions for various groups within the church continues here in chapter six. The first group that he instructs are children.

6:1 – Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ²“Honor your father and mother”—which is the first commandment with a promise— ³“so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.”

First off, and we get this from verse one when Paul writes – *parents in the Lord* – that Paul expects that these children have Christian parents, and that those Christian parents were raising their children with love.

Paul quotes from Exodus 20:12, and he notes that it is the first commandment with a promise. In Exodus 20:12 the promise is: “so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you.”

The promise as Paul writes it is: “so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.”

Some have asked why the difference between the two promises? Well, first, the land was a promise to the Jewish people – but wouldn't that now include the Gentile converts since Paul wrote in **Galatians 3:7** – “Understand, then, that those who have faith are children of Abraham.”

Ah, Paul is a Christian! He's not concerned with some national homeland, because he knew that his true homeland was in the presence of God.

Perhaps what Paul is sharing is that in a general sense, when we learn respect for legitimate authority as opposed to learning rebellion, it impact the child's future.

6:4 – Fathers, do not exasperate / provoke your children; instead, bring them up in the training / discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Some translations have parents. Paul used the word fathers, but in the culture of that day, it would have been understood that Paul was addressing both parents.

The Greek word that we translate as provoke or exasperate is (par-org-id'-zo) rouse someone to anger; to *provoke* in a way that "really pushes someone's buttons."

Instead, train and instruct them in the Lord. Many Christian parents leave this up to the church, but the parents have the number one responsibility to instruct their children in the ways of the Lord.

6:5 – Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ.

In verses 5 – 9, Paul gives instructions for servants and masters. I've taught many times about the economics of Greek slavery. Remember, almost all of these slaves were indentured servants, men and women who had sold themselves into servitude to their master for the sake of economic security.

Not economic security in the way most of us think – economic security in the sense that they would not starve to death.

In this verse slaves – bond servants – were to serve with respect and fear, or fear and trembling in some translations. This term did not imply terror or living in dread, but carried the idea of respect.

They are also told to have sincerity of heart. This meant to genuinely work hard, not trying to deceive their masters.

Next they were told to obey their masters as they would obey Christ. Now, their experience with their masters was certainly much different than what slaves in North America experienced, however it wasn't all roses. It was a very difficult life.

Yet, Paul tells them to work sincerely, and serve their boss as they would the Lord. Paul will soon address the slave owners.

6:6 – Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart.

The NIV has - when their eye is on you.
The RSV & the KJV has eye service. That's a great translation from an interesting Greek word. The word was Ophthalmodoulia – literally eye service. It was a term for a slave that worked hard when being watched, but slacked off when no one was looking.

It seems that Ophthalmodoulia is still around today.

The things all of us, slave or free, must realize is that we are bondservants of Christ. Remember, a bondservant sold themselves to their masters. We should be sold out for Jesus.

As such, we must always do the will of God from our heart.

Some folks don't like this imagery of us being slaves of Christ because they think of slavery in North American terms. Slaves to Jesus is a common theme in the New Testament.

2 Peter 2:19 – for “people are slaves to whatever has mastered them.”

Romans 6:16 – Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? ¹⁷ But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance. ¹⁸ You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.

6:7 – Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people, ⁸ because you know that the Lord will reward each one for whatever good they do, whether they are slave or free.

Wholeheartedly is translated in various ways. Good will. With enthusiasm. Both good translations.

However you wish to translate it, it speaks to the person's attitude. While this verse speaks to bondservants, the statement ‘as if you were serving the Lord,’ is good advice for all of us.

We know we are to put the needs of others above ourselves. IN all we do, we should do as if we were serving the Lord.

6:9 – And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him.

Masters, or lords, may be in charge, but they are to remember who their Master is in heaven.

We can remove the cultural terms of bondservants and lords and what we have here is good, biblical, advice for employees and employers.

Verses 10-20 are a famous and often read portion of Scripture. In it, Paul wraps up his practical teachings with a series of analogies, comparing aspects of the Christian life and faith to the equipment carried by a Roman soldier.

6:10 – Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.

Verse ten gives us the overall motivation for the following instructions, so that we would be strong, not in and of ourselves, but in the Lord.

Paul has written much about God's power in this letter. 1:19 spoke about the incomparably great power that is available for those who believe.

3:16 spoke of being strengthened with power through the Spirit in our inner being.

3:20 spoke about God's power being able to do immeasurably more in us than we can ask or imagine.

6:11 – Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.

Verse 11 says to put on – or clothe yourselves – the full armor. This armor is something we have to take the initiative to have. It doesn't just fall onto us because we have confessed Jesus as our Savior.

We have to put it on. It must be intentional and deliberate. Remember, disciples are disciplined.

Also, note it says the full armor. The word for full armor – (pan-op-lee'-ah) – was a Roman term that literally meant everything needed to wage successful warfare.

So, if we put on one or two of these things that Paul writes about, we probably won't be successful in taking a stand against the devil's schemes.

6:12 – For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

One of the reasons why I love the Book of Revelation – and we will get to it one day – is that it teaches us, like the book of Daniel, that there are spiritual battles going on right now. Everyday there are spiritual battles. They are waged all around us. This verse certainly recognizes this fact.

Some have read into this verse a ranking of the demonic armies. Rulers would be the top level of spiritual forces. Authorities are the forces of evil that attack believers.

Powers of this dark world refers to the worldwide nature of these battles.
Spiritual forces in the heavenly realms refers to battles beyond our world.

I'm not so sure we can read all of that into these verses, but suffice it to say, we ought to recognize that there are spiritual battles all around us, and we must be prepared and well equipped.

6:13 – Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.

Paul stresses what I said in verse 11, we can't put on a piece or two of this armor, we must put on the whole armor.

What does Paul mean by the day of evil? I don't believe that this is some end time or last days event, but refers to any moment of spiritual attack. Therefore, we must always be prepared, and always equip ourselves with the full armor.

Sometimes spiritual battles come upon us when we least expect them, in places we never expected. We say things like, ‘wow, I didn’t see that coming!’

No, we often don’t see spiritual battles coming, therefore be prepared for the day of evil.

6:14 – Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place,

Paul said to put these on, literally cloth yourself with this armor. The armor pieces mentioned are mentioned in the order that the soldier would put them on.

The belt of truth.

John 8:32 – “Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

John 14:6 – “I am the way and the truth and the life.

Here, for Paul, the truth may refer to accurate information about Jesus, and accurate information about God’s plan of salvation – the good news.

Ephesians 1:13 – you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation.

The breastplate of righteousness. Righteousness would be God’s righteousness. Godliness in the Christian context.

The breastplate of a Roman soldier was often personalized. Fellow soldiers could recognize others by their breastplate.

Likewise, people should be able to recognize us as Christians by our righteousness.

6:15 – and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel / good news of peace.

Most people of that time wore homemade sandals. The Roman soldiers had the best footwear of that time. They had specially made sandals that enable them to move quickly over rough terrain.

Here, Paul connects their sandals with our readiness that comes from the good news of Jesus. Ready for what? The context of this passage would suggest that we must be ready for spiritual battles.

6:16 – In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

The shield was a soldier's most important tool, it kept them alive! In the Old Testament, a shield was often associated with strength. In Deuteronomy 33:29 we read: Blessed are you, Israel! Who is like you, a people saved by the LORD? He is your shield.

Our shield – our strength – is our faith. Our faith in God is what can deflect the attack of our spiritual enemies.

We should note that shields are instruments that allow a soldier to move forward in battle. Our faith is not something that we hide behind. It is something that helps us move forward.

What we translate as evil one in this verse can be translated in various ways: wicked, evil, malicious. Anything we face in a spiritual battle is what Paul has in mind. The devil? Certainly, as well.

6:17 – Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

The helmet was as essential in battle as a shield. A helmet made a soldier feel more secure. Likewise, we should feel secure in our salvation. Indeed, it is our salvation that should be the one thing that is secure. No matter what happens in this world, we have a home, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

Then Paul mentions the sword of the spirit. Have you noticed something? Everything that Paul has mentioned has been defensive. A sword is offensive. The Spirit is our offense.

Swords were made to defeat the enemy. Why do we need the Spirit? Because the spirit can and will defeat our enemy! Don't fight spiritual battles without your sword, without the Holy Spirit.

Here, Paul calls the Spirit the Word of God. The Greek word for word in this verse is not logos, that is used in John 1.

The word for word here is rhema, which meant a thing spoken or a matter of business. So, I don't think Paul is referring to Scripture per se, but Scripture is a good defense. Jesus used Scripture when he was tempted in the wilderness.

But here, when Paul says the Spirit, which is the word of God – I believe he is saying that the Spirit is God at work. Or, the Spirit, being our sword, is God's business.

It's not our business to be on the offensive. That's the work of God. But, we best prepare ourselves defensively and call upon the Spirit to fight for us.

6:18 – And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.

We tend to think the armor of God part is finished, and perhaps the armor is, but here is one more essential element for spiritual warfare – prayer.

Prayer keeps us connected to God, and without being connected to God, being victorious in spiritual battles will be impossible.

Pray in the spirit – we stay connected to God through the presence of the Holy Spirit. Many Christians don't seek the Holy Spirit. Many pray to God and to Jesus, which is great, but the Holy Spirit is God's promised presence with us right here and now.

Paul told us in **Romans 8:26**: he Spirit helps us in our weakness.

And in **Romans 8:27** – the Spirit intercedes for God’s people in accordance with the will of God.

Then Paul tells us to stay alert, literally stay awake. Don’t take a spiritual nap! Stay aware of the spiritual battles that we encounter everyday. Seek the Spirit’s help every time we need it – which is every spiritual battle.

This being alert and being connected to the Spirit is for our benefit, but as we are told in this verse – also for one another, as we are to pray for all of the Lord’s people (or all the saints).

6:19 – Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel (good news),

How much do we need prayer? Here is the man through whom the Holy Spirit worked miracles, and through whom inspired nearly half of the New Testament, and he is asking for prayers. Not prayer for his health and security, but that he would fearlessly preach the good news.

If Paul the Apostle needed prayer so that he could communicate the good news in an effective manner, we should most certainly be praying for one another that we could also share the good news in an effective manner.

6:20 – for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

We are all ambassadors for Jesus, as Paul said in ...
2 Corinthians 5:20 – We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us.

Paul, however, was under house arrest when he wrote this letter. It’s unlikely, being a Roman citizen who had appealed to Cesar, that he was imprisoned in the likes of jails that he had been in previously during his missionary journeys.

6:21 – Tychicus, the dear brother and faithful servant in the Lord, will tell you everything, so that you also may know how I am and what I am doing.

As Paul often did, we now have some concluding remarks. Tychicus was a travelling companion of Paul. Acts 20 tells us that he travelled with Paul through Macedonia and Greece.

He delivered this letter and the letter to the church in Colossae. He is mentioned in several of Paul's letters.

So, here, Paul is telling them that Tychicus will be able to give them more information about Paul's situation.

6:22 – I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage you.

Not only was Tychicus delivering the letter, and informing them about Paul's situation, he was being sent to encourage them. Perhaps he had additional teachings from Paul.

It is clear that Paul knew him to be an encourager. He writes the same thing about Tychicus in Colossians.

6:23 – Peace to the brothers and sisters,^[e] and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

In addition to peace, which Paul often extends in his letters, he offers love with faith from God. I love that term – love with faith. I think this refers to a love that goes beyond feelings, but like faith, is a gift from God.

We should pray not only for faith, but for love.

6:24 – Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love.^[d]

Paul ends with Grace, as he often does. Here he says grace to those who love our Lord with an undying love. Incorruptible is literally what the word says.

Life can come at us hard sometimes. Regardless as to what life brings, nothing should be able to corrupt the love we have for Jesus.