

## Ephesians

- Assumptions
  - Principles of Bible study:
    - Easily understood by an ordinary person.
    - Complete, not sound bytes.
    - Application, not theory.
    - Requires the work of the Spirit in all facets.
  - If the reasons for doing what you do skip over faith and love on the way to action, you have entered the land of the Pharisees. Typical results are in Matthew 23:
    - (4) Faith becomes a burden, especially for the poor.
    - (5 – 12) Leadership becomes honor instead of service.
    - (13, 15) Honest seekers are diverted.
    - (14, 16 – 24) Inconsistent application, leading to complication.
    - (25 – 28) Skipping an essential step: the outward must be a natural result of the inward. The outward cannot succeed without the inward.
    - (29 – 36) Self-deception through theoretical superiority.
    - (37 – 39) The result is emptiness.
  - If your conclusions end with principles, you have entered the land of the Gnostics.
    - James 1:22 – 27, 2:14 – 26
    - 1 John 2:4, 11, 15 – 16
    - 1 Corinthians 5:2
    - Titus 1:16
  - If the ability to succeed does not originate with the Spirit, you have entered paganism.
    - Hope based on self-deception.
    - Compromise to achieve goals.
    - Theory fails to meet reality.
  - Faith is about trusting and acting upon God's promises. If you don't know what God promised, you can't have faith. If you don't make choices based on God performing as promised, you don't have faith.
  - Love is about what is best for others. Neither my wants and needs nor my expectations of others are in the picture.
- Basis for this communication (1:1 – 2)
  - One belonging to Jesus the Christ, specifically sent. (Enabled, 1 Timothy 1:12)
  - Delivering the message God desired.
  - The overall objective of God's desire is that the Christians in Ephesus may receive a gracious nature and experience peace.
    - Considering that the Christians in Ephesus had received the gospel years earlier and had benefited from Paul's personal teaching for three and a half years (Acts 18:18 – 21, 24 – 26, 19:1 – 20:1, 20:17 – 38) and that of Timothy after Paul's departure (1 Timothy 1:3ff), how could they still need to receive grace?
      - Incorporating a gracious nature into our decision making is a growth process (2 Peter 3:18).
      - Paul predicted that division and poor teaching would arise from among the leaders in the church in Ephesus whom Paul appointed and taught (Acts 20:30).

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- The topics that follow are essential to having peace in a broken world, including during the turmoil that would soon result in the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple.
  - Peace guards our hearts and minds (Philippians 4:7).
  - Peace is to be pursued (2 Timothy 2:22, 1 Peter 3:11, 2 Peter 3:14).
  - Peace must rule in our hearts (Colossians 3:15).
- Description of Grace
  - Relationships of Grace (1:3 – 8)
    - God: To the praise of the glory of His grace.
      - He chose us before the foundation of the world.
      - Predestined us to adoption as sons by His desire.
      - Bestowed His gracious nature upon us.
      - Blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ.
    - Christ: “In” Him
      - By Jesus
      - Redemption through His blood
      - Chosen and acceptable because we are “in” Him
    - Us: Response to God’s gracious nature
      - Holiness due to spiritual blessings
      - Adoption, not earned, not surrender
      - A gracious nature manifests itself in us as wisdom and understanding
    - Applications
      - Note: Under law, every choice can be criticized as incomplete, even the choices made by Jesus. Under grace, these shortcomings are not forgiven because to do so would be legalism. Rather, every choice is made by faith (trust in the promises of God), so the choice is acceptable. That’s how Jesus did it, and how we can do the same.
      - Having a problem with holiness? Focus on a gracious nature to receive spiritual blessings that result in the wisdom and understanding to make faithful decisions.
      - Having a problem feeling acceptable? Focus on God’s gracious nature which results in adoption, not surrender and not accomplishment. We rise to the occasion because it is family.
      - Having trouble grasping what a gracious nature is? Read on. Paul lists proofs, memories, and qualities that can turn the concept of God’s gracious nature into the cornerstone of reality.
  - Proofs of Grace (1:8 – 23)
    - Remembering the timing of grace makes it real (1:8 – 11)
      - Which He made to abound toward us
        - In a sensible way (in all wisdom and understanding)
        - Because God wanted this good thing
        - Predestined: planned ahead of time
      - Applications
        - Does the world seem out of control? We need to trust that God has evil under control (Ephesians 6:11, James 4:7, 1 John 3:8).

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- Is God reacting or leading? God is not scrambling to stay on top. At the other extreme, we cannot say that everything pre-programmed or neither faith nor love has any meaning. Rather, no matter what choices people make, God's plan has it covered.
- Are we merely surviving life on earth to get to heaven? So far, Paul has described life on earth as blessed, adopted, and accepted.
- Twice Paul used "good pleasure of His will." Whatever this plan is, God calls it "good." We need to trust that His description is accurate.
- Remembering the promises of grace gives it substance (1:10 – 14)
  - A few examples
    - (1:3) Blessed with every spiritual blessing
    - (1:5) Adoption, acceptance
    - (1:7) Redemption
    - (1:9) Understanding of that which had been concealed
    - (1:10) Obtained an inheritance
    - (1:13 – 14) Down payment: the Spirit of promise
  - Applications
    - (1:10) All of heaven and earth connect through Jesus. This includes people of all times and the angels. One plan covers everything, not consecutive plans or parallel plans.
    - The application is now (blessing, adoption, acceptance, redemption, understanding, *etc.*).
- Remembering the revelation of grace makes us rich (1:15 – 19)
  - (1:17 – 18) Miraculous insight available
    - Faith and love are the starting point
    - Through prayer (in this case, prayers of others)
    - Result: hope and richness of the character of the inheritance
  - Applications
    - The world can make sense.
    - The plan of God can make sense.
- Remembering the resurrection gives grace power (1:19 – 23)
  - The power that caused the resurrection is being used on us.
  - Not just a sacrifice
    - Raised
    - Seated at the right hand of God
    - Above angels
    - Highest quality (name) of all time
    - Conqueror (under His feet)
    - Head of the church, His body.
  - Applications
    - Although our redemption is an essential first step, freedom from our unpayable debt is arguably a "small" thing compared to the rest of Jesus' achievements, position, and promises.

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- We are trusting because of an historical event witnessed by many, not because of theory or confident assertions.
- Memories keep grace fresh (2:1 – 22)
  - Remember where you came from (2:1 – 3)
    - Grace is appreciated through remembering the futility of life in the world.
    - The point is not how bad we were (because many were not), because we were just like everyone else in our inconsistency.
  - Remember how you got here (2:4 – 9)
    - Not by attaining an arbitrary minimum faith or behavior.
    - Because of His love and kindness, not authority or power.
    - “Here” is “in the heavenlies.” Christians are presently seated together with Jesus (1:20).
    - When we catch of glimpse of grace and respond by trusting His love and kindness, our spirits are not only resurrected but also seated in the most favorable place.
  - Remember why you are here (2:10)
    - The plan includes not only a residence for our spirits, but also a plan for life on earth, which centers around “good works.”
    - Opportunities to accomplish good works were built into the plan.
  - Remember how far you have come (2:11 – 13)
    - Expanding on “where you came from,” remember the distance covered.
    - Specifically to Gentiles, not having the advantage of a lifetime of exposure to the history and promises of God enjoyed by the Israelites, remember the hopelessness and ridiculous gods.
    - The distance was covered in one step “by the blood of Christ.”
  - Remember what you came to (2:14 – 18)
    - Unity and equality
    - The end of ethnic barriers
    - Regardless of starting point
    - All are “in” Christ (being transformed into His glory, conformed to His image), are enabled by the same Spirit, to the same goal.
  - Remember where you came to (2:19 – 22)
    - Citizens of an eternal kingdom
    - Adopted children of a big family
    - Well documented historically by ordinary people empowered by God
    - All things connect back to Jesus (1:10, 2:20)
    - Building materials of the true Temple in heaven (Hebrews 9:23 – 26, 1 Peter 2:5)
- Qualities of Grace (3:1 – 21)
  - Obligating (3:1 – 2)
    - “For this reason”
      - Grace should make one get up and go, not sit down and wait
      - Adversity was a proof, not a problem
    - Stewardship for you

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- Paul had spent over two years there, performing many miracles in addition to daily teaching (Acts 19:8 – 12), so his apostleship was well documented among them.
- The primary importance of grace is that it is for you, not for me.
- Revealed (3:3 – 13)
  - The mystery has been revealed; no mysteries remain.
    - Grace has been fully explained. We do not have “belief in that for which there is no proof.” We live in reality, not fantasy. Outsiders have no choice but to live in inconsistency and unsupported assertions.
    - Gentiles are fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise. “Putting to death the enmity” (2:16) Every culture fits. If we have trouble doing that, we need to search out and extract the parts of our gospel that are really our culture.
    - The unsearchable riches of Christ. “As I have written briefly already” (1:3 – 2:22) The promises are well beyond what we can imagine on our own.
    - Connection of spirits, not just fellow members. This connectedness has a substance that far exceeds being recorded in the same directory.
    - The role of the church: to teach angels. They can see us even when people cannot.
  - Other specifics of the mystery
    - Low response rate among Jews (Romans 11:25)
    - For all nations (Romans 16:25 – 27, Ephesians 3:3 – 9, 6:19 – 20)
    - The things which God has prepared for those who love Him (1 Corinthians 2:7 – 10)
    - Raised to immortality (1 Corinthians 15:51 – 58)
    - What God desires (Ephesians 1:9)
    - The relationship of Jesus and the church (Ephesians 5:32, Revelation 1:20)
    - Christ in you, the hope of glory (Colossians 1:24 – 2:3)
    - The Word, faith (Colossians 4:2 – 4, 1 Timothy 3:9 – 16)
    - Details of the destruction of Jerusalem (2 Thessalonians 2:1 – 12, Revelation 17:5 – 7)
    - God’s plan (Revelation 10:7)
- Motivating (3:14 – 19)
  - “I bow my knees,” not in surrender but in awe. The image is of family, not conquest. Motivated by the “unsearchable riches of Christ.”
  - “From whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named”
    - Includes deceased faithful people and faithful angels.
    - The faithful are “named,” given a new essential quality
    - Motivated to live up to the name we have been given.
  - “Strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man.” Motivated by the power at our disposal.

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- Christ dwells in your hearts; the character of Jesus being developed in us.
- *To know* the love which surpasses knowledge. Therefore, this surpassed knowledge is human knowledge. What we gain is God's knowledge.
- Filled with the fullness of God
  - The church is the fullness of Him; the individuals are filled (Ephesians 1:23, 3:19, John 1:16)
  - When the church is able to edify itself (Ephesians 4:16), "we will all come to...the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."
  - "In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." (Colossians 2:9) The present tense refers to Christ after He returned to heaven, not Jesus during His public ministry. So, the fullness of the Godhead dwells in His body, the church. "In Him all the fullness should dwell" (Colossians 1:19) is after reconciling things on earth and things in heaven, so again the fullness is in His body, the church.
  - Christians are promised that this resemblance to Jesus was the plan all along (Romans 8:29, Hebrews 2:11, 2 Peter 1:4, 1 Corinthians 3:18) for those who have the faith of Jesus (Romans 3:26).
- Humbling (3:20 – 21)
  - Through the Spirit in the inner person, we are filled with all the fullness of God (3:16 – 19), yet the power still belongs to God. If we turn the power loose, we will be surprised continually by what He accomplishes through us.
  - The church is the parade of Jesus' character traits to all generations.
- Results of Grace (4:1) How to walk worthily
  - Review of the descriptions of grace that keep us from turning grace into law.
    - (1:2) The overall objective of the letter is so that the reader may experience and respond to grace in a life of peace.
    - (1:3 – 8) Holiness through spiritual blessings, not by trying harder. Acceptability by adoption, not surrender or accomplishment.
    - (1:8 – 23) Remember the sensibility of grace (its promises, revelation, planning, and power), that every other method is flawed.
    - (2:1 – 22) Remember where you came from, how you got here, and why you are here.
    - (3:1 – 21) Remember that grace is obligating, revealed, motivating, and humbling.
    - Grace should result in a response based on a gift, not performance to receive a gift. Judgment is based on what we do with grace, if it motivates us to trusting God's promises and allowing the Spirit to work on us. We neither start working to obtain grace nor stop working because of grace (both of which are legalism), but change our attitudes and relationships.
  - Unity (4:1 – 16)
    - See John 17:20 – 21 The importance of unity
    - Attitudes that produce unity (4:2 – 3)
      - Character traits: humility, gentleness, patience, forbearance, love, peace

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- Remember how you got here: sealed with the Spirit (1:13), given wisdom and knowledge and godly character (1:17 – 20), access to God (2:18), strengthened (3:16).
- Unity is based on these character traits, neither by authority nor by office, not by sameness but by diversity.
- Unity is a natural result, not a goal of enforcement.
- Concepts that produce unity (4:4 – 7)
  - One body (one church)
    - Do we think in terms of one congregation (or a collection of congregations) or in terms of the universal church, including angels?
    - Do we think in terms of manufacturing copies of my ideal or in terms of the diversity of body parts?
  - One Spirit (one set of attitudes initiated by the indwelling Spirit)
    - The Spirit is responsible for our diverse growth through diverse gifts (e.g., Romans 12:3 – 16, 1 Peter 4:7 – 11)
    - The Spirit will not give gifts in opposition to one another, but only in harmony.
  - One Lord (one authority figure)
    - Lesser authorities are not mentioned.
    - As will be explained in 5:15 – 33, this Lordship is that of a sacrificial husband, not a commander or slave master.
  - One faith (one set of promises in which we trust)
    - Also trusting that the distribution of those promises will be according to God’s desire, as needed in the Kingdom, not with legalistic equality.
    - Unity cannot exist without knowledge of the promises we share.
  - One baptism (one level of commitment)
    - Baptism is a statement of commitment by a believer to these promises:
      - My sins are washed away. (Acts 22:16, Hebrews 10:22)
      - I am reserved for godly purposes. (1 Corinthians 6:11, Ephesians 5:26)
      - I am a sacrifice like Jesus. (Romans 6:3 – 4, 12:1)
      - I walk in newness of life. My spirit is resurrected: reconnected. (Romans 6:4, Titus 3:5, Colossians 2:12)
      - I will be raised on Judgment Day. (Romans 6:5)
      - I am freed from slavery to sin. (Romans 6:6)
      - I will achieve miraculous unity. (1 Corinthians 12:13)
      - I am being transformed (Romans 8:29, 2 Corinthians 3:18, Galatians 3:27) into the image of Jesus.
      - I am rescued from an evil world. (1 Peter 3:21)
      - I receive the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38)
    - This commitment to these promises is what holds us together.
- A plan from the beginning that produces unity (4:8 – 16)
  - (4:7) A reminder that Jesus gives gifts by grace as necessary for success.
  - (4:8 – 10) Jesus’ time on earth was necessary “to fill all things”

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- (4:11) Examples of gifts: leadership
- (4:12) Purpose of gifts: edification
- (4:13 – 16) Objectives: unity, knowledge, consistency at Jesus' level, decreasing susceptibility to hidden agendas, truth expressing itself through love, growing into His character, every part doing its part.
- (4:16) Terminal objective: The leadership gifts will be needed for only a time because the body will mature to the point of being able to edify itself.
- Morality (4:17 – 5:20)
  - Why do people go the wrong way? (4:17 – 22)
    - Futility of their minds; lack of purpose, not knowing why we are here.
    - Understanding darkened; the negative viewpoint
    - Alienated from the life of God; disconnected, alone
    - Ignorance; having not heard the reasonable good news
    - Blindness of heart; wanting all the wrong things
    - Past feeling; giving up on having a real relationship
    - Deceitful lusts; fooled by desire
    - Application to grace:
      - Are people born this way or do they go this way?
      - How do we feel about those who are as we were?
  - How do we escape? (4:20 – 32)
    - Learned Christ; drawn by kindness, virtue, character
    - Renewed in the spirit of your mind; let the Spirit do its job.
    - Created according to God; acting as we were built to act.
    - Members of one another; connected
    - Example (28): re-focus the lust of the eye from obtaining to sharing
    - Build up others and impart grace
    - Don't grieve God
    - Forgiving (restoring relationships) as God did with you
    - Applications to grace:
      - We escape when we stop looking at ourselves but give grace
      - Learning is focused on understanding a gracious character
  - Attitude summary (5:1 – 14)
    - Imitator of God; implies we can
    - Walk in love; in what ways did Jesus love people?
    - Be a sacrifice; a celebration of forgiveness with family and friends in the presence of God
    - Be thankful; it's attractive
    - Be a light; flashlight on the pitfalls, not condemning
    - Applications to grace:
      - Our natures should be dominated by our grace.
      - These are the attitudes that make us like Jesus.
  - Wisdom (5:15 – 21)
    - Buying back time that, left to itself, would turn out badly; you can't make it worse.
    - Understand what God wants, what makes Him happy.
    - Be as filled with the Spirit as a drunk is with wine.



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- Communicate simply and in way that is easy to remember (complex theories are difficult to put to music).
- Giving thanks from the point of view of Jesus' nature.
- Supporting the ideas of others; not needing to be in charge.
- Applications to grace:
  - Grace gives us courage (we can't make it worse)
  - Grace is radical, not comfortable
  - Grace is simple
- Subjection (5:21 – 6:9)
  - Because of the gracious character of God, we let others lead
    - Examples given by Paul
      - (5:21) Submit to one another
      - (5:22) Wives to husbands (note: “submit” is not in the text, rather it is implied from the previous verse.
      - (5:24) The church to Jesus (same word in 21 and 24)
      - (6:1) Hearken to parents (remember 5:31)
      - (6:4) Train children as God does, not by authority
      - (6:5) Obey masters with sincerity with an eye to conversion
      - (6:9) Treating slaves as God does, not by authority
    - Specific traits of God cited:
      - (5:23) Savior
      - (5:25) Love
      - (5:25) Sacrifice
      - (5:26) Sanctifier
      - (5:29) Nourish and cherish
      - (6:9) Impartial, not impassive
    - Other considerations:
      - (5:21) Fear for the fate of outsiders
      - (5:23) Jesus is head of the church
      - (5:26) That which is symbolized in baptism is accomplished by the Word.
      - (5:27) We have been made holy and blameless
      - (5:31) One flesh
      - (6:6) Doing what God wants
  - Applications to relationships based on a gracious character
    - Grace is not being a pushover (hell is still going to happen)
    - Grace is not authority driven
    - Can we say that grace has a longer-term result than authority?
    - How does each group illustrate our response to the gracious character of God?
- Strength (6:10 – 20)
  - Review: Ability from the grace of God
    - 4:7 – 8 To each one of us grace has been given; He gave gifts to men
    - 1:3 Every spiritual blessing
    - 1:8, 1:17, 3:18 – 19 Wisdom and understanding

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- 1:13 Sealed with the Holy Spirit
- 1:19, 3:20 Power toward us, power that works in us
- 2:22 Dwelling place of the Spirit
- 3:12 Boldness and confident access
- 3:16 Strengthened in the inner man with might through His Spirit
- 4:23 – 24 Be renewed in the spirit of your mind; put on the new man
- 5:18 Be filled with the Spirit
- Grace provides strength
  - 6:10 In the power of His might
    - 1:19, 3:16, 3:20 Being strong in the Lord results from His power, not ours (see 2:1 – 8).
    - Physical strength is insufficient. Those who lack an understanding of grace equate strength with unwavering positions and “contending earnestly for the faith” (Jude 3).
  - 6:14 Truth
    - 1:13, 4:15, 4:21, 4:25, 5:9 The word of truth in love, in Jesus, a fruit of the Spirit. Having a firm grasp on reality enables us to discern deceit.
    - This truth is not just the opposite of a lie, but is a description of the reality of creation. The world’s version of truth depends on human wisdom and varies from time to time.
  - 6:14 Righteousness
    - 4:24, 5:9 True righteousness is a fruit of the Spirit. We are declared righteous (acceptable) because of our faith (Romans 4:3 – 12). Understanding that God calls us righteous allows us to deflect the Law mentality that constantly tries to convince us that we do not measure up.
    - Those who do not understand righteousness as a fruit of the Spirit are easily diverted from grace to law.
  - 6:15 Preparation of the gospel of peace
    - 3:10 Now the manifold wisdom of God may be made know by the church, not just by special people (3:1 – 7).
    - 2:11 – 22 Peace from God and peace with God for all people.
    - 4:17 – 32 See “”Why do people go the wrong way?” If we are prepared to bring the good news of peace, these reasons will give of a means by which to reach them. If we view those descriptions as why they have rejected the gospel, we are not prepared.
  - 6:16 Faith
    - Faith: trusting the promises of God.
    - Deception is exposed when we trust those promises.
    - If faith is re-defined as understanding facts and doctrines, we have no protection from clever arguments.
  - 6:17 Salvation
    - 1:13, 2:5, 2:8, 5:23 The gracious character of God allowed our rescue to happen. Our debt was paid so that we could be transferred out of the right-and-wrong system into the faith system.

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- 3:12 We have boldness and confident access through His faith.
- If salvation depends on certain practices and doctrines, our heads are exposed.
- 6:17 The Word
  - 1:13, 5:26 That which is symbolized in baptism is accomplished by the Word.
  - The Word is God (John 1:1), not a document. This facet of God describes God's philosophy, His reasoning, His purposes.
  - Paul's audience could not participate in "deep" Bible studies because it was not finished and was not widely distributed yet. Paul's point was to know the philosophical concepts (grace, the purpose of creation, the promises, the predictions and that they had been accomplished, *etc.*). With this logical basis, empty philosophy (5:6) is defeated.
  - Many use the Scriptures as a sword: to wound or kill.
- 6:18 Pray in the Spirit
  - Pray like a spirit, not like a physical person.
  - Pray not only for yourself, but for all the saints and particularly those who ask for it.
  - Romans 2:29 Inwardly, of the heart
  - Romans 8:9 If indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you
  - Galatians 3:3 Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?
  - Galatians 5:16 Walk in the Spirit and you will not fulfill the lust of the flesh.
  - Galatians 5:25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.
  - Philippians 3:3 ...who worship God in the Spirit... or ...who worship in the Spirit of God.
  - Colossians 1:8 ...your love in the Spirit.
- The enemy of Paul's original audience
  - 6:11, 12, 13, 16 Satan and other evil spirits in "heavenly places."
    - 1:20 Jesus is seated in the same place
    - 2:6 Our spirits are seated in the same place
    - The war in heaven (Revelation 12:7 – 12) has not yet occurred.
    - Post-war authors (2 Peter 2:4, Jude 6, Revelation 20:1 – 3).
  - Other pre-war authors assured the faithful that they were protected from Satan (Romans 8:38, James 4:7, 1 John 3:8, 4:4)
- Applications for the post-war era
  - The power of God, truth, righteousness, evangelism, faith, salvation, the Word, and prayer were effective against the deceptions of the devil. Deceit was Satan's only weapon specifically mentioned.
  - How much more effective will this armor be against "philosophy and empty deceit" (Ephesians 5:6, Colossians 2:4, 8, 18)?
- Summary (6:21 – 24)

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- (22) Communication for the purpose of comfort. Paul's situation prompted him to write about grace (not in response to a problem). Those in difficulty have a responsibility to assure others that grace still works.
- (23 – 24) Love of Jesus (due to His virtue and character) prompts faith (trust in His promises) which results in receiving a gracious character and peace.