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# Ephesians

God's Glorious Church

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# Overview

The book of Ephesians is all about God's glorious church! All that God has done for the church and all that God calls the church to be, and not just the church of Ephesus but the universal church. Paul the Apostle uses the word 'church' 9 times throughout this letter, way more than any other letter of a similar length.

I would split the letter into 2 main sections: 'The Truth of the Church' and 'The Calling of the Church', separated by Paul's 'Prayer for the Church'. I think the idea and prayer being, that if we fully embrace the truth of the church we might be filled with his fullness and live out the calling he desires.

## **The Truth of the Church**

- The church is Spiritually Blessed for God's Glory
- The church is God's Glorious Inheritance
- The church is Alive in Christ
- The church is Near to God
- The church is Revealing God's Wisdom

## **The Prayer for the Church**

- The church are to Know God's Love

## **The Calling of the Church**

- The church are to be United, Diverse and Mature
- The church are to be Imitators of God
- The church are to be Children of Light
- The church are to have Christ Shaped Relationships
- The church are to Stand Firm

# Ephesians 1:1-14 - Spiritually Blessed for God's Glory

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God,  
To God's holy people in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus:

- 'an apostle by the will of God' - making it clear that God had chosen and appointed him to this role
- Paul calls them "the faithful" as if it is by their own faithfulness, but then goes on to say that they are chosen and predestined. Their faithfulness is a result of their being chosen/predestination and the work of the Holy Spirit

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

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

- Far greater than any earthly blessing we might receive is our spiritual blessing in Christ
- The theme and result of this section is our spiritual blessings in Christ, which results in praise and glory to God
- 'every spiritual blessing' - how great it is that God bestows on us all the righteousness and blessings that Christ himself has!

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

- CHOSEN
- Out of all humanity that is lost in sin and darkness, in his great mercy, God, has decided to choose some to salvation
- We are chosen 'in him' (in Christ) as that is the only way to salvation/the Father. There is no other way of being chosen and saved, except through Christ
- 'before the creation of the world' - not that He chose us according to His foreknowledge of our future response to the gospel, but that He chose us out of his divine will even before the creation of the world. The fact that God chose us precedes and causes all other things pertaining to our salvation.
- We are chosen, not just for our own sake, but to be holy and blameless in God's sight, i.e. for His good pleasure!

In love 5 he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.

- ADOPTED
- We have been predestined to be adopted as children through Jesus, meaning that our salvation was not God's plan B but God's original intention according to his pleasure and will. He wanted it to happen and made it happen.
- How great it is that we have been adopted! Even though we naturally belonged to the way of the world and sin, God in his great mercy saw it fit to adopt us into his holy and heavenly family!
- Yet even so, we are not just adopted for our own sake, but for the praise of his glorious grace.

- 'freely given us in the one He loves' - God has expressed his grace and love to humanity through Jesus Christ

7In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace 8that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding,

- FORGIVEN
- In Christ we have been redeemed/purchased by his blood and so also been forgiven of our sins which stood in way between us and God
- Our forgiveness was brought about because of the grace of God which is lavishly poured out onto us. Yet this love and grace is not reckless and unjustified, as He did it with all wisdom and understanding.

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

- REVEALED HIS WILL
- God did not keep us in dark regarding his intention and plan, but revealed the mystery of His will to us, just as loving parents do not withhold important information from their children
- God's will is purposed in, put into effect and fulfilled through Jesus Christ. He is the agent of God's will and is therefore at the centre of all that God is doing.

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

- WON
- "The Greek text literally reads, "In whom (Christ), indeed we were lot-cast"
- The idea here being that Christ has won us, like through the casting of lots, and therefore we are now His treasure and inheritance
- But this was not an accident, or a lucky draw, or a spontaneous decision. God predestined us according to his plan and in conformity to the purpose of his will - i.e. God wanted to win us all along, so that we would be His treasure!
- God did this (won us), according to his predetermined will, so that we might live for the praise of his glory!
- BSB "In him we were chosen as God's own"
- NET "In Christ we too have been claimed as God's own possession"

13And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, 14who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.

- MARKED/SEALED
- Upon hearing and believing the message of the gospel, we were included in Christ by being marked and sealed by the Holy Spirit
- The Holy Spirit does not come at a later stage through a 'second blessing' but is given at the moment of salvation through belief in the gospel

- The Holy Spirit is our deposit which keeps and secures us, until the full redemption of the church. We cannot lose our salvation because the Holy Spirit will not lose us and we won't lose the Holy Spirit.
- Again, Paul reiterates that what spiritual blessing we might have in God is ultimately for the praise of His glory. We are spiritually blessed for God's glory!

### **Summary**

- The church is spiritually blessed in Christ by being chosen, adopted, forgiven, knowing God's will, bought as a possession and sealed by the Spirit. Ultimately, whatever spiritual blessings we have in Christ are for the praise of God's glory. We are his possession, predestined for his good pleasure.

## Ephesians 1:15-23 - God's Glorious Inheritance

15For 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

- Paul's focus and priority is for the faith and love of people. He is thankful for the spiritual things in others lives, not the practical things in his own life, which is what we often focus our prayers on
- We should pray for each other and other Christians more regularly and specifically pray and thank God for their faith and love

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

- We should ask for a spirit of wisdom and revelation for ourselves and others. We should never take our current understanding of God for granted
- Paul's primary care, concern and prayer for the Ephesians is for their growth in God, to know Him better.
- We should not settle for a mediocre Christian experience but strive to know God more and more, for that is where our true identity and being is found.
- "Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent." John 17:3

18I 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, 19and his incomparably great power for us who believe.

- "eyes of your heart enlightened" - that we may have sight and feeling, knowledge and love. To have the eyes of our hearts/understanding enlightened is for these truths to become daily realities and deep convictions in our hearts.
- Paul wants us to know 3 things:
  1. "hope to which he has called you" - our hope is ultimately in Christ and the spiritual blessings laid out in Ephesians 1:1-14. We need to become more convicted and sure of our calling from God and that our hope would become more sure and central in our lives
  2. "the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints" - we are both heirs (Eph 1:11) and an inheritance. We will inherit/be heirs of the new creation along with Christ, but God inherits us as his treasured possession. We are God's rich and treasured inherited possession.
  3. " his incomparably great power for us who believe" - we might think 'how could God consider me a rich inheritance?'. Well if God can raise Christ from the dead and seat him high above all rule and authority then that same power (as explained next) can turn a wretch like me into a rich inheritance/treasured possession.

That power is the same as the mighty strength 20he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, 21far 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.

- The power displayed in Christ in raising him from the dead and exalting him is the same power that will be displayed in us, not just in likeness but also in effect. We will also be spiritually raised from the dead and seated with Christ in the heavenly realms.
- God's power is one that turns things from death to life, and life in all abundance.

22And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, 23which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

- We are united with Christ but he is also our head. We will rule and reign with Christ but he still has overall dominion
- "the fullness of him who fills everything in every way" - God is working through the Church to reveal himself to the world and will set up his rule and reign through the church (his body) in the new Kingdom. The church is central and intrinsic to what God is doing in this world

### Summary

- The church is God's glorious inheritance and God desires that the eyes of our hearts may be opened through wisdom and revelation to this reality and that we might fully embrace and claim all the spiritual blessings we have in Christ.

# Ephesians 2:1-10 - Alive in Christ

## 1 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins,

- From the great heights of our spiritual blessings in Christ, Paul now descends to our present reality as sinners where our state is simply dead in transgressions and sins
- We are spiritually dead and so are totally unable to seek after God if it were not for his prior intervention, yet his love is so deep for us that he is willing to reach down into the depths of our death and sin to bring us life
- What is the difference between transgressions and sins?
  - Transgressions/trespases speak of consciously choosing to violate God's law, like trespassing on land not ours or crossing (tran-) a line
  - Sin speaks of 'missing the mark' of God's standard and perfection and so failing to measure up
  - Trespases speak of man as a rebel, sins speak of man as a failure. We can't live righteously and we won't live righteously. "Before God we are both rebels and failures." (Stott)

## 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.

- The way of this world is accustomed not to follow God, but to trespass and sin against him.
- The way of this world is dictated by the "ruler of the kingdom of the air", who is the Satan. He is the kingdom of the air because that is what we breath and live in unconsciously, just as we walk in our sin.
- This spirit is at work in the 'children of disobedience' - all of humanity, to set them against God by their very nature

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

- Before Christ in our lives we lived just all did, seeking to gratify the cravings of our sinful flesh instead of seeking to be saved from them. We were subject to ourselves and our own sin, until we became subservient to a new master, the spirit of Christ.
- 'gratifying' the cravings of our flesh - can be translated as busying oneself or having a conversation with your own cravings.
- We are by nature objects of wrath because we sin and trespass against God because we follow our sinful desires, thoughts and feelings because the Spirit of evil is at work within us.
  1. The Spirit of evil at work within us causes us to
  2. Gratify the cravings of our flesh, which causes us to
  3. Sin and Trespass against God, which causes us to become
  4. Objects of God's wrath

## 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.

- The key theme here is death to life. That is the nature of salvation and shows even more clearly that we have no part in our own salvation. We are a corpse brought back to life, not someone on the edge and rescued from death
- Despite being dead in transgressions against God and being objects of wrath, God saved us because of his love, mercy and grace. His love is greater than our sin!

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

- God has not just made us alive in Christ and brought us up to a neutral position before him, but seated is with him in the heavenly realms.
- O the height and depth of God's love that he would raise us from being objects of wrath to be elevated in heavenly places.
- For what purpose? - that he might show the incomparable riches of his grace. This links back to chapter 1, where all things are for the 'praise of his glory'
- This also ties in with Romans 9:23 whereby God will make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy.

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.

- The 'gift' is salvation by grace alone, not by our merit. Faith enables this gift to be received
- Salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. 'sola fide sola gratia sola christo'

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

- "handiwork/workmanship" - this infers there is a purpose to our being saved, which was expressed before...that God might display the incomparable riches of his grace towards us
- We are created to do good works not evil works. That is our original calling. The works that we produce as simply the fruit of the spirit that is at work within us. An evil spirit produces evil fruit, a holy spirit produces holy fruit. It is not so much our choice which fruit we bear but which spirit we submit to
- It is the spirit who enables good works to be produced it is all by his mercy by his grace
- Titus 2:14 "who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good."

## Summary

- The church has been made alive in Christ because God is rich in mercy, even though we were dead in our sin and transgression and lost to our own desires. Not only did he make us alive, but also seated us in the heavenly realms alongside Christ to reveal to the incomparable riches of his grace, which he gifted to us.

## Ephesians 2:11-22 - Brought Near to God

11Therefore, 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)— 12remember 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.

- We were not just dead in sins and transgressions, but we were also cut off from ever approaching God
- We were separate from Christ, excluded from God’s people, had no part in God’s promises..and therefore were without hope and without God in the world - we were far far away from God!
- Circumcision was symbolic of being cut off and separated out (Genesis 17:10-14) - those who had been circumcised had been cut off from the world and separated out for God. Similarly those who were not circumcised had been cut off from God and separated from him

13But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

- We have been brought near through the blood of Christ because we are now part of God’s family
- Hosea 2:23 “I will say to those called 'Not my people,' 'You are my people'; and they will say, 'You are my God.'”
- We have undergone a spiritual circumcision (Romans 2:29) and so are now part of God’s people

14For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, 15by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations.

- Jesus is our peace - he is what enables us to have relationship with God and unity with all other people
- The Law is the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility - that was the separation between God’s people and all others. Since they kept (tried to keep it) and others did not have to. Some were under the law and some weren’t and therefore the Law was the separation line/wall
- But since none could keep the Law, except Jesus, he has set it aside so all mankind is on a level plane and in the same situation
- How did Jesus set the law aside in his flesh? - By perfectly keeping the law and then paying the price that the law demanded in his flesh. He died the death that we all should have died and so fulfilled the requirements of the law. He therefore completed it and could set it aside

His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace,

- "one new man" - speaks of unity and singularity. Israel was often described as 'a man', "they came together as one man".
- God is interested in creating a single united people with a common heart and spirit

- How? - By creating them "in himself". That we would be a united people in Christ. Not just like Christ or affiliated with him but IN him
- Acts 4:32 "All the believers were one in heart and mind" - that is only possible when the Spirit of Christ unites us all
- Sin creates division, holiness creates unity. We can see how sin creates division between God and man, and man & woman in the garden

16and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.

- God restores the man-man relationship as well as the God-man relationship at the same time
- The cross restores all relationships back to their rightful place of unity and love. It is restoring all that was lost in the fall
- Jesus paid the price for us all with his body, that we might become his body
- Like a company that buys two other companies and merges them both into one under the top company. The two are now joined and have become the company that paid the price for them

17He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. 18For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

- To preach is to announce the good news. The good news is that we all have access to the Father through one Spirit
- The good news for the Jew is that they do not need to keep the standards of the Law to access the Father, Jesus has paid the way
- The good news for the Gentile is that they are not cut off from the Father any longer, as Jesus has paid the way

19Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household,

- We are no longer foreigners and strangers to God, we are now longer distant from him and far away, but are now fellow citizens with God's people and not only that but members of his household!
- We are privileged to be classed amongst the citizens of God and members of his household
- Think back to the 1st century when being a Roman citizen was such a privileged position

20built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.

- Apostles and prophets - The prophets foretold/predicted Jesus (for the Jews) and the apostles told forth/proclaimed Jesus (for the Gentiles)
- Jesus is the cornerstone which defines where everything is, the starting and reference point
- We the church are the building of God - elsewhere we are called living stones

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

- The different members are joined together, Jewish believers and Gentile believers to become one building of God
- What is this building, what is its purpose? - We are like a temple where God dwells, and is worshipped and glorified. God's purpose in us is to dwell with us and for his glory

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

- 'you too' speaking of the church in Ephesus and therefore of all other local churches throughout the world. But since churches are really just communities of individual believers in whom God lives by His Spirit then this is not just a corporate purpose for us all, but also a personal one
- In the OT there was little individual connection with God. God dealt with his people as a collective and only a few as individuals, but now through Jesus God dwells in each of us
- The church collectively is not just being built together but we personally are being built.
- "The Father makes the choice of this house, the Son purchases it, the Holy Ghost takes possession of it."

### Summary

- The church (Gentiles) were far away from God and had no hope or part in his promises, but God has brought us near through Jesus Christ. We are being built with Israel into a building with Christ as the cornerstone, in which God lives by his Spirit.

## Ephesians 3:1-13 - Revealing God's Wisdom

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

- Paul was in prison because of his missionary efforts towards the Gentiles - because of the very gospel he was proclaiming

2Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, 3that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly.

- God's grace was given to Paul, for others, just as all of the gifts of grace are given in our lives for the sake of the body, not ourselves.
- The mystery was made known by revelation and no other way. Paul did not and could not learn it or discover it for himself. It is not some philosophical idea that we can enlighten ourselves with, but only something revealed as God chooses to reveal it.

4In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, 5which 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.

- The Spirit has now revealed the mystery of Christ to God's apostles and prophets - the foundation which the church is built on as we read in Ephesians 2:20
- The apostles and the prophets were the 'founders' or 'firstfruits' of the church
- So God is choosing now to reveal his mystery, where beforehand he had concealed it from everyone. The mystery of Christ is something that God had kept hidden for generations in order to maximise his glory.

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

- The mystery is that God is doing the work of re-uniting humanity with itself and Himself. The mystery is that God is flinging open the doors of salvation to the whole world, a salvation which had been foreshadowed in his dealings with the Jewish people.

7I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power.

- Paul is a servant of the gospel, stewarding what has been given to him on behalf of others. i.e. passing it from one to another and making it known
- Note that it is only by God's grace and power that Paul is who he is. He is a chosen instrument in the hands of God.

8Although I am less than the least of all the Lord's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the boundless riches of Christ, 9and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things.

- Paul counts himself as less than the least of all God's people - our role within the Kingdom of God is based on nothing we have done or did not do, but through the grace and mercy of Jesus. The fact that Paul sees himself so lowly reveals his great humility, but also reveals the great power of God that must be working in his life.

- 'administration/dispensation of this mystery' - that which was previously hidden in God, he is now making known and dispensing it throughout the world through the preaching of the gospel. This is God's big reveal, the premiere of his plan to redeem all of creation to himself.

10His 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, 11according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- Through the redemption of the church, God is displaying his manifold wisdom to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms. Angels that long to look into his salvation plan (1 Peter 1:12) are glimpsing the manifold wisdom of God as he unveils his plan and purpose to redeem creation to himself and once more unite heaven and earth. As the rulers in the heavenly realms watch the church being prepared through the gospel, they sit back and marvel "what a wise plan, what a wise God!"
- In the beginning, heaven and earth were joined together, but since the fall they have been separated by sin. The good news to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places (e.g. angels) is that they will receive earth back again with the church. The two will become one again.

12In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence. 13I ask you, therefore, not to be discouraged because of my sufferings for you, which are your glory.

- Because God has flung open the doors of salvation to the Gentile world and welcomes them, Paul says we may approach him with freedom and confidence (as we are no longer foreigners and strangers).
- The route of salvation is the same for all though, 'in him and through faith in him (Jesus), we may approach God. Paul includes himself in this because it is through the same route which both Jew and Gentile are saved.
- Paul starts and finishes this section by referencing his imprisonment and suffering, but this section helps put it in perspective. Paul has been chosen to communicate and dispense the good news to the Gentiles so they might find salvation in God. This will mean suffering for Paul but glory for the Gentiles, so they should not need to be discouraged.

### Summary

- God had kept his great gospel plan hidden for ages past, but now through the church he has made it known to the world. In the gospel and through the church the wisdom of God is displayed in the heavenly realms.

## Ephesians 3:14-21 - Knowing God's Love

14 For this reason I kneel before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name.

- We are part of God's family and so bear his name, just as we are made in his image and so bear his likeness.
- 'Every family in heaven and on earth' - as Paul has just described, God is revealing his wisdom to the heavens in his redemption of the earth, to one day reunite them.

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

- This is not talking about needing power to receive Christ initially, but that Christ might be able to dwell, take up residence and settle-in within our hearts, as we are empowered to allow him to take control.
- Paul's prayer is that Christ may have all of us and nothing may grieve him in our hearts, and the second half of his prayer is that might have all of Christ.

And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love,

- Being rooted and established/grounded in love is the starting point to understanding the love of God
- We cannot understand and comprehend God from a position of pridefulness or sinfulness - we must approach him and view him from a perspective of love so that we know him better
- Paul is praying for a reciprocal love here between us and God. That as we are rooted and established in love for God, we might have the power to grasp God's love for us.

18 may 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,

- God wants us to grasp his love for us. He wants us to know it well and be convicted of it, so that we might have all of Christ, just as he has all of us
- These are the dimensions of Christ's love which we can grow in the knowledge of, like a land which we must explore
- Wide (platos) - that we have been brought from far to near (Ch2b)
- Long (makros) - that we are God's long term plan to display his glory and wisdom (Ch1b, 3a)
- High (upsos) - that we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ (Ch1a)
- Deep (bathos) - that we have been made alive when dead in our deepest sins (Ch2a)

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

- Know this love that surpasses knowledge
  - We cannot fully know and comprehend the love of God, until the 'perfect is revealed', but we can grow in the knowledge of it till then and experience and live in it
  - 1 Cor 13 'We know in part'

- Being filled to the measure of all the fullness of God is about knowing the love of Christ!
  - That Christ might have all of us, and that we might have all of Christ. That every nook and cranny in our lives is filled with Christ's love.

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.

- We need power to grasp God's love for us because we cannot ask for or imagine it. We would never think to do what God does
- "in the church" - God is going to be glorified through the church. We are his long term plan to bring glory to himself
- Ultimately, God's agenda and motive behind his great love for us and empowering us to love him is that he might receive glory.

### **Summary**

- The church needs to grasp the full extent of God's love, in how we have been saved from the depth of our sin and the width of our farness, the length to which he has invested in us and the height to which he has raised us.

# Ephesians 4:1-16 - Unity & Diversity for Maturity

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

- "As a prisoner for the Lord"
  - This is the second time that Paul has referred to his imprisonment, and he is not just a prisoner, he is a prisoner of Christ Jesus/the Lord
  - Paul's imprisonment reveals a 'sold out' and radical attitude towards his faith. Someone who is willing to be a prisoner for a cause is fully committed and dedicated to that cause
  - Paul implores us to live a life worthy of the wondrous calling we have received and so take on the same attitude
  - Paul is a physical prisoner but he is spiritually one too - he is bound and held captive within the grace of the God! Viewing ourselves as prisoners for God gives us a sole focus of living for God
- "Live a life worthy of the calling you have received"
  - This is the bridge between the first 3 chapters and the last 3 chapters of Ephesians - the calling we have received & living a life worthy of it.
  - One might think we need to earn or pay back our calling by the way we walk and that we ought to live up to it out of sheer will. Instead, it is recognising and knowing our position in Christ and letting that transform us, as Paul explains further on this passage.
  - Once we have 'sat' in the great truths of the gospel, we are now empowered to 'walk' in them.

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

- Paul uses varied terms here to describe the conduct that we should have to one another, imploring us to strive towards unity because he along with us know how difficult that can be at times.
  - Be humble - accepting that we are still a work in progress and still have things to learn
  - Be gentle - in the words we speak and how we deal with people, to not cause unnecessary harm or offense
  - Be patient (longsuffering) - when our ideal is not met and we need to allow time and space for people
  - Be forbearing (put up with) - to those whom are not easy to work with or talk to, even at inconvenience or detriment to ourselves
- In short, Paul is saying to "suck-up, back-up, shut-up and put-up"...in love.

3 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

- Unity of the spirit
  - Significant how this is unity of the spirit and not anything else (the word, uniformity etc.)
  - The Spirit is key to living the Christian life and is who leads us into truth, freedom and love

- There is true unity when individual believers submit themselves to the spirit through prayer
- Through the bond of peace
  - There is unity of the Spirit when there is a bond of peace - a lack of peace (conflict) causes a lack of unity in the spirit
  - How do we keep the unity of the Spirit and peace between each other? - Through humility, gentleness, patience and bearing with each other
  - Paul says to make every effort, therefore these are the things that we should make every effort to display. Am I being humble towards my leaders, am I being gentle towards my peers, showing patience to those who are difficult and forbearance to those making me suffer?
  - Peace is not just a lack of conflict and arguments, it is dealing with all judgmental and offending thoughts against each other. Those thoughts and attitudes prevent a bond of true peace from developing as there is not true unity.
  - Therefore we should make every effort to deal with the thoughts and attitudes which prevent that unity, and why it's so important that we pray for each other, not just because it's a good principle but because it stimulates unity between each other. When we pray for each other we challenge those offending and judgmental thoughts.
- We see why unity is so important because of the last verse in this section, because we are meant to be a living body and are responsible for the growth and health of each other. We cannot encourage and build up each others faith if there is no unity

4There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; 5one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

- This highlights the single commonality we are called towards
- We are called to be one, single, united body i.e. everybody the same in terms of belief, focus & priority

7But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.

- We have all received a grace to use within the body and for the body. Our gifts and talents should not be used pridefully or boastfully since they are all gifts that have been given to us through Christ.
- This is not just speaking of leaders but all people. We have all been given graces and gifts to use for the benefit of the church and for God's glory.

8This is why it says:

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

- Paul quotes from Psalm 68:18 but uses a slightly different wording whereby in the Psalm it says he received gifts from men. In the context that Paul is talking about, Christ has been given all authority from the Father and is now apportioning this grace and authority to his church - just as a king would receive gifts from other nations, and give gifts to his followers.

- This is why it is key and better that Christ ascended than to remain on earth. He ascended on high, took his throne and sent the Holy Spirit, who is a gift in and of himself. But through the Holy Spirit, Christ would also apportion grace and gifts to his church to fulfill her commission.

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

- The gospel story is not that a man from earth managed to ascend towards God, but that God in his mercy descended to humanity. Jesus could only ascend because he had first descended. As in John’s gospel “the Word became flesh and made his dwelling amongst us”
- The gifts and graces that God has bestowed on his church are nothing to do with our inherent value or ability, but because of the mercy of God.

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

- Christ has given special roles to certain people to equip, unite and mature the church
  - Apostles & Prophets - pointing to and preaching Christ
    - Even though there is nothing in the New Testament to say that these roles have stopped, we should be careful to not call anyone a prophet or apostle today and so not give them more authority than Christ has given them, even though their ministry might be prophetic or apostolic in style. Only God himself appointed people to these offices.
  - Evangelists - leading the way to reach the lost
  - Pastor/Teachers - to equip the flock of God. The Greek wording here indicates that this is one role in two parts, not two different roles. I.e. an elder/overseer needs to both pastor and teach the flock under his care

12to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13until 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.

- Christ has given the above roles for these purposes:
  - Equipping the church for works of service/ministry
  - Reaching unity in the faith & knowledge of God
  - Maturity in the fullness of Christ
- These roles of leadership are contrasted with the gifts given to everyone as above - in God's kingdom there is leadership and authority but also total participation
- We can see in politics how these extremes are separated - Far right encourages total authority whereas far left encourages no authority and absolute equality

14Then 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.

- Growing in the knowledge of God helps us identify teaching that isn't sound or helpful to the Christian walk

- A lot of teaching might not necessarily be wrong, it just might be the wrong focus and so not be helpful to our walk!
- God wants us to stop being infants/spiritual babies and to grow up
- Growing up in both action and knowledge

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. 16From 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.

- We grow and build each other up, as God does his work in us
- The challenge is to speak the truth in love - we must continue to fellowship with each other, setting our minds and thoughts on the truth and lovingly challenging one another
- We often fail at doing one of these - either we don't speak, it's not truthful and sound what we speak, or we don't do it in a loving way
- Let's practise speaking the truth in love to one another

### **Summary**

- The church is to make every effort to pursue unity just as God has called us to be one united body. We are also a diverse church too in that God has given gifts and offices for the building up and maturity of the church. We are to pursue unity, through diversity, for maturity.

## Ephesians 4:17-5:2 - Be Imitators of God

17So 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. 18They 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.

- Insist on it in the Lord - Paul is following on from his previous subject of spiritual maturity and now insisting that a mark of maturity is no longer living as the world does. This a danger and temptation for many believers, that we become Christians and grow in knowledge, but not character!
- Futility of their thinking - our thinking has a degree of futility to it when it is not God centred. The attitude and worldview we bring to life is warped by sin and ultimately futile, so that we cannot truly discern what is good. For example, our highest hope for making a perfect world may be humanity but this is a futile thought.
- Hardening (hardness, noun) of their hearts - we are futile in our thinking and darkened in our understanding because we have hardened our hearts against God. Sin makes us spiritually blind and deaf, and so we are ignorant of greater spiritual realities.

19Having 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.

- Having lost all sensitivity to God (our heavenly master), we give ourselves over to sensuality (our earthly master). Note that in Romans 1 Paul uses very similar language of being given over, however there it is God who gives us over
- The result of this is that we indulge ourselves in the things of life in a greedy manner to try and create as much happiness as we can. We are indulgent pigs in the muck of our sin.

20That, however, is not the way of life you learned 21when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus.

- 'But you did not learn Christ in this way' - Christ is not just the atoning sacrifice for our sins but also our 'way of life'. Just as people might learn other methods to try and escape the trials of life (e.g. meditation), so we learn Christ who truly brings us freedom and transformation.

22You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; 23to be made new in the attitude of your minds; 24and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

- 'Put off' - to lay aside, to cast off. In putting off our old self, we choose to no longer be mastered by it and so gradually free ourselves from the control of our corrupt desires.
- 'renewed in the spirit of your minds' - The key to putting off our old self and putting on our new self is being made new in the spirit of our minds. This is a work of God by the Holy Spirit, but is one done when we present ourselves to God willing and wanting to be transformed.
- 'Put on' - to clothe yourself, to sink into a garment. Just as a little child cannot so easily close themselves, but in raising their arms to their loving parents they are willing and wanting to be clothed. So it is with the disciple of Christ.

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

- Truthfulness - falsehood and lies are of the devil since he is the father of lies, but God is all truth and cannot lie. Even as believers we often present a mask of falsehood because we are ashamed to reveal the truth about ourselves to each other.

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

- Forgiveness - instead of being driven by anger and bitterness, we are to forgive each other quickly
- ‘In your anger do not sin’ - this can often be used to excuse or say that being angry is not sinful itself, but that we must not be led to sin. Paul is quoting Psalm 4:4 which says “In your anger do not sin; when you are on your beds, search your hearts and be silent.” The emphasis here is that whilst we are wrestling with our frustrations and anger, we do not allow ourselves to be mastered by them.
- Certainly, the majority of anger we experience is sinful in its origin, and we are to wrestle with our internal private anger before it manifests as external public sin.
- We do this, by keeping short accounts with people and learning to forgive quickly, not letting the sun go down whilst we are still angry. We may not always have a chance to reconcile with the person before the day is out, but we always have a chance to internally forgive them.
- When we harbour bitterness and anger we give the devil a foothold and allow him a place and opportunity to influence our lives. Our bitterness and anger can easily become an open doorway to further corruption.

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.**

- Integrity - instead of stealing things (time, resources, money, opportunities) to avoid hard work and doing the right thing, God calls us to live with integrity
- The heart of stealing is laziness and selfishness, whereas the heart of integrity is hard work and selflessness.
- When we think of stealing we often only think of physical theft, like shop-lifting. We are very prone to ‘invisible theft’ though, like using our employed time for personal reasons or not reporting income we have made to the tax office.

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.**

- Wholesomeness - to slander and condemn others is a trait of the devil, not of the people of God.
- The word ‘unwholesome’ actually means ‘rotten’, like how rotten food contaminates and corrupts everything else around it. Unwholesome talk spreads and corrupts the minds of those listening, whereas wholesome talk builds and edifies others.

30**And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. 32Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.**

- The Holy Spirit has sealed us for the day of redemption, he is our companion and helper throughout life. He will never leave us, even though we may grieve him.
- The ways of our old self, which is corrupted by deceitful desires, are what grieve the Holy Spirit. These ways are bitterness, rage, anger, brawling, slander and malice, and when we let these master us we grieve the Holy Spirit.
- How compassionate and forgiving is God then, that even though we grieve his heart, he remains with us and in our lives. This should be our motivation for expressing kindness, compassion and forgiveness to each other, just as in Christ God has forgiven us.

**5:1 Be imitators of God, 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.**

- 'Be imitators of God'- God has set an example for us to follow in himself. In putting off of the old self and putting on the new self we are imitating and mimicking the character of God
- We walk in the way of love, by following the footsteps of God and keeping in close fellowship to him. Galatians 5:25 "Since we live by the spirit, let us keep in step with the spirit"

### **Summary**

- The church are to be imitators of God, in the putting off of our sinful selves which are corrupted by deceitful desires and to put on the new self created to be like Christ and pursuing truthfulness, forgiveness, integrity and wholesomeness.

## Ephesians 5:3-20 - Living as Children of Light

3But 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.

- Not be even a hint or 'not even be named among you' - the idea here that God's people need to be above reproach and not come under the accusation of immorality, impurity or greed
- This requires a conscientious attitude of the people of God to stay well away from these things, to flee from temptation and live transparently
- No sexual immorality - because our marriages, our sexual relationships with our spouses, are a living symbol of Christ and his church
- No impurity - because we have been saved and cleansed by the blood of Christ to be pure, not to be made impure again
- No greed/covetousness - because Christ is our prize and possession

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

- No obscenity/filthiness - because we have become the treasure and inheritance of God
- No foolish (moronic) talk - because God is our very truth and reality, and our knowledge of him sharpens our intellect and understanding of the world
- No coarse joking - because God's people do not seek to find fault or pull others down, but take what is important with a serious and sober attitude
- Thanksgiving - why is thanksgiving mentioned as the right alternative to these ungodly behaviours? Because when we are thankful we place the right value on God, his grace and his church. With a thankful spirit we see all things with the right perspective and so avoid ungodly behaviours which are improper and out of place.

5For 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.

- People who live by these behaviours in some way worship the gratification they receive from them, and so are idolaters, for they worship these and themselves rather than God.
- As we have seen, these behaviours do not belong in God's people and therefore have no place in the kingdom of God. Therefore, in choosing how we live and who we follow (Christ or not), we also choose where our inheritance will be.

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

- We should not be deceived in thinking that we can have both: have an inheritance in God's kingdom yet still live with ungodly behaviours (consciously approving of them)
- God's wrath is roused against those who choose disobedience and darkness because in doing so they consciously reject God, his goodness and truth.
- Do not be partners/partakers - also used in Ephesians 3:6 "...and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise". We are to be partakers of the promise of God, not of sin and darkness. This is not to say that we cannot partner or work

with non-Christians or secular organizations (as churches) but that we do not partake in things contrary to the kingdom of God.

**8For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.**

- We were darkness and are now light, not just that we were in darkness and are now in light. We embody and emulate whatever kingdom we live in and belong to. Those in darkness will be darkness and create darkness. Those in light will be light and emulate light. This is why Jesus can say “you are the light of the world” (Matthew 5:14)

**Live as children of light 9(for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) 10and find out what pleases the Lord.**

- We are to live as children of light by pursuing what is good, right and true, namely God himself. These things are the fruit of light, therefore by keeping in close relationship to the true light, Christ himself, we might bear the fruit of light
- Find out what pleases the Lord - what should characterise the people of God is a desire to please the Lord in all that we do. So that by living with a conscientious approach to life and a fear of the Lord, we seek to discern what is well-pleasing to him. So we should ask of all things, “is this good, is this right, is this true...does it please the Lord?”

**11Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them.**

- Again, we are to have nothing to do with the deeds of darkness, we should not be partakers in things contrary to the kingdom of God
- Expose them - we are not to expose the people but the deeds, by reproving them in our hearts and minds as we seek to find out what pleases the Lord. In matters of difficulty it can be all too easy to shrug our shoulders and wander unknowingly into disobedience and so have fellowship with and partake in darkness. Instead, our task is to thrust all things under the spotlight of Christ and ask “is it good, right and true?” and through prayer and obedience to the scriptures we discern what is best and pleasing to God.

**12It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret.**

- When acts of disobedience are the subjects of our conversations, we put ourselves in a vulnerable position and may become entertained or enthralled by them, and unknowingly educate ourselves of how to also practise disobedience in secret.
- It is shameful then to steer so close to these things by talking about them, that they may become an influence on our hearts and minds.

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

- When we expose all things by putting them under the spotlight of Christ, they then become visible and discernable whether they are good, right and true.
- Everything illuminated (made visible) becomes a light in and of itself, for it helps us discern what is best and becomes a sign post to all that pleases God. Even dark deeds, when exposed before Christ become a helpful lesson in discerning what is best. Therefore it is good to practise exposing all things to the light that we might please the Lord in all we do.

14 This is why it is said:

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

- It is unclear from where Paul is quoting this from, possibly a loose rendering of Isaiah 60:1
- But its application is to say that as we wake from our sleep and death in sin, Christ's light shines on us and we become a light ourselves in reflecting the goodness, righteousness and truth of God.

15 Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, 16 making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. 17 Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.

- Make the most of every opportunity (redeeming the time) - even though this world is lost to evil and darkness is all around us, we are to redeem the time and make best use of it for God's glory
- It should be said at the end of our lives that we did not live for our own pleasure and purposes but for the will of God and to bring him glory

18 Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery.

- Knowing that we live in an evil and dark world comes with the temptation to try and gratify ourselves in the luxuries of the world, such as drunkenness.
- Many people get drunk at the weekends just to escape the stress and toil of their lives.

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

- As children of light, we are to be filled again and again with the Spirit that we might continually be reflecting the light of God, and not growing dimmer and dimmer
- This is not to say that we lose the Spirit over time like a leaky bucket, but that our hearts grow hard and our sensitivity to the Spirit wanes. To be filled then is to be comforted again by God and once more filled with a greater affection for Jesus.
- We encourage each other with psalms, hymns and songs from the Spirit, making music in our heart to the Lord. As we do so the Spirit helps us in our weaknesses and we are comforted in our trials, and so see no need to gratify ourselves in the world's pleasures.
- Again, as at the start of this passage we are to be a thankful people and place a great value on the things of God and what he provides for us

### Summary

- The church are to live as children of light in this dark world, having nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness but rather exposing them by the light of God's goodness and encouraging each other with songs of light.

# Ephesians 5:21-6:9 - Christ Shaped Relationships

## 21 Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

- Continuing Paul's subject of living as children of light, another aspect of this submissive Christ-like relationships between spouses, between parents and children, and between servants and masters.
- At the start of this section, Paul makes clear that we are to have mutual submission to each other out of our reverence for Christ, no matter what role or position we fulfill in life. This is important to hold onto as we consider the need for wives to submit to their husbands, children to their parents and servants to their masters.

## Wives & Husbands

### 22 Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord.

- This is not to say that all women should submit to all men, but that wives should submit to their husbands, as their husbands take up the headship role within the marriage and family.
- as you do to the Lord - just as we recognise the spiritual headship of Christ over our lives, we also recognise that some of that headship is revealed and expressed through the husband for the marriage and family

### 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. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

- head - literally meaning a physical head, in that the head is one with the body but is responsible for controlling and leading the actions of the body. A body cannot exist without a head, and a head cannot exist without a body so this is therefore not an issue of worth or value. As we see in physical disabilities, it is a great sadness when the physical body no longer responds or submits to the instructions of the mind/head, such as with paralysis. A body not in submission to the head is chaotic and disorderly. This then is the picture that Paul is using to describe Christ and his church, and the marriage between husband and wife too.
- Paul makes clear that our marriages are living symbols of Christ and his church, and therefore we should hold our marriages in the light of this. To deny the headship of husbands is to deny the headship of Christ over his church. Where wives do not submit to their husbands, they do not submit to Christ either.

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

- The command to husbands is to love their wives and humbly give themselves up through loving service and self-sacrifice, as Christ did for the church.
- The role for husbands therefore involves loving servant leadership. They lead with love.

### 26 to make her holy, cleansing 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.

- Christ gave himself up for the church so that he could make her holy and present her cleansed, radiant and blameless, because he loved her.
- In reflecting the same love of Christ towards their wives, husbands should also desire and work to see their wives grow in holiness before God
- Cleansed by the washing with water through the word - a picture of the Old Testament symbolism and act of washing things to purify them. The cleansing and washing of the church is done through the word though, as the church believes the message/word of the gospel and what God has spoken.
- So as Christ loved the church and cleansed her through the word of God, so husbands, out of their love for their wives should seek to see their wives grow in holiness through the word of God. A simple and effective way of doing this is reading the Bible and praying together, allowing the word and Spirit of God to wash over both.

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

- Paul has expressed two ideas above: that husbands and wives are one body and that husbands need to love their wives as Christ loved the church. Joining these two ideas together here then, the summary is for husbands to love wives as their own body, since they are one flesh.
- This is a profound thought, that when a husband thinks of 'himself' he really thinks of not just himself but also his wife, for they are one.

**29**After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church— **30**for we are members of his body.

- Just as Christ feeds and cares for his body, the church, so husbands need to feed and care for their wives. This is primarily of spiritual sustenance in feeding and caring for their faith, by exalting the word and spirit of God over the marriage.
- The primary role of the husband then is to ensure that both he, his wife and family are being spiritually nourished so that the whole body is being fed and cared for.

**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."

- Paul is quoting from Genesis 2:24 here, and the implication is not that a man would leave his parents house and live with his wife and her parents, but that in leaving his parents and joining with his wife he is establishing a new family and a new body.
- It is important that the man 'leaves' his father and mother so that he can establish a headship over this new family body. He leaves one circle and creates another.

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

- Every time this happens (a couple getting married and creating a new family), it is a living symbol of the awesome union between Christ and his church. We live this mystery out in the world stage of our lives, not realizing that we are acting out a greater reality existing in the heavenly realms and will one day experience in full.

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

- Even though our marriages have a greater meaning and symbol of Christ and his church, it is not an excuse to theorise it and not live up to the practical implications.
- Paul affirms again that husbands must love their wives as they love themselves, that the marriage needs to be soaked in self-giving sacrificial love.
- Not only so, but wives need to respect (revere, honour, submit to) their husbands as the head of the marriage body.
- Marriages break down when either or both of these are broken, when men fail to love their wives, or wives fail to respect/honour their husbands. Likewise, they are strengthened when these actions are reciprocated. Wives are more willing to show respect/honour when their husbands are truly loving, and visa versa.

## Children & Parents

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

- Not only our marriages, but our parental relationships are to be branded with Christ too and be a reflection of his glory
- In the Lord - in that obeying their parents, children know that they are also obeying God
- This also speaks of the attitude in which children are brought up, in that they think and reason 'in the Lord', possessing a Christ-centered worldview crafted by their parents.
- For this is right - just as the church, the children of God, submit to and obey their heavenly father, it is fitting and right that children submit to and obey their earthly parents. Again, this is a living symbol of Christ and his church.

### 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."

- This was one of the ten commandments and one so crucial that it guaranteed the transfer of faith and obedience from one generation to the next.
- The promise being that as each generation honoured and followed after their parents by expressing faith and obedience in God, they would experience God's blessing.
- Likewise, children growing up under Christian parents are blessed with knowing the truths of the gospel and will experience God's richest blessing (Eph 1:3) if they place their faith in Christ

### 4 Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

- The instruction here is not to exasperate or provoke our children (to anger and sin) but to steer them towards God through training (discipline) and instruction (teaching, counsel)
- Parents, and fathers especially, have a vital role in the steering and molding of our children. Our actions and words can steer them towards anger and sin or towards God

## Servants & Masters

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

- Finally, our working relationships also need to be branded with Christ and be a living symbol of our relationship with him as our master, whom we respect and fear
- Sincerity of heart - not with a duplicitous spirit that seeks to hide anything or present a false impression

**6Obey 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.**

- We obey and serve our employers knowing that God sees all that we do, and so we live to honour God as we work in our jobs
- We live and work with integrity and sincerity, striving to do what is right and fair in all circumstances

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

- Even if a servant/employee works under a harsh master/employer who fails to recognise and reward faithful service, they can be comforted in knowing that their reward is in and from God.
- A better translation for verse 8 is “knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord” - there is a sense of fairness and justice here, in that God will repay and reward that which has been given with no consideration for position or privilege.

**9And 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/employers are to treat their servants/employees in the same way, with respect and sincerity of heart, showing no favouritism but equality instead.
- Ultimately we all serve and submit to the same master, God, therefore our working relationships should be a living symbol of the God we serve, honour and submit to.

### **Summary**

- The church is to have Christ shaped relationships between husbands and wives, parents and children, employers and employees whereby there is sacrificial love, servant-hearted humility, and reverent submission to act as a living symbol of Christ and his church.

## Ephesians 6:10-24 - The Armour of God

10Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.

- The 'armor of God' is first mentioned in Isaiah 59:17 and is actually the metaphorical armor which God wears in responding to the sin of man. God is on the offensive against sin to redeem and rescue man. Paul likely has this scripture in mind when he encourages us to clothe ourselves in God's armor
- Just as Saul lent his armor to David to fight Goliath, so God makes his armor available to us in fighting our battles. We are reminded then that it is God's armor, not ours, his strength, not ours, his power, not ours.

12For 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.

- The battles we fight are not physical but spiritual. Our struggle is against the powers of evil, which this world is soaked in and which corrupts our bodies with ungodly desires. Our struggle is against "the cravings of sinful man, the lust of our eyes and the boasting of our hearts" (1 John 2:16)
- This is why we must wholly depend on God's power and strength, because we have no power in ourselves to fight against spiritual forces. Flesh cannot battle spirit, only spirit can battle spirit - so without the spiritual armor of God we are naked and exposed.

13Therefore 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 says to put on the armor of God, before the day of evil comes, not when it comes. A prepared disciple is a protected disciple.
- 'Putting on the armor of God' is not an action in and of itself, but is simply being filled with the fullness of God through his word and Holy Spirit as Paul has been saying repeatedly throughout this letter (Eph 3:19, 4:13, 5:18). Putting on God's armor is simply filling your heart and mind with God, and when we clothe ourselves in God we clothe ourselves in his armor.
- To stand - God's desire for us is the same he had for Job, to stand as righteous and holy even when tested and buffeted by Satan.

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

- Belt of truth - literally 'gird your waist with truth'. To gird is to fasten around and prepare for something challenging. We gird ourselves and continually remind ourselves of the truth in Christ which protects us against doubt and falsehood. The value of Biblical truth should never be underestimated, as it provides for us a sure and solid foundation and holds all things together (as a belt does) in our faith. Those not girded and convicted in truth will become doubtful and weary when evil comes and darkness descends.
- Breastplate of righteousness - this is one of the pieces of God's armor mentioned in Isaiah 59:17. Righteousness is God's heartbeat, because he is fully righteous and

knows he is wholeheartedly. The image of God wearing righteousness as a breastplate is a statement of him saying "I am righteous", and so in giving it for us to wear we can claim the same thing through Christ. This is a statement and truth we need to remind ourselves of and believe wholeheartedly, that through Jesus we are righteous. Just as the breastplate protects the heart and vital organs, so God's righteousness protects us against believing otherwise.

**15 and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.**

- Disciples of Christ are to be prepared and ready to take the gospel of peace throughout the world
- Romans 10:15 "And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"
- 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"
- Ultimately the church is to be on mission, we are strangers and foreigners with a message of peace. We are peacemakers, not fighters. In many ways the images here make the church look like soldiers of the UN (United Nations), clothed in armor but to bring peace.

**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.**

- As we persevere in life and keep the faith we defend ourselves against the attacks of evil.
- Arrows come down from the sky, so the image here is of a soldier raising his shield above his head and hiding underneath it. Likewise, we are to continually elevate our faith over and in our lives, which can become a challenge at times.
- The purpose of flaming arrows is to set their targets on fire, and this is the intention of Satan, to set our hearts on fire with evil. James describes the tongue as being set on fire by hell (James 3:6), so the intention of Satan is to corrupt our whole being and turn us once more into children of darkness.

**17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.**

- Helmet of salvation - this is another piece of the armor of God mentioned in Isaiah 59:17. It cannot simply mean to know and remind yourself that you are saved because God has no need for that. Instead, this piece of God's armour is a symbol of him as saviour. Just as a king would wear a crown, a priest would wear a turban, a saviour would wear a helmet - it is a symbol of who that person is. So when Paul shows us that we too can take up the helmet of salvation, it shows that God is using the church in saving the world. The reality is that God is saving the world through the church as we preach the gospel - we are God's salvation army!
- Sword of the spirit, the word of God - this final piece belongs to God too since it is the sword of the spirit (the sword supplied by the spirit). Our one offensive weapon is the word of God, but crucially it is the spirit which reveals it to us and others. We are reminded that Jesus used scripture alone to ward off Satan whilst being tempted, and likewise when we submit ourselves to the spirit of God we are reminded of and enlightened to God's word.

18And 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.

- Pray in the spirit - this is unlikely to mean praying in tongues as Paul has made no mention of supernatural gifts throughout his letter. Instead, I think it means to simply pray with a sincere heart, seeking to submit and be sensitive to the spirit. This we do on all occasions, so that we are never just praying with mindless words, but sincerely seeking the spirit as we pray.
- prayers and requests - the manner of our prayers is both talking and asking. As a child speaks with their parents, their speaking is a manner of talking (telling them something) and asking (requesting something). Our prayers need to consist of both.
- be alert - to persevere securely in our faith we need to continually be alert and not drift off into the weariness and slumber of little faith. Jesus warned his disciples the night before the crucifixion to not give into the slumber of temptation. Temptation and weariness can affect us all, so it is good that we keep on praying for each other that our faith might be preserved and strengthened

19Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, 20for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

- Paul had no scriptures to preach from (except the Old Testament), for his letters and writings form the very scriptures we read and preach from today. Therefore, a major work in Paul's life was the spirit giving him the right words to say as he made known the mystery of the gospel for the first time to many (Eph 3:5)
- fearlessly - Paul asks for prayer twice about this, likely because of the persecution and imprisonment he received from preaching the gospel. We should pray this for each other too, that we might be fearless against the rejection and potential persecution we may face against proclaiming the gospel.

21Tychicus, 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. 22I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage you.

- Tychicus was one of Paul's regular companions who assisted him in his ministry.
- Paul's heart here is to encourage the Ephesians and all else who would read this letter

23Peace to the brothers and sisters, and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 24Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love.

- Love with faith - these two are mutual companions and cannot be separated. One cannot love God but have no faith in him, and likewise cannot have true faith but express no love. They must exist together as James expresses in his letter (faith and deeds). It is interesting to note that Paul mentions that these are 'from' God, in that our love and faith are truly a work of God in our lives.
- Undying love - incorruptible love. Our love for God is one that will endure into all eternity and will never spoil, fade or die out.

## Summary

- The church is to take its stand in this dark world and remain faithful by putting on the full armor of God, being strengthened by him through truth, righteousness, peace, faith and the word of God.