
Christian Belief and Behaviour

An EasyEnglish Bible Version and Commentary (2800 word vocabulary) on Paul's Letter to the Ephesians

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This commentary **has been** through Advanced Checking.

Words in boxes are from the Bible.

A word list at the end explains words with a *star by them.

About this letter

The *apostle Paul wrote this letter when he was in a prison in Rome. He wrote it to people in the town called Ephesus. This was about 61 years after the birth of Christ.

At one time, *Greek leaders had ruled Ephesus. Now the *Romans ruled the city. It was the capital of the *Roman region called Asia. It was a busy port and the centre of much trade. The *temple of the goddess (female god) Diana (or Artemis) was there. The business people sold models of Diana's *temple there. But Paul's *preaching affected their trade. This caused confusion and trouble in the city (Acts 19:23-41).

This letter is different from other letters by Paul. The main differences are:

- a) he does not give any special greetings;
- b) he does not send a message to any one particular person;
- c) he does not talk about special problems.

Paul wrote the letter to encourage the personal *faith of the Christians. It gives teaching, prayers and great *praises to God. It is about God's Son, Jesus Christ. He came to our world in order to put right all the things that had gone wrong. Paul makes clear that Christ is the head of the *church. He will work out his purposes in and by the *church.

It is possible that Paul sent this letter to other *churches in Asia. Then they too could read it.

The letter is in two parts. First is the teaching part. It mainly teaches us about God's plan for the world. This plan is for all time. It is about the gathering together of all things to Jesus Christ as head. God created men and women. He created them to be his friends. But now they are apart from him. They are his enemies.

There is no unity in a world without Christ. One person is against another person. Nations fight each other. *Jews and *Gentiles are against each other. There is a battle between evil *angels and good *angels. There is a battle between God and *Satan. Most people in the world do not know Christ. This is the reason for all that is wrong. But this is not God's purpose for the world. There can be unity only when all things come together with Christ as head. Unity should first be inside the *church. Then it should be for all people everywhere. Then it should be with everything that God has made. This unity is for the entire world and for all ages. This is what Paul teaches in the first three chapters.

God's plan is to fix the unity that is spoiled. The last three chapters teach about how God will use Christians in this plan. Paul teaches that the *church is like the body of Christ. Christians must be like Christ's hands to do Christ's work. Christians must be like his mouth to speak for him. They must be like his feet to take his *gospel to all the people in the world. God wants to deal with all the things that divide people. God will do this in and by the *church. Paul speaks about the different ways in which his message will apply. Change will come by the good behaviour of God's people in the home and in the world.

Plan of Ephesians

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Part 1: The place of the *believer in Christ (chapters 1-3)

Chapter 1

1:1-2 ~ Greetings

v1 I am the *apostle Paul. I am an *apostle by God's will. I am writing this letter to the *saints (God's people) in Ephesus. You believe in Christ Jesus and you are in him.

v2 I pray that God, our Father, and the *Lord Jesus Christ will send you *grace and *peace.

Verse 1 Paul calls himself an '*apostle'. He is a person whom God has chosen. God has chosen him to be a leader in the *church and to act with God's authority. First, Paul refers to himself as the writer of the letter. This was the custom at that time. Then he refers to his readers, as the '*saints'. The meaning of '*saints' is 'the holy persons'. It means those that God has set apart to live holy lives. These are the Christians in Ephesus. They remain strong in their belief. Paul greets them.

Verse 2 Paul changes the common *Greek word for 'greetings' to another word, '*grace'. The common *Hebrew greeting was 'shalom' or '*peace'. Paul brings the two greetings together as a *blessing and a prayer. He prays that his readers will know the free help of God the Father and the *Lord Jesus Christ. They do not need to earn this. He also prays that they will know peace with God. And he prays that they will have peace with each other. The *peace of God is not just the lack of trouble. The word 'shalom' has many meanings. It means to be well. It means to have enough for your needs. It means safety and health. We can have peace inside us even if life is difficult.

1:3-14 ~ *Praise for all the *blessings of God

In the original *Greek language, this song of *praise (verses 3-14) is one sentence. The thoughts of Paul follow from one to the next at great speed. It is as if he wants to say it all at once.

In this passage, Paul writes about the good things that the Father gives to us. The Father has *blessed us (verse 3). He has chosen us (verse 4). He has decided that we shall become his sons and daughters (verse 5). He has given his *grace to us (verse 6). *Grace is the gift of God that we cannot buy. Neither can we work to earn it (2:8-9). He has told us about his choice and purpose. It is to bring together all things in heaven and on earth. Then all will have one head, that is, Christ (verses 9-10).

1:3-6 ~ The Father has chosen us

v3 We praise the God and Father of our *Lord Jesus Christ who has greatly *blessed us. God has *blessed us in the *heavenly places with every *spiritual *blessing in Christ. **v4** Before he made the world, he chose us. He wants us to live holy lives. He wants us to do nothing wrong, but only things that are good. He loved us. **v5** So he chose to make us his sons and daughters by Jesus Christ. He did this so that we can be *holy and without *sin in his sight. **v6** We praise him for his wonderful *grace. We thank him for the free gift that he gave to us. He gave it to us in the son that he loves.

Verse 3 God has *blessed us 'in the *heavenly places with every *spiritual *blessing in Christ'. The *heavenly places refer to an area that you cannot see or touch. In that area, there are *beings that you cannot see. These *beings are both good and evil. The good *beings serve God and the evil *beings serve *Satan. The evil *beings try to rule society and the lives of people. Paul often uses the words '*heavenly places'. He uses them 5 times in this letter. If we are Christians, we live now in the *heavenly places. This is true even now whilst we live on earth. It refers to any place where Christ rules over all. His people rule with him too (1:20; 2:6).

Verse 4 Jesus Christ has always existed; he is *eternal. God chose us before our birth to be together with Christ. God made this choice before he made the world. This choice has nothing to do with the kind of person that we are. It does not depend on whether we are good or bad. Therefore, we cannot be proud. We cannot say that we have made the choice. We can only agree with what God has done. Christ *justifies us in front of God. Then we need to obey God. We must live holy lives as God intends.

Paul writes, 'He wants us to live holy lives.' The meaning of the *Greek word 'holy' is to be separate or different. Christians live in the world. But they must be different from the people round them. They will be different in their homes. And they will be different in the place where they work.

'He wants us to do nothing wrong.' The whole life of a Christian is like something that we are offering to God.

Verse 5 In the *Roman family, the father had great power. He could do as he wished to his sons. He could make them work without pay. He could sell them as slaves. He could hit them. He could even kill them. This power lasted all through the life of the son. It did not matter how old he was.

A father might decide to adopt a son. Then he would ask the court to give him legal authority to be the father of the child. The judge would pass all the power of the original father to this new father. All the rights of the old father then ended. The son became a new person. If he had any debts in the old family, the court ended them. It would be as if the debts had never existed.

That is what God has done for us. We were under the power of *sin and the *devil. God, by Jesus, removed us from that power. He put us into his new family. He took away the old debts (our *sins). It was as if they had never existed. We became part of his family and we became new people.

Verse 6 All this makes us *praise him for his wonderful *grace. This *grace is free. Moreover, he gave us this in the 'son that he loves' - Jesus. The *grace of God is everything that he has chosen to show us about himself.

1:7-12 ~ The Son gave his life for us

v7 Christ *saved us and made us free by his blood (death). God forgave our *sins. By this, God shows us his rich *grace. **v8** With it, he gave us wisdom and understanding. They pour over us like water from a great river. **v9** God decided to show us his secret plan that Christ would complete. He was pleased to do this. **v10** He will complete his plan when the time is right. Then he will bring together all things in heaven and earth, to Christ. Christ will be the head of them all.

v11 God also chose us because of Christ. God had already decided what his plan should be. He chose us to receive an *inheritance. That was his plan. He uses everything that happens in his plans and his purposes. **v12** So then we, the first people to have hope in Christ, would bring *praise and *glory to him.

Verses 7-8 In Paul's days, you might have been a slave. Sometimes a kind person would pay money to free you. The *Israelites had been slaves in Egypt, but God made them free. God made them his people (Exodus 15:13). A person could make a *sacrifice to God. God would then *forgive his *sin. *Sacrifice was the way by which God would *forgive you. It was the way that God could deal with *sin. 'If there is no *sacrifice of blood, God will not forgive our *sins' (Hebrews 9:22).

Christ himself became this *sacrifice. He gave his blood when he died on the *cross. This *forgiveness is because 'God shows us his rich *grace'. This *grace is greater than we can understand. It is beyond any riches of the earth (Hebrews 11:26).

God is so kind to us. He gave us 'wisdom and understanding. They pour over us like water from a great river.' His *blessings never dry up. Wisdom is the gift to be able to see things as they really are. But this wisdom is not just an idea in your head. Wisdom gives you knowledge. You are then able to use your knowledge to solve the problems of daily life.

Verses 9-10 God lets us know 'his secret plan that Christ would complete'. He makes it possible for us to understand this. But he did not show his plan before Jesus came.

God's plan was that Jesus Christ will be the head (or ruler) of the whole *universe (heaven and earth). God arranges the time of all things. He does this in perfect wisdom. God has fixed all the ages and seasons. He has decided when they will end. God is now working out his plan (that Christ will rule the whole *universe). His plan is working all the time. One day God will complete it. History is 'his story'.

Through the ages, God is bringing everything together under his rule. The meaning of the *Greek words is that God will add up everything. He will put it all under Christ as head.

It would be difficult for a person who is not a Christian to understand this. He would not make sense of history. Different events have taken place in different ages. They would not link with each other. Paul shows that God has a plan for the history of men and women. Once God hid this secret. Now he makes his plan plain. Christians today can now understand it. It is the job of Christians to tell the world about it.

Verses 11-12 From the beginning, God chose us to 'have hope in Christ', the *Messiah. He chose that we should be a part of his plan. God works out everything in agreement with his choice. Everything that he wants to do, he does. Everything will be as he said. This plan includes Paul and the *Jewish *believers ('we' verse 12). They were the first to hope in Christ, the *Messiah. They hoped in him before he came (see Acts 28:20). They looked forward to him as their *Saviour. The plan then includes 'you also' (the *Gentile Christians) who believe in him (verse 13).

1:13-14 ~ The mark of the *Holy Spirit

v13 You also later heard the word of truth, the good news about how Christ could *save you. Then you, too, became united with Christ. When you believed in him, he marked you with a special sign. The *Holy Spirit was the sign. **v14** The *Holy Spirit is the promise that God will give complete freedom to his people. We must praise God for his *glory.

Verse 13 The most important thing is to hear God's word. God's word is the word of truth. The word of truth is the *gospel. The *gospel is the good news about *salvation. The knowledge of *salvation comes by hearing about Jesus Christ (Romans 10:14). Hearing, however, must lead to *faith. God can *bless us only if we have *faith.

So, when you believe, God marks you with a special sign. This is for both *Jews and *Gentiles. It is for those who have heard and believed. In those days, a *seal was a person's own sign. It was a stamp or mark. It showed that he was the owner. He used it when he sent something important to another person. He would use this on a letter. It showed that everything was true and not false. It was a promise. You could be sure that no one had opened the letter and changed it.

The *Holy Spirit is the *seal for the Christian. The *Holy Spirit in him is a proof to himself of his *faith. It also shows other people how real his *faith is. The *Holy Spirit makes the Christian certain that he has *salvation. This *seal also keeps the Christian safe. No one can break the *seal. No one can break into his life. In the end, he will be safe with Jesus.

Verse 14 In those days, when you bought something, you paid some money. This was only a part of the whole price. You made a promise to the seller. You promised that later you would pay the rest of the price. The *Holy Spirit is God's *seal or promise. It is a promise to all those who believe in him. He promises that one day he will make them completely his own possession. They will belong completely to him. That includes both *Jews and *Gentiles. This will be completely to God's *glory.

1:15-23 ~ Paul's first prayer

v15 I heard about your *faith in the *Lord Jesus, and your love for all the *saints. Ever since that time, **v16** I have never stopped thanking God for you. And I remember you when I pray. **v17** God is the wonderful Father of our *Lord Jesus Christ. I am always asking that he will give you great wisdom and knowledge about himself. He will show himself to you, so that you can know him better. **v18** I pray too, that you will understand what he has promised to give you. You will know the hope to which he has called you. You will know the *glory of the rich *blessings that he has prepared for you. **v19** And you will know how very great his power is. This power works in those who believe in him. He used the same strong power **v20** after Christ had died. He used this power to make Jesus Christ come back to life again. He used his power to cause Christ to sit at his right side in heaven. **v21** God put Christ far above all people with authority, *lords and other rulers on earth and in heaven. Christ rules over them now and he will rule over them in the future. **v22** God put all things under the authority and power of Christ. God put him in the highest place as head over everything for the *church. **v23** The *church is the body of Christ. It is complete in him, who fills everything everywhere.

Verses 15-16 In the rest of this chapter, Paul prays for his readers. He asks God to give them real understanding. He wants them to understand how wonderful and exciting the good news is.

He speaks about their *faith and love. He tells his readers that their behaviour towards the *Lord is important. So too is their behaviour with each other. Paul says that he does not stop thanking God for them. He also remembers them all in his prayers.

Verse 17 Paul is always asking that God:

- will give them wisdom and
- that he will show himself to them so that they can know him better.

God the Father is a 'wonderful Father'. All *glory and all power and all greatness belong to him. God made the earth, the sky and everything. We see his greatness in all that he has made. We see his greatness in the way that he provides. He provides for everyone and everything on the earth. It all comes from God.

By God the Son we have wonderful freedom from *sin. We see his greatness in this. That should cause us to wonder. It should increase our *faith when we pray. God the *Holy Spirit helps us to understand all this. He helps us to know God better.

Verses 18-23 We cannot understand such knowledge by ourselves. It is far too great. God must help us to understand. To know God is more than to know facts about him. It is to know him as a person and to share our lives with him.

Paul prays that three things will happen:

- First, that they will know 'the hope to which he has called' them. God called us to himself at the very beginning. He called us to be united with Jesus Christ. He called us to be holy even as he is holy (4:1). This is the call that God brings to those without hope (2:12). The hope is about our future. We will then be with Christ for ever. We can think about a time after our present suffering. We can think about a wonderful future. God's promise to us is that we can have the *Holy Spirit inside us now (verse 14). The promise is also about what he is keeping for us in the future.
- Second, that they 'will know the *glory of the rich *blessings that he (God) has prepared' for them. God has given these rich *blessings to those who believe. Christians can expect to enjoy this *inheritance.

Peter describes the *inheritance that God has prepared for us. It never dies. It is not like rubbish. It never disappears. God is 'keeping it in heaven for you' (1 Peter 1:4). The children of God are the heirs of God. They are heirs together with Christ (Romans 8:17). Everything that belongs to a person will belong to his heirs one day. That is what 'heirs' means. One day our *inheritance will be complete. We shall be completely God's possession. We do not know what it will be like. We do know that we shall see Christ. And we shall *worship him. When he appears, we shall be like him. We shall be like him in our bodies. We shall be like him in his character. We shall be united with each other. It will be perfect. God wants us to know about this. He wants us to think about it. He wants us to know how wonderful it will be.

- Third, that 'you will know how very great his power is' (verse 19). Nothing compares with that power. It is far greater than any other power. We cannot measure it. By this power, God made everything in heaven and earth. This power is working 'in (or 'for' or 'towards') those who believe'.

Paul describes this great power by three events (verses 19-23):

- First, God made 'Jesus Christ come back to life again' (verse 20).
- Second, 'He used his power to cause Christ to sit at his right side in heaven.' This was far above 'all people with authority, *lords and other rulers on earth and in heaven'. It was above every title (or rank) that anyone can give. And 'Christ rules over them now and he will rule over them in the future' (verse 21).
- Third 'and God put all things under the authority and power of Christ. God put him in the highest place as head over everything for the *church' (verse 22). 'All things' include the world, the stars and all physical things. 'All things' also include all people, good *angels and bad *angels. God made Christ head over all things. He also made him head over everything for the *church. The *church is his body. So both the *church and everything that is have the same head. He completely fills everything in every way. He also fills the *church (verses 22-23).

There are two powers that men cannot control. One power is death and the other power is the devil. Jesus Christ won the battle over both. He did this by his death and *resurrection. He can rescue us from both death and the devil. God raised Jesus from death. He raised him to new life where there is no more death. This new life lasts for ever and ever. God caused Jesus to sit at God's right side in heaven. God made him king over every power that there is. Jesus rules in heaven as king. He rules over all people. He rules over all nations. He rules over all *spirits, both good and evil.

Verse 21 also includes every title (or rank) that anyone can give. In Genesis chapter 1, God told man to rule over all things. When Adam *sinned, people lost the power to rule. Christ now rules over everything. So he gives back to us the power to rule.

The *church is the body of Christ. The *church consists of his people (Christians). Jesus is the head of his *church. The job of the *church is to explain Jesus to the world. To do this, the *church needs to be full of his *Holy Spirit.

Chapter 2

2:1-10 ~ *Salvation by *grace

2:1-3 ~ Our past life

v1 In past days, you were *spiritually dead because of your *sins, and because you did not obey God. **v2** You used to copy the bad ways of the people in the world (non-Christians). You used to do the things that pleased the devil. He is the king who rules the *spiritual forces in the air. He is a *spirit. He now controls the people who do not obey God's rules. **v3** We all used to live like them, just to satisfy our own desires. We did what our physical body wanted. God was angry with us, as he was angry with them.

In this part, Paul shows what *sinful people are like. He then shows what we can become by the *grace of God. Jesus died, but God raised him to life. God then put him in a very high place in heaven. It is just like that for us. We were dead, but God raised us too. He placed us together with Jesus. We are close to Jesus. We are in heaven with him. This is true even whilst we live on earth.

Verses 1-3 All people are *sinners. Paul first makes this clear in verse 1. He says, 'you were *spiritually dead because of your *sins and because you did not obey God.' And then in verse 3, Paul uses the word 'we' (verse 3). 'We all used to live like them.' We are all *sinners.

Often you fail to be the person that wants you to be. That is *sin. Often you do not live as God wants you to live. That is *sin. You also *sin when you do something wrong. But sometimes you do not do something that you should do. That is *sin too.

The old way to live moves away from God. This old life, says Paul, is the way that 'we all used to live' (verse 3). Every thing that we did was against God. It moved away from God. It moved in the direction of evil things. Either we can walk with God or we can walk away from him. Paul speaks about this wrong way to live in three ways.

- First, it is when you 'used to copy the bad ways of the people in the world (non-Christians).' In the *Greek language, it means 'people who belong to the age of this world'. In the world, there are different systems. They could be political, social or money systems. The 'age of this world' might apply to any of these. It could refer to any system that does not have God in it. The people in these systems do not think about God. They do not discuss things with him.
- Second, 'the king who rules the *spiritual forces in the air'. This means *Satan, who is the head of all the evil *spirits. We cannot see them. However, they are there and they work in the world.
- Third, they belonged to the person who 'now controls the people who do not obey God's rules'. Paul tells us that, 'He is a *spirit.' Again this means *Satan.

We have this *sinful nature as the result of Adam's *sin. It means that I am at the centre of my life. Apart from God, I live with me at the centre. I think about myself. And I do what I want to do.

There is nothing wrong with physical desires. We have many of these. Some desires are for food, sleep or sex. God made our body to want these things. But they are wrong when we eat too much. They are wrong when we sleep too much. They are wrong when we have sex outside marriage.

Paul says that we all 'did what our physical body wanted. God was angry with us.' We all have Adam's *sinful nature. It comes to us by Adam's *sin. By his *sin, we share his *sinful nature. That is how we are children of Adam.

We need to understand the meaning of 'God was angry with us'. It does not mean that he is in a bad temper. Nor that he hates us and he wants to punish us. God's anger (or wrath) means that he is always an enemy of evil things. He hates evil things. He hates them very much. He never stops hating them. This is because he is God. He is a *righteous God. By his very nature, he cannot stop being angry against *sin.

2:4-6 ~ Our present life

v4 But God wants to forgive people. He loved us so much that **v5** he gave each of us a new life in Christ. He did this, although we were *spiritually dead. God's *grace has *saved you. **v6** God has raised us up with Christ to sit with him in the *heavenly places.

Verse 4 Paul has described the sad situation of men and women. He has spoken about the anger of God. But this is not the last word. Paul now writes some wonderful words. He speaks about God's goodness and *grace. God wants to forgive people. He pities those who do not deserve his *grace. Paul writes, 'He loved us so much'. God wants to be kind, even to bad people. God has acted. We were dead, but God made us alive with Christ. God has acted because of our *sin. He is rich in kindness. That kindness comes from his great love. His love reaches down from heaven to us on earth. 'While we were still *sinners, Christ died for us' (Romans 5:8).

Verse 5 We were objects of God's anger. We are now objects of his love. Think about what God has done to change our state. He has *saved us. 'God's *grace has *saved you.' By his death, Christ suffered for our *sin. Our *sin was like a wall between God and us. It separated us from him. Jesus' death removed that wall. By his *resurrection, he won the battle against death. God raised Christ from death. Because of that, he raised men and women from being dead in *sins. He won both in his body and in his *spirit. Now we have a new life with Christ and in Christ.

Verse 6 'God has raised us up with Christ'. Paul is not now writing about when God raised Christ. He is writing about us. God 'gave each of us a new life in Christ' (verse 5). God raised us with Christ. God caused us to sit with Christ 'in the *heavenly places'. Here we see three events in history.

- First, we see Jesus' *resurrection.
- Second, we see his return to heaven.
- Third, we see him sitting at the right side of God. He sits there as the King in heaven. Some Christians say this in the Creed (statement of Christian belief). It says, 'on the third day he rose again from death. Then he went up into heaven. Now he sits at the right side of God the Father.'

Here Paul writes about Christ's *church. All together, we are one body 'in Christ'. It does not matter what our nationality is. It does not matter whether we are men or women. It does not matter who we are. We are a part of Christ. Also, Christ is on the *throne (the seat of the king). So we are there too. We have a new life. We know that God is real. We have a new love for him and his people. We were dead and we are now alive. It was as if we were in chains. Christ has removed them. We are free. Now we sit with Jesus on the top seat!

2:7-10 ~ Our future life

v7 He did this to show for all time, his rich *grace to us. He expressed this *grace in the kindness that he showed to us in Christ Jesus. **v8** God has *saved you by his *grace by your *faith in Christ. You could not do this by yourselves, but God gave you this free gift. **v9** Not one of us can say that he *saved himself. The good things that we do cannot *save us. Only the gift of God can do this. So you cannot tell people how good you are! **v10** God made us in Christ Jesus. He had already prepared good things for us to do. He made us so that we could do them.

Verse 7 Paul now comes to the purpose of God's great power. He writes about the reason why God raised Jesus from death. And he writes about the reason why he raised us with him. 'He did this to show for all time, his rich *grace.' Nothing can compare with that. He showed this 'in the kindness that he showed to us in Christ Jesus'.

Verses 8-9 These verses again show God's *grace and kindness. We are in Christ Jesus. God has *saved us and he has shown his *grace towards us. He helps us to become free from our *sins. We are also free from God's anger. *Grace belongs to God. It is his gift. To have *faith means to trust in God. We can trust him to give us all that he has for us. We turn to God because we are weak and empty. We turn to God because we need him.

We must have *faith in God. However, *faith itself is not enough. God wants to give us everything. We receive *salvation by *faith. We are *justified by *faith. But *salvation is by God's *grace. *Faith itself does not give us any right to receive. Nor do good deeds give us this right. We would be proud if that were true. We might say, 'This all comes from me. It is the result of my great *faith.'

Everything, including *faith, is a gift from God. He wakes us up, *spiritually. He causes us to think and to ask about him. Only by God's power are we able to receive from him. We can live good lives and be good people. But that cannot *save us. However, if God *saves us, we will want to be good. That will be because we love God. And because we want to please him.

Verse 10 This verse ends this part of the letter. It ends it with two statements. 'God made us in Christ Jesus. He had already prepared good things for us to do.' He made us in a careful way. He made us in Christ Jesus to do good things. God prepared these good things for us to do. Paul has already described what *salvation is. Because of our *sins, we are like dead people. *Salvation is when God brings dead people to life. God frees us from our *sins. God has given us true life. (We cannot give ourselves life.) He has also prepared good things for us to do. We used to do wrong things. Now we do good things. God prepared these for us in the beginning. He prepared us to do these good things. God tells us what to do. We decide whether to follow him or not.

2:11-22 ~ *Jews and *Gentiles are united in Christ

2:11-12 ~ What the *Gentiles were without Christ

v11 Remember that you were *Gentiles, not *Jews, when you were born. *Jews call themselves '*circumcised' but you are 'not *circumcised'. (They are talking about the *circumcision that men's hands do.) **v12** So you did not belong to the people of *Israel, and you were separate from Christ. You did not receive the promises that God had made to *Israel's people. You did not belong to God and you had no hope in the world.

Verse 11 God chose *Israel to be a holy people. He intended them to be separate from the other nations. Many years before, he had made an agreement with Abraham. This separated the *Israelites for God. He made them his special people. This agreement did not depend on their goodness. It had nothing to do with how good, or strong or beautiful the people were. God chose them only because he wanted to. He did this in order that he could *bless all the other families on the earth. Then all the other families could come to know him as well. But the *Jewish leaders had different thoughts. They thought that their nation was better than the other nations. They thought that God loved only the people in *Israel. They thought that he would send the people in all the other nations to hell.

*Jews were '*circumcised'. *Gentiles were 'not *circumcised'. God gave the custom of *circumcision to Abraham. It became part of the *Jewish religion. He gave it as an outer sign of his choice of the *Israelites. People could see that they were his special people. Paul refers to this *circumcision as 'the *circumcision that men's hands do'. He seems to be saying that the physical sign is not important. What happens inside us is important. In that way, *Jews and *Gentiles are the same.

Verse 12 Paul says this about the *Gentiles at that time. They were separate from Christ. They were not a part of the people of *Israel. They were without God in the world. They were without hope. God wanted the *Gentiles to belong to him. He wanted them to share the promises that he had made to the *Jews. God had made these promises to *Israel's people. But he wanted them to be for everyone. He did not want the *Gentiles always to be separated from him.

But the *Gentiles did not know this because no one told them. So they 'did not belong to God' and they 'had no hope in the world'. God made himself known to the *Jews. He had planned and promised to include the *Gentiles one day. But the *Gentiles did not know it. Therefore, they had no hope. Paul tells us in the letter to the *Romans that God shows his power and his character in *creation. That is, in the things that people can see (see Romans 1:18-20). Other than that, there was only one way that the *Gentiles could see God. That was by other people. This was our situation before we knew Jesus as our *Saviour and *Lord. We should always remember this and we should be grateful.

2:13-18 ~ The one body

v13 Before, you were far away, but now the blood of Christ has brought you near to God.

v14 Christ himself is our *peace. He has destroyed the hate which was like a wall between *Jews and *Gentiles. So he has made us united. **v15** When he took this wall away, the *Jewish rules became of no use. Christ wanted to make the *Jews and *Gentiles into one people. He wanted to unite them with himself. He wanted them to have *peace with each other. **v16** This one body of people would become a friend of God by the death of Christ on the *cross. So men and women from different nations should not hate each other. **v17** Christ came and told you people who were far away to be at peace. He told the same thing to those people who were near to him. **v18** Because of Christ we all have the same Spirit and we can come near to the Father.

Verse 13 Those who were once 'far away' were the *Gentiles. Sometimes a *Gentile might want to become a *Jew. Then the teacher would say that he would 'come near'. There is good news for the *Gentiles. They can now be in Christ Jesus. God has brought them to him by the blood of Christ. It was like a closed door. Now it is like an open door. *Gentiles were 'far away' from God. Now God has brought them 'near'. The door is open to everyone. We are now 'in Christ'. We can now come near to God our Father.

Verse 14 Not only does Jesus bring us *peace. Now he 'is our *peace'. Jesus Christ is the Prince of *Peace (Isaiah 9:6). Now God brings men and women together. They find peace with God. They find peace with each other. They leave behind their differences. 'He has destroyed the hate which was like a wall between *Jews and *Gentiles.' So he has made them 'united'. There is now no division between the *Jews and the *Gentiles.

In the *Temple, where the *Jews *worshipped God, there were different courts (sections).

These were:

- a) the Court of the *Gentiles;
- b) the Court of the Women;
- c) the Court of the *Israelites;
- d) the Court of the Priests;
- e) the Most Holy Place.

Between the Court of the *Gentiles and the rest of the *Temple there was a wall. The *Jews did not allow the *Gentiles to pass this wall. There were warning signs on the wall. The message to the *Gentiles was this. 'If you go past this sign, you will die!'

A few years ago, someone found one of these signs. It reads, 'Let nobody from any other nation come inside the fence and boundary round the Most Holy Place'. It warned also that such a person would be responsible for his own death. This boundary, therefore, was like a fence to a *Gentile. *Jews thought that God was present in the Most Holy Place. So this fence kept the *Gentiles away from the place where God lived. The 'wall between' in the *Temple separated *Jews and *Gentiles. This made them enemies. God 'destroyed' this wall.

We know from history that the *Romans broke down the wall in the *Temple. But that was in *AD 70. It was when their army entered Jerusalem. The soldiers destroyed the *Temple. However, the wall was still there in the *Temple when Paul wrote his letter. No one had destroyed it yet. But in a *spiritual sense the wall was already destroyed. That happened about *AD 30 when Jesus died on the *cross.

Verses 15-16 These verses tell us how Jesus did this. He did it in three ways:

- a) First, for Christians, he ended the authority of the laws and customs of the *Jewish religion. These were about *circumcision, food and drink. They were also about holy days and seasons and many other things. These laws became of no use as a way to please God.

Jesus said that he did not come to end the law. (See Matthew chapters 5-7.) He ended the laws and customs of the *Jewish religion. But he did not end the moral law. That is about right and wrong actions. Jesus came to show us how to live as God intended. He did this by the example of his own life. Paul explains it in another way. He says, 'the law is like a master at school. His job is to bring us to Christ' (Galatians 3:24). Jesus died on the *cross. By his death, he ended these customs.

Jesus brought a new way for *salvation – *faith in him. He made the law complete. He brought new meaning to it. But we no longer have to keep the moral law as a way of *salvation. We cannot *save ourselves by our good actions. We cannot always do right things, however hard we try. We ought always to obey the moral law. That is what God requires from us. But it is impossible for us to do this. Not to obey the moral law separates us from God. It also separates us from each other. When we do not obey God, the result is death. However, the good news is this: When we confess our *sins, God will *forgive us our *sins. He will make us clean us from all that is wrong in us (1 John 1:9).

God accepts us not because we keep the moral law. He accepts us because we believe in Jesus Christ. Jesus obeyed the moral law completely in his life. He took our failure to keep that law upon him. He took all our *sin in his own body when he died. His death made it possible for God to accept us. Now both *Jews and *Gentiles come to God in the same way. They come not by keeping laws. They come by *faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus put away the regulations that were about ceremonies of the law. The moral law tells us that we are wrong and guilty. He put away that guilt too. Jesus put both things aside by his death on the *cross.

b) Second, he 'wanted to make the *Jews and *Gentiles into one people'. The *Jewish laws made *Jews and *Gentiles enemies. In his body, Jesus made them friends. Jesus has formed a new body, the *church. It consists of both *Jews and *Gentiles. He made the two into one. That made peace possible between them. All kinds of people are now in one body. There are *Jews and *Gentiles. There are men and women. There are rich and poor. There are people in prison and free people. All are equal in front of God. There is a new unity in Christ.

Third, God 'wanted to unite them with himself. He wanted them to have peace with each other'. Jesus did this by the *cross. *Jews and *Gentiles are no longer enemies. Jesus has ended that. Neither are they enemies of God. Jesus has ended that too. The result of being an enemy of God is death. Now both *Jews and *Gentiles are together friends of God.

Verse 17 'Christ came and told you people who were far away to be at *peace. He told the same thing to those people who were near to him.' The *prophet Isaiah spoke about this. He said 'peace, peace, to those far and near' (Isaiah 57:19). God has brought peace to those who were 'far away'. Those were the *Gentiles. Before, they 'did not belong to God' and they 'had no hope in the world' (verse 12). God has also brought peace to 'those people who were near'. Those were the *Jews. They were those who had 'the promises that God had made to *Israel's people' (verse 12).

God gave these promises to Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3). This was the promise to the *Jews about the *Messiah. The same promise came to *Israel as a nation. This was when Moses was their leader (Exodus 24:1-11). The promises brought *Israel's people into a special relationship with God. It was a relationship of *grace. So they had hope for a future rescue and future *glory. But up to this time, the *Gentiles had not been included in these promises. They were a people without hope.

God chose *Israel out of all the nations to be his special people (Deuteronomy 7:6). God did not choose them because they were better than other nations. God's purpose was that they should bring his *blessing to all the people in the world. But they forgot why God had chosen them. Later, other people would belong to God. God would *bless them all. These are his children. The promises were for the *Jews. But now the promises are also for the *Gentiles. Both now have *peace with God. And they have peace with each other.

Verse 18 'Because of Christ we all have the same Spirit and we can come near to the Father.' Paul uses a word that means to have the right to come near to an important person. That person might be a king. You have a friend. Suppose he is also the friend of the king. He could take you to see the king. He could do this because he is your friend. He is the king's friend too. This is what happens for us. Jesus is the friend of the King, his Father.

He is also the door, the way in (John 10:9). He gives us the right to come to the Father. Both *Jews and *Gentiles come by 'the same Spirit'. The same *Holy Spirit is working in both *Jews and *Gentiles.

2:19-22 ~ The one building

v19 So now you are not strangers and foreigners to God's people. You are God's people, as all Christians are. And you are part of his family. **v20** This family is like a building. The *apostles and *prophets are like the important stones at the base of the building. You are like the other stones. You depend on them. Christ Jesus is the most important stone in the building. **v21** He holds the whole building together so that it becomes a *holy *temple for the *Lord. **v22** God is building you together in Christ into a house where God lives by his Spirit.

Verses 19-22 Before, the *Gentiles in *Israel were 'strangers and foreigners'. They might live with the people of *Israel. But they did not own land. They had no rights. But it is not like this in the *church. *Gentiles have the same rights as other people in the *church. They are all citizens together. They are citizens of King Jesus. They are in the *kingdom of God. They are also in the family of God. They are all together his children. God is their Father.

All are part of the *church. And the *church is like a *temple or a building. God built it on the base of the *apostles and *prophets. Jesus Christ himself is the chief corner stone. Paul first speaks about the base of the building. God builds his *Temple on this. It is the '*apostles and *prophets'. Jesus Christ himself is the most important stone. All the other stones fit into him. All the stones will then be straight and level. All the other stones depend on this important stone. It is the most important stone. This stone holds the building together.

God gave his word to the *prophets in the *Old Testament. When they received it, they spoke it. What they said happened. The *apostles are the first 12 whom Jesus appointed (except for Judas). They also include other people such as Paul himself, Barnabas and Silas. God is building the *Temple on this firm base. In Jesus, the building grows.

Verse 22 says, 'God is building you together with Christ into a house where God lives by his Spirit.' The people whom God builds together are *Jews and *Gentiles. Jesus Christ is the most important stone. He holds together both groups of stones. In him, they grow together. They can grow because they are like living stones (1 Peter 2:5). They come to Christ. Then God builds them together. They will be like a house where God himself will live.

The *Jews believed that God lived in the centre of the *Temple. But God is so great that we cannot contain him in a building. The whole *universe, the sun and all the stars in space cannot contain him. The central part of the *Temple was the Most Holy Place. In it there was a clear, bright light. It showed that God was near.

God did not make the new building out of stones. All the people together are the family of God. This is the *church. It is present in every age. It is all over the world. The *church is the home of God. Christ's *church is living and growing.

Chapter 3

3:1-13 ~ God has made his secret known

3:1-6 ~ God made his secret known to Paul

v1 For this reason, I, Paul the prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you *Gentiles –

v2 you must have heard about the responsibilities that God has given me for you *Gentiles. I am a *steward of his *grace towards you. **v3** As I have already written briefly, he made his special secret clear to me. **v4** And as you read this, you will understand how he did this. And you will understand why he did this. **v5** Men who lived in earlier days did not understand the secret of Christ. But now the Spirit has shown it to God's *holy *apostles and *prophets. **v6** This secret is that God wants *Gentiles and *Israelites to unite together in the same group. He wants *Gentiles to have a share in all his promises. He gives these promises by Christ Jesus. He wants the *Gentiles to share these with his people, *Israel.

Verse 1 'For this reason, I, Paul the prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you *Gentiles –'. Paul does not finish this sentence in verse 1 but see verse 14. In verse 14, he repeats 'For this reason'. The *Roman ruler, Nero, had put Paul in prison. They had put chains on him. Paul wrote this letter from prison. But now he has new understanding. He knows King Jesus as his *Lord. Now he thinks about himself as a prisoner of Jesus Christ. He does not think about himself as a prisoner of Nero, the *Roman ruler. He thinks about his whole life in a different way. Both good and bad events happen in his life. But Jesus controls his life. He is sure about that.

So Paul is in prison. He gives his *Gentile readers a reason for this. He is there because of them. Moreover, it is for their benefit. Now he is able to tell them the good news. This is the *gospel about Jesus Christ. Paul has been teaching about the *Gentiles. He has taught that they too are God's chosen people (chapter 2). Both share in the promises. God gave these to Abraham. Paul has been teaching that the *Gentiles and the *Jews are members of the same group. By the *gospel, they have the same promise in the *Messiah Jesus. The *Jewish leaders believed that God had chosen *Israel alone to be his people. So the *Jewish leaders objected to what Paul taught. It was dangerous to their religion. Yes, the *Roman ruler had put Paul in prison. But what really put Paul there was what he taught.

Verse 2 God has given his *grace to Paul. By his *grace, God sent Paul to the *Gentiles. By his *grace, God gave Paul the honour to be their *apostle. Paul knows that he is responsible to use this special *blessing. He must use it in a responsible way. He must be a good *steward. God gave Paul special understanding about his plans for the *Gentiles. God also gave Paul the *grace to tell them about God's plans. What God made known to him, Paul must make known to other people.

Verse 3 In this chapter, Paul uses the word 'secret' 4 times (verses 3, 5, 6 and 9). In many religions, only those who belong can understand. They hide it from other people. For the Christian, these 'secrets' are truths. They are truths that God makes known to us. However, these truths are not just for a few chosen people. They are for everybody. A 'secret' or *mystery is something that once God hid. Now he wants us to know about it.

Verses 4-6 The 'secret' is the good news that Christ has joined *Jews and *Gentiles together. He wants them to become one people. Jesus offers them life and *salvation. Both groups share that promise.

3:7-13 ~ God chose Paul to *preach this secret

v7 God gave me his *grace. And he made me his servant to tell people his good news. His power worked in me to do this. **v8** I am less important than any of God's people. But God gave me the *grace to teach the *Gentiles about his rich gifts. He gives us these gifts in Christ. His riches are very great. We shall never know how great they are. **v9** God wants me to show everyone how to understand this secret. God, who created everything, hid his plan from his people. He hid it through all the past years. **v10** He would show his immense wisdom to the rulers and authorities in the heavens. He would do this by the *church. **v11** This was the plan that God had in the beginning. It is the plan that he will complete in Christ Jesus, our *Lord. **v12** If we believe and trust in Christ, we can approach God. Christ gives us courage and confidence so that we can come close to him. **v13** So you must not lose courage because I am suffering for you. My suffering causes *glory for you.

Verse 7 God gave Paul the power to tell people the good news. Paul knew that he was not strong enough. He knew that he could not do the work without God's help.

Verse 8 Paul says that he is 'less important than any of God's people'. In Latin (the language of the *Romans), Paulus (his name) means little or small. Paul thinks about himself like this because he feels so weak. He can do nothing without God's help. He also remembers that he was once an enemy of God. He used to put Christians in prison. God has been so kind to him. God has *forgiven him. So now he thanks God.

God has given Paul a gift. It is the power to 'teach the *Gentiles about his (God's) rich gifts'. God's riches are difficult to discover. No one can measure them. They are like wealth at the bottom of the sea. It is so deep that you cannot bring it to the shore. This wealth is the greatness of God. It is the riches of his wisdom, knowledge, beauty and power.

This wealth is not money and possessions. We can receive *spiritual riches now in our life upon the earth. The death of Jesus has made this possible. But there is even more wealth. We will share the life of Christ in heaven. This wealth is greater than anything that we can think of. Moreover, it is for ever.

Verse 9 Paul wants to 'show everyone how to understand this secret'. The *Greek word 'to show' is something like the English word 'photo'. It means to bring light to something. The message is for both *Jews and *Gentiles.

Verse 10 God wants to make known his 'immense wisdom'. He has many different kinds of wisdom, which he wants men and women to learn. There are *spiritual authorities and rulers who are surrounding us. They are the good *angels and bad *angels that we cannot see. God wants them to know about it too. He makes this wisdom known 'by the *church'. There is no other way that everybody can know it.

God has given Paul the special task to be the *apostle to the *Gentiles. God has made known the secret of his plan to Paul himself. He has also made it known to the other *apostles and *prophets (verse 5). We have seen the complete plan of God. First, he shows his plan to Paul. Then he sends Paul (and other people) to *preach the *gospel in the entire world. This is by the spoken message. It is the task of the growing *church. There are *angels in the air round us. We cannot see them. They watch the *church as it grows. So they see the immense wisdom of God too.

Verse 11 'This was the plan that God had in the beginning.' It is all 'in Christ Jesus our *Lord'. God is working out his plan in history. The whole world is included.

Verse 12 Paul has been speaking about the great plan of God in history. But in this verse, Paul explains what this means to Christians now. Christians have received the gift of *salvation from God. We have received it by *faith. We can now come straight to God. We can come without fear. We can come at any time. It is like a little child who runs to his father. That is how it is with us. Praise God!

Verse 13 Paul is suffering and he is in prison. Paul knows that there is a reason for this. It will benefit his Christian friends. He warns them not to be sad or afraid. The situation is becoming more and more to the *glory of God. Paul is certain about this. There is no better way for God to achieve his purpose.

3:14-21 ~ Paul's second prayer

v14 For this reason, I kneel and I pray to the Father of our *Lord Jesus Christ. **v15** Each member of his whole family in heaven and on earth has his name. **v16** I pray that he will make you strong with power from the riches of his *glory. He will do this in you (in your inner person) by his *Holy Spirit. **v17** When you have *faith in Christ, he will live in you. Then your lives will be like plants with roots in the ground of his love. **v18** And I pray that you and all the *saints will know more of the love of Christ. You will be able to understand that his love is immense. It is so very wide and long and high and deep. **v19** His love is much too great to know completely. But I pray that the Father of our *Lord Jesus Christ will fill you until you are full. I pray that he will fill you with the whole nature of God.

v20 Let us give *glory to God. He can do so much more than we can ever ask or think. His power is very great and it is working in us. **v21** Let the whole *church in Christ Jesus give him *glory. Let all the *church, now and for all the years to come, give him *glory. *Amen!

Verse 14 'For this reason, I kneel and I pray to the Father of our *Lord Jesus Christ.' It was the custom of *Jews to stand when they prayed (see Matthew 6:5; Luke 18:11, 13). However, sometimes they would kneel. This would show a great desire to pray. Ezra prayed like this (Ezra 9:5). Jesus prayed like this. He fell to the ground in the garden. This was just before he died on the *cross (Matthew 26:39). Stephen prayed like this just before he died (Acts 7:60).

Verse 15 'Each member of his whole family in heaven and on earth has his name.' Our Father in heaven is completely wise. He is completely loving. He is completely powerful. He provides everything that we need. He looks after us. He corrects us when we go wrong. A human father does all that he can for his children. Our Father in heaven is much greater. His ways with us are perfect and complete.

Verse 16 Our strength comes 'from the riches of his *glory'. We can describe God's *glory in many ways. It is his greatness. We see it in the powerful way that he made everything. He made it all out of nothing. His *glory is great and powerful. We see his *glory in Exodus chapter 19. Moses climbed Sinai Mountain to meet with God. There was thunder, lightning and a thick cloud over the mountain. Thunder is the loud noise that we hear during a storm. The noise was very great. It caused everyone in the camp to tremble with fear. Paul prays that God will make us strong by the 'riches of his *glory'.

'He will do this in you by his *Holy Spirit.' God will give us *spiritual strength with power from his *Holy Spirit. It will be in our 'inner person'. The inner person is the place where we experience our feelings. We can be happy. We can be sad. We can be angry. We can hate people. The inner person is the place where we think about things. It is where we make decisions. It is the centre of a person. It is where the *Holy Spirit lives. The *Holy Spirit works from this centre of our person. He works from there to change us. He changes us from one experience of *glory to another (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Verse 17 When we have *faith in Christ, he lives in our 'inner person'. There he gives us his love. 'Your lives will be like plants with roots in the ground of his love'. It is as if we have deep roots. It is like the roots of a strong tree. They go down deep into the soil. Christ's love is like the soil that the roots grow into. His love gives strong life to the roots. He holds us firmly. In Christ, we are safe and we can grow. It is also like the firm rock under a building. With hard rock underneath it, the building cannot fall down.

Verse 18 The love of God is wide. It is for everyone in the world. Paul is talking especially about *Jews and *Gentiles. So it is for them. It is long enough for all time and every age. It is high enough to bring *praise to God in heaven. It is deep enough to reach down to the worst *sinner. The root is love in the inner person. It is not love in the head and the mind. It does not mean knowledge in the mind. Also, a person does not receive this love only for himself. He receives it together with 'all the *saints'. We share this wonderful love with each other.

Verse 19 This love of Christ is 'much too great to know completely'. Our minds are not large enough to understand it all. It is beyond our best prayers, desires, thoughts or hopes. This love is more than to know something in our heads. We need to express Christ's love in all the daily experiences in life. His love is with us in our joys, difficulties and suffering too.

Here we have the most important part of Paul's prayer. He prays that the Father 'will fill you until you are full' - 'with the whole nature of God'. But God is completely powerful and he lives for ever. It is not possible to contain him inside any human person. In verse 19, Paul is asking that we receive all that we can of God. It is so that God can enter into us.

Also, we must go on and on receiving him. Christ now sits at the right side of God. Only at the end, in heaven, shall we be like him. We shall then be perfect and complete in his love.

Verse 20 Paul now starts a *hymn of *praise to God. God knows what we ask. And he knows it even before we ask. He knows our thoughts. He knows what we imagine. He knows what we dream. He has the power to go beyond any of these. His thoughts and his ways are greater than ours. He is able to do much more than we can ever ask or imagine. The power comes from Christ. He lives in our inner person by *faith. Paul writes about the same power that raised Jesus from death. The same power put Jesus at the right side of God. And it puts us there with him.

Verse 21 Everything that there is will give God *glory. It will be for ever and ever through all the ages. This is his great master plan of *salvation. He gave it to us by Jesus Christ. Christ's love and power are in the Christian and in the *church. The *church will work out God's purposes in the world. They will have the strength of God's *Holy Spirit to do this.

Part 2: The behaviour of the *believer in the world (chapters 4-6)

Chapter 4

What Paul taught in chapters 1-3 was first about God and his Son Jesus Christ. Then it was about the *church and our *salvation.

What Paul teaches in chapters 4-6 is about how to live as Christians. We see practical ways in which God's *glory enters the *church. Then Paul shows how the *church will express God's *glory to the world.

4:1-16 ~ To live a life that has value

4:1-6 ~ Try hard to stay together

v1 I am in prison because I serve the *Lord. So I am asking you to live good lives. God has called you, so your lives must give him honour. **v2** You should be completely humble, gentle and patient. And you should show love to people who do not agree with you. **v3** The Spirit, who gives peace, binds you together. And you must try hard to stay together. **v4** God called you to one hope. In the same way, there is one body and one Spirit. **v5** There is one *Lord, one *faith, one *baptism. **v6** There is one God and Father of all. He is over all. He works by all and he lives in you all.

Verse 1 Christ has chosen us to sit with him in the *heavenly places (2:6). The name of Jesus is a statement about who he is. His name means 'the *Lord *saves'. He is great and powerful. We are united with Jesus. We are with him at his side. We represent his name in our daily lives. In Ephesians 1:18, Paul speaks about the hope that we have in Christ. He now urges his readers to live as Christ taught us.

Verse 2 Paul now lists 4 qualities. The first is that we need to be 'humble'. All people are of equal value to God. So no one Christian is more important than any other Christian is. To be humble means to recognise this. We should not be proud. We should not think that we are more important than other people. The *Greeks understood this differently from the *Jews. The *Greeks did not think that people should be humble. They did not want to be humble. To be humble was to be weak. They used a plant to describe it. This plant kept close to the ground and it always seemed to be trying to hide itself. The *Greeks did not like that. They did not think that to be humble was a good quality. Neither do many people today.

Paul, however, gives a new meaning to the word 'humble'. A Christian should not have too great an opinion about himself. But he will want to know himself as he really is. He will look at the life of Christ. He will compare his life with his *Lord's life. He will see then how weak and selfish he is. He will see the great difference. Then he will have a true opinion about himself. Because he thinks like this, he will respect other people. He will be kind towards them. Jesus was humble when he became a man (Philippians 2:6-7). Also, Paul says that it is not just 'be humble' but 'be completely humble'. A Christian should be humble in every way.

However, a Christian can think well about himself and he should do so. But this is only when he understands the truth about himself. Yes, he has become the kind of person that God wants. But it is only by the *grace that God has given him. This means that God does not want you always to think that you are a bad person. He wants you to think about yourself for less time.

The second quality is to be 'gentle'. This means to be under control. It is like a horse. He is strong but in perfect control. It is like a strong man who is able control himself. He uses his strength for good purposes. He is gentle with other people. He will be kind to them. It is like Jesus. He said about himself, 'my attitude is gentle and humble'. A gentle person will not worry if someone hurts him. And he will not worry if someone does something wrong to him.

The third quality is to be 'patient' (or longsuffering). It means not to give up when things are against you. Suppose someone acts wrongly towards you. You must not do the same to them. This is what God is like (Romans 2:4). He does not act badly against us when we act badly against him.

The fourth quality is to be tolerant. This is to practise patience in daily life. It is to 'show love to people who do not agree with you'. It is to be patient with the faults of another person. You continue to love a person when he does the wrong things. That means things that you do not like. Paul wants his friends to have these qualities only in love. Paul has already prayed for his friends (3:17). He prayed that they would 'be like plants with roots in the ground of his love' (3:17). Now he prays that Christians will have all these qualities in love.

Verse 3 Some people describe verses 4-6 as part of an early Christian *hymn. Paul uses the word 'one' 7 times. By Christ, we have unity. We should be united in the Spirit of God. This does not happen to us by our own efforts. However, we must work hard to keep it. We do this as we live in peace. The peace is the peace that Christ has given to us. We also live in peace with each other.

Verse 4 The *church is a like a body. It is a body of people - men, women and children. God has joined everyone together. Each person belongs to the other people. It is a group of people who work together for God. So people can see the *church. It is like the different parts of our physical bodies. Our bodies have many different parts. These parts all belong to each other. All the parts work together.

There is also 'one Spirit'. He is the *Holy Spirit. There is only one body because there is only one Spirit. The *church consists of *Jewish and *Gentile *believers. Its unity comes from the one *Holy Spirit.

The *Holy Spirit is in the *church and he gives it life. He joins the people together. This makes unity in the *church. The *church is not a club or society. It is a body. It is alive and it is always growing. It grows by the power of the *Holy Spirit inside it.

There is 'one hope'. This hope is that one day we shall all be like Jesus. We will live close to him for ever.

Verse 5 Next comes, 'one *Lord, one *faith, one *baptism'. There is 'one *Lord', Jesus Christ. He is the *Lord of the *church. He is the same *Lord for all people. It does not matter who they are. They can be *Jews or *Gentiles. They can be black or white people. They can be rich or poor, great or small. Jesus Christ joins them all together and he keeps them together with him.

There is 'one *faith'. All who love God share the same truths. These are truths about Jesus and his plan for our *salvation. *Faith in Jesus Christ means that we trust him for all of our life. All Christians share together in this.

There is 'one *baptism'. We are not sure what Paul is referring to here. There is a *baptism in water. There is a *baptism into Christ (Galatians 3:27). There is a *baptism into one body (1 Corinthians 12:13).

Verse 6 'There is one God and Father of all. He is over all. He works by all and he lives in you all.' In this one sentence, Paul speaks about the greatness and wonder of God. We live in a world where God is at the head of everything. This is what Christians believe. God is in control of everything. God keeps everything going and he holds everything together (Colossians 1:17). God is in all Christians. He knows about everything that happens. This same God is in us. He is working out his plan by us.

In verses 4-6, we see the Three in One God. We have the *Holy Spirit (verse 4), the *Lord Jesus (verse 5) and God the Father (verse 6).

4:7-12 ~ The gifts of Christ

v7 Christ has given a share of his *grace to each of us. **v8** This is why scripture (the *Old Testament) says, 'When Christ went up to the highest place, he took prisoners with him. And he gave gifts to men.'

v9 (When it says 'He went up', it must mean that he also descended into the lower parts of the earth. **v10** The person who went down is also the person who went up higher than all things. He fills everything that exists.) **v11** It was he who gave gifts to his *church. He gave some *apostles and some *prophets. He gave some people the gift to tell out the good news about Christ. He gave some *pastors and teachers. **v12** This is how he prepares God's people to do his work. He builds them up into one body in Christ.

Verse 7

God tells us to keep this unity in the Spirit ('stay together' verse 3). But it does not mean that we are all alike. It does not mean that we all have the same gifts. God gives many different kinds of gifts to the members of Christ's body. No one has all the gifts but each member has some gift. All gifts come from God, so we cannot be proud of our gifts. We did not give ourselves the gifts. They come by God's *grace.

There are two ways that we can use the word '*grace'. First, it is God's *grace that *saves *sinners (2:5, 8). That is '*grace that *saves'. God gives this to everyone who believes in him. Second, there is God's *grace in the special gifts that he gives to us. These help us to serve him. Here in verse 7, Paul says, 'Christ has given a share of his *grace to each of us.' He gives *grace in the way that he wants to distribute it. Christ gives us what he chooses to give us. He gives from the rich wealth of his gifts.

Verse 8 'When Christ went up to the highest place, he took prisoners with him. And he gave gifts to men.'

Paul now refers to a verse from the Psalms (Psalm 68:18). He starts his sentence with the words; 'This is why scripture (the *Old Testament) says'. He is explaining what this verse means. It says, 'When Christ went up to the highest place, he took prisoners with him. And he gave gifts to men.' This speaks about the *Lord who has just won a war. He returns either to the *Temple or to heaven. This is what happened in *Old Testament days. The person who won the war would take valuable things from his prisoners. He would return home with his enemies as prisoners. He would then give the valuable things to his own people. After winning the war, he takes the prizes of war (gifts). He can now give them to his own people. But Paul says that this *Old Testament verse is about Christ. He has won the war against *Satan. Then he returns to be in the most high place with his Father. In that place, he is able to give good things to his people. Of course, the gifts that Christ gives to us come from God. They do not come from the enemy.

As he returns to the Father, Christ brings with him his enemies. These are the evil *spiritual forces of *spiritual rulers. He has defeated them. He has taken their *weapons. Now they have no power over us.

He also gives gifts to his own people. This is what Acts 2:33 means. It says that Jesus has 'gone up to the right side of God'. 'He has received from the Father the Spirit that the Father promised.' 'He has poured out what you now see and hear' (the gift of the *Holy Spirit).

Verses 9-10 We understand 'went up' to mean his return to be in heaven with the Father. 'He descended into the lower parts of the earth'. This is more difficult to understand. One possible meaning is this. He returned to the Father. Then he sent down his *Holy Spirit to the world below. It could be what Peter says in 1 Peter 3:19. He writes, 'He went and gave a message to the *spirits in prison' (see also 1 Peter 4:6). When Jesus died, God made his *spirit alive. Then he went to *preach to the *spirits of those who had already died (who were in prison). Another possible meaning is this. First, he came to earth from heaven as a baby. Then later he died on the *cross. There he suffered the worst pain possible (Philippians 2:5-11).

There may be doubt about the exact meaning of these words. But we can be certain about one thing: He did everything in order to fill the whole *universe. Jesus was here as a man on the earth. His body could be in only one place at one time. After the *resurrection, he is everywhere in the world by his Spirit. Everywhere Jesus is King. He is King in the heavens, on the earth or under the earth. Everything and everyone will be under his authority. And his *glory will fill the heavens and the earth (see Philippians 2:1-11).

Verses 11-12 In the original *Greek, it says that Jesus has given certain people to the *church as a gift. These people have different gifts. But together they are God's gift to the *church. Here Paul describes the gifts that God has given to these people. He gives them the gifts to help other members of the *church. They then use their gifts and do their jobs in the *church. The result of this is that God can build up the *church. Now it can grow.

The first of these people are '*apostles'. These include the first 12 *disciples. They would include Matthias who replaced Judas. They include people such as Paul himself, Barnabas and Silas. The *Lord sent the *apostles out into the world. Everyone could see how God was using the *apostles. They worked by the power of the *Holy Spirit. People saw the wonderful events that took place. The results were powerful actions (2 Corinthians 12:12). The *apostles also taught the facts about Jesus. They taught about his life, death and *resurrection.

Together with the *apostles in the work of building the *church were the '*prophets' (2:20 and 3:5). Their work was like that of the *Old Testament *prophets. It was to speak the word of God. This might mean to make the *sins of the people clear. Also it might mean to bring words of hope to the *church. This would give the people new strength. Judas and Silas did this in Acts 15:32. They encouraged the brothers with many words. They helped them to be strong in their *faith. This was like putting solid rock beneath the *church. Both the *apostles and the *prophets did this.

Next, come people with 'the gift to tell out the good news about Christ'. We sometimes call a person who tells people the good news about Jesus an evangelist. Acts 21:8 describes Philip as an evangelist. In 2 Timothy 4:5, Paul tells Timothy to 'do the work of an evangelist'. All Christians should be telling the *gospel (good news) to other people. But God has given some people a special gift to do that. Evangelists have the gift to teach the message of the *gospel. They do it in a way that people can understand. Then people can receive the offer of *salvation from Jesus.

Then there are '*pastors' (that is *shepherds) and 'teachers'. Paul does not separate these two gifts. They are together responsible to look after the *church. They teach the Bible to the members. The *shepherds and teachers have a duty. It is to feed the members of the *church with the 'food' of God's Spirit. This 'food' is the word of God, the Bible. The *shepherds and teachers help people to understand the word of God. People will then remember it. The *pastors and teachers help people to obey God's word. Then they will use God's word in their daily lives. The *shepherds and teachers also guard the people. They keep them safe from attack. This might be from any enemy of the *gospel (1 Peter 5:2). Such an enemy might teach wrong things or cause trouble in the church.

The *church is the body of Christ. In the body, it is not necessary for any one member to have all the gifts. These gifts should be for all the members. God's gift was for some people to be *apostles and for some people to be *prophets. Also, it was for some people to tell the good news about Jesus. And it was for some people to be *pastors and teachers. The purpose is to prepare 'God's people to do his work'. This is so that Christ can build up the *church, his body. The leaders' work is to give the members the equipment that they need. Then the members can do their different jobs in the *church. Think about the reason for this. It is because God was 'building them up into one body in Christ'.

The *apostles, *prophets, *pastors and other people that Paul mentioned earlier have their different gifts. They use these gifts to help all the members of the church to be Jesus' servants. They can then do the work of Christ. They can tell people outside the *church about Jesus. Jesus Christ is the head. He gives gifts to each member. God then builds up his *church. And it grows as all the members use their gifts.

4:13-16 ~ *Faith and knowledge

v13 So we shall all become one body. We shall have the same *faith and knowledge of the Son of God. We shall all become mature and we shall grow *spiritually into complete adults like Christ himself.

v14 We shall not be like small children any longer. We shall not be like boats that the wind blows about. Some things that people teach are like winds. They change our thoughts. They can turn us away from the word of Christ. This is how false teachers tempt us to go away from the truth. **v15** We must speak the truth with love. Then we shall grow up into Christ, who is the head of the body. **v16** He controls all the different parts of the body. He joins them strongly together. Then the body grows in love as each part does its work.

Verse 13 To have the same *faith is not just to believe the teachers of that *faith. It is unity in knowing the Son of God. We cannot know people only with our minds. We must know them as they really are. It is like husbands and wives. They live their lives in each other's company. In this way, they get to know each other. The person that we should really know is Jesus Christ the Son of God.

We need to grow and to become mature, that is to become completely developed in our *faith. We need to be like adults and not like children in our *faith (1 Corinthians 13:11). 'Mature' here means to be complete or ripe (like fruit that is ready to eat). It is what God wants for us.

We, all together, must 'grow *spiritually into complete adults like Christ himself'. In every way, he is the complete and grown up person. He is our model. Jesus himself has the whole nature of God (Colossians 1:19). God wants us to receive the gifts and the *grace of Christ. His great desire is to give us these. God wants us to become more and more like Christ.

Verse 14 Jesus said that we should be like children. They have a simple *faith and trust in their parents. But there is one way in which we should not be like children. They may not have much knowledge about God's word. We should not let things move us away from our *faith. The winds are like a picture of the false things that clever men can teach. They lead us away from the truth. It is like the snake that led Adam and Eve away from God.

Verse 15 Unlike such evil men, we should 'speak the truth with love'. This means that we should not only speak the truth. We should also act the truth. We act the truth as we behave properly towards other people. Truth and love must be in the right balance. It is possible to have all truth but no love. It is also possible to have all love but no truth. We speak the truth 'with love' to help other people. We must spread the truth and we must love each other.

Verse 16 The whole body, the *church, depends upon Jesus. This verse is about a body like the human body. God joins the many parts of the body. They all work together. God is feeding the whole body. He is building it up (Colossians 2:19). The arm or the leg in the human body does not grow by itself. It is not there to satisfy its own needs. It grows for the benefit of the whole body. The *church grows as all the members use their gifts.

The *church grows when new members join it. But that is not the only way that it grows. The *church grows as the members learn to love each other more. More of Jesus' love will grow in the people. Then more members will join (Acts 2:42-47).

4:17-32 ~ A different way to live

4:17-19 ~ How the *Gentiles live

v17 I tell you very strongly not to continue to live as the *Gentiles do. I say this in the name of the *Lord, because their ideas have no value. **v18** Their minds are confused. They are like blind men, who can see nothing. They do not know about the life that God gives. They refuse to listen to him. **v19** They do many things that are wrong. But they are not ashamed. So they do all kinds of wicked things and they become even worse. And they want more and more to continue to do these terrible things.

In these verses, Paul describes how these people lived before they became Christians. The new Christians should have now stopped living that kind of life. But all round them are those who still live in a bad way. These people do not know God. Paul writes to those who are *Gentiles. But now, by the *grace of God, they are different from the other *Gentiles. They are no longer without God in the world. They are no longer without hope (see 2:12). They share the promises that God made to the *Jews.

Verses 17-18 Paul writes about the *Gentiles. 'Their minds are confused. They are like blind men, who can see nothing.' There is no real wisdom in their minds. Paul is now speaking very seriously. He wants the new Christians to be careful. He wants them to listen to what he is saying. 'I say this in the name of the *Lord', he says. He describes the kind of life that they used to live. They lived like that before they became Christians. It was the very worst kind of life that you can think of. It was very evil. That is how it was in Greece and Rome then. And it is like that in our world today.

The first description of this evil life is, 'They do not know about the life that God gives.' Their minds are confused. Many people who do not know God have no real purpose in life. They do not plan their lives well. However, all people are not as Paul describes. But this is how their lives will develop if they do not know God. This is how it is when people have no thought about God in their lives.

Next, they 'refuse to listen to him'. These people are separate from God because they have no knowledge of God. They are separate from God, who alone gives life.

You could ask why these people did not know about the life that God gives. It might be because they did not hear the good news. But they are without excuse. This is because they have not lived by the knowledge that they already have (Romans 1:18-23). We cannot see God. But we can see the things that he has made. These things are everywhere for everyone to see. The *spirits and minds of these people have become like hard stones.

Verse 19 'They do many things that are wrong. But they are not ashamed. So they do all kinds of wicked things and they become even worse.' They have no shame for their evil ways. Also, they are not sad about this. Wrong thoughts in the mind lead to wrong desires. Wrong desires lead to evil actions. They do not care about the effect that their actions have on other people. Neither do they care what people think about their *sin.

They put everything that they have into their evil actions. It is like their business or trade. They put all their time and energy into it. They do all kinds of disgusting things. They are *greedy for it. They want more and more of it.

4:20-24 ~ Take off the old nature and put on the new nature

v20 But you know that Christ taught you a better way to live. **v21** You heard about him. You learnt the truth that is in Jesus. **v22** You must stop doing the bad things that your old nature liked. These things were destroying you. **v23** You must learn to think in a completely new way. **v24** God made you to be like himself. He has given you a new nature so put it on. God will make you *holy and good.

Verse 20 'you know that Christ taught you a better way to live'. You are different from the people that Paul has just described. Your minds are not dark any more. God lights up your life as you live side by side with him. You have finished with all *sinful behaviour.

Verse 21 The Christians at Ephesus have heard about Jesus. Their Christian teachers have told them his words. Paul himself has taught them about the truth that is 'in Jesus'. The whole truth is 'in Jesus'. The truth is in Jesus because he is the truth. The truth is in his life, death and *resurrection.

Verse 22 A Christian should leave behind the old way to live. Before, you used to put yourself at the centre of everything. Your desires came from that centre. Your desires led to bad behaviour. That was your old way to live. An example is the effect that an insect has on a good apple. The good apple becomes bad. The effect that *sin has on human nature is the same. Paul taught people to take off this old person and to put on the new person. The old person is the old nature. We should take it off like a piece of clothing. We need to become a new person.

The old way to live was wrong and it led to death. It was 'destroying you'. This way brought desires that you might think are pure. But they are not. They are pleasures that you want in order to please yourself. We think that they will give us joy. And we think that they will benefit us. But this is not true. All *sin is like that. We never get what we hope to get. *Sin damages all the good things that God has given. It leads to the death of the *sinner. But the Christian can praise God. God has *forgiven all these old *sins. He has put them away for ever.

Verse 23 You have stopped thinking in the old way. That was your old way to live before you became a Christian. This is so that you can 'learn to think in a completely new way'. Your mind was dead and it has become alive again. It should continue to become alive every day and every moment. Your mind became dark. That was what went wrong in the first place. Now you have the Spirit of God in you. So you think in new ways. This leads to a new way to live.

Verse 24 'God has given you a new nature, so put it on'. Now that we have taken off the old nature, Paul asks us to put on the new nature. It is our new way to live. God *created Adam and Eve. He made them perfect and he gave them his own nature. It is a nature of true goodness and holy ways. God was close to them all the time. He walked with them and he talked with them. But their *sin caused everything to go wrong. They lost this close relationship and they lost God's nature.

But now God has given that relationship back to us. This is by Christ who died for us on the *cross. It is the relationship of the new birth. By his death, men and women can be born a second time. God has given us again a relationship with himself. It is now as it was when God first created Adam and Eve. Jesus' death made right all that the *sin of Adam and Eve had spoilt.

The new nature is the new *creation of God. It is the act of God alone. You cannot *create it. It is a new birth from God. You cannot yourself cause your physical birth. Neither can you cause yourself to be born again. You have now left behind your old person. You must therefore leave behind the old kind of behaviour. People can now see God in you. They can see him in you because 'God will make you *holy and good'. The old nature was false. It made false promises (verse 22). The new nature is '*holy and good'. To be 'good' is to be right with other people. To be '*holy' is to be right with God. This is God's purpose for all of us.

4:25-32 ~ Live as a Christian

v25 You must not tell lies any more. We must all speak the truth to each other, because we are all parts of Christ's body. **v26** If you are angry, you must not let this anger make you *sin. You must stop being angry before sunset. **v27** Otherwise, the *Devil could make you do something that is wrong. **v28** If you were a thief, you must stop stealing things. You should work and do something useful with your hands. Then you will earn something that you can share with other people. They may need your help.

v29 Do not use bad words that may hurt somebody. Your words should help other people, as they need it. These words should help them to become better people. **v30** You must not make God's *Holy Spirit sad. Remember that he is God's promise. He shows that you belong to God. And one day he will set you completely free. **v31** You must not hold on to any bitter hurts, *rage or anger. You must not fight each other or say bad things about each other. You must not think or act because of spite. **v32** You should be friends and you should be kind to each other. You must forgive each other, just as God forgave you. God forgave you because of Christ.

This part of the letter shows how we should be '*holy and good'. Paul has asked us to take off the old nature and to put on the new nature. He now gives a list of things that we should stop doing. He tells us what we should do instead.

Verse 25 The first thing is not to tell lies. This is something that every good person would agree with. Both Christians and those who are not Christians agree about that.

But if Christians lie, they damage their love and unity. Christians belong together in one body. Therefore, they must be honest with each other. To tell lies prevents the body (the *church) from working well.

Verse 26 Another part of the old nature is bad temper. This is anger that has no good cause. There is a right anger. Jesus himself showed this (Mark 3:5). Someone may do wrong things to another person. You feel angry towards the person who has acted in that way. It is then right that you feel angry. That is *righteous or right anger. Anger must not be the result of an attack against you. It must not be because someone has hurt your pride. We must be careful that there is no *sin in our anger.

Paul adds, 'You must stop being angry before sunset'. People do wrong things to us. But we should not hold on to our anger for a long time. 'If you are angry, you must not let this anger make you *sin.' These words are from Psalm 4:4. It adds, 'when you are on your beds, search your minds and be silent'. You may be angry when you go to bed. But then you will not be able to think good thoughts. You must stop being angry before you go to sleep. Otherwise, your anger will keep growing. You must first examine yourself about your anger. Then you will ask yourself, 'Is my anger right?' 'Am I happy and at peace about it?' If so, I can sleep in peace.

Verse 27 Paul gives a further thought in this verse. He writes, 'Otherwise, the *Devil could make you do something that is wrong.' To continue to be angry is like leaving a door open. The *devil can then enter. Then you will have bad thoughts and you will do wrong things. That spoils the unity of the body (the *church). The *Greek word for 'devil' is also the word for 'slanderer'. A slanderer says things that are not true about another person.

Verse 28 Those who steal must stop stealing. Some people may have lived by stealing. A Christian must not take things from other people. They have had to work for these things. Instead, the Christian must use his hands to earn money. He must not be afraid of honest, hard work. Then he can look after his own family. And he can have what he needs himself. But he will also want to give to those who do not have enough. Jesus was not rich. But he gave to poor people from the small amount of money that he had (John 13:29). The same was true about Paul (Acts 20:34-35).

Verse 29 Paul now talks about the way that Christians should talk. 'Do not use bad words that may hurt somebody. Your words should help other people'. We should speak only words that help other people. We should speak to help other people grow. God can help us to say the words that they need. How we speak is very important. Jesus taught that. There will be a day for judgement. Then Jesus will remind us about the words that we have spoken. We will have spoken many words without care and thought. He will want to know about these. James also spoke about the great importance of the tongue. We can use it to speak in a good way or in an evil way (James 3:1-12).

There should be no bad language or language that does not help anyone. 'A man is happy when he gives a right reply. How good is a word that you speak at the proper time' (Proverbs 15:23). Our words should not only be true and pure. They should help those who hear them. Our words should build up the Body of Christ (the *church). Our example again is Jesus himself. 'All spoke well about him. The kind words that he spoke astonished them' (Luke 4:22).

Verse 30 There was an instruction about anger in verse 26. Then a warning followed in verse 27, 'the *Devil could make you do something that is wrong.' It is the same in Paul's instruction about how we talk. He follows it with a warning. He warns, 'You must not make God's *Holy Spirit sad'. All *sin makes God sad. The *Holy Spirit is a Person. He is the *Holy Spirit of truth. Anything that is not holy or true hurts the Spirit of God. He lives in a Christian.

And Paul reminds us that the *Holy Spirit is God's promise (or *seal). He *sealed us for the day of freedom. This *seal of the *Holy Spirit gives the Christian certainty. It makes us sure about *salvation. It makes us sure that we will have a home in heaven for ever.

Verse 31 There are 5 things that the Christian must stop doing.

- First, is to be 'bitter'. A person may have done something wrong to you. And perhaps you refuse to become friends again. Or, you may have done wrong things to someone. They *forgive you, but you do not accept their *forgiveness. You continue to think angry, evil things about them. If so, then you are bitter.
- Next come '*rage' and 'anger'. 'Rage' is a sudden burst of anger like a storm. Anger itself is a wrong feeling against an enemy. It is a deep, slow feeling. It grows inside you (please see explanation of verse 26).

- We should not shout and 'fight'. An angry man shouts. He thinks that everything that he says must be right. Someone has done something wrong to him. He wants everyone to hear about it. We should watch for times when we shout. We should watch when we are not speaking with a normal voice. We sometimes have arguments and we quarrel. But we must not be angry and shout at people.
- We must not 'say bad things about each other'. To 'slander' means to tell lies and offend people. The Bible uses this word for speaking against God. It uses it too for making wrong statements against another person.
- Last, we must not 'think or act because of spite'. This could mean to plan evil things against another person. It could include all the other *sins that we have described. It could also be other similar bad things.

Verse 32 We need to think in the way that pleases God. This will help us to stop evil words and actions. So 'be friends' and 'be kind to each other.' And '**forgive each other, just as God forgave you. God forgave you because of Christ.' God shows his kindness even to those who do not honour him. God shows his kindness to us (2:7). Kindness is to put love into action. It is to think about someone else. You think about them as much as you think about yourself.

So Paul goes on to say, 'forgive each other'. The *apostle knows, however, what prevents us from being kind and thinking good things about each other. We can all think of an occasion when another person did something wrong to us. We need to forgive that person. For 'kind', Paul uses the *Greek word for '*grace'. It means to act in *grace towards each other. It means to give *grace to someone. This is how God in Christ has acted in *grace towards us. You can be sure that God forgave you. You love God. So you too will want to *forgive (give *grace) to other people. God has put our *sin away. He has put it away as far as the east is from the west (Psalm 103:12). Jesus is our example of *forgiveness.

Chapter 5

5:1-14 ~ Love

5:1-7 ~ Live in love

v1 You must try to be as much like God as you can. You are his children and he loves you. **v2** So you must let his love rule your life. You must love each other as Christ himself loved you. He gave his life for us. That was like a gift to God that had a sweet smell.

v3 You know God's rules about sex. So you must not even think about doing something that he does not allow. You must not be *greedy or do other bad things. These things are not suitable for God's people. Do not even talk about these things. **v4** Nor should you speak bad words, or say silly things. Instead, you should thank God. **v5** Other people may have sex in a way that God does not allow. They may do other bad things. They may be *greedy. You can be sure that they are not *worshipping God. They are like people who *worship *idols. They will not have a share in the *kingdom of Christ and of God. **v6** Do not let anyone who does not speak the truth pull you away from God. God is angry with all those people who do not obey him. He will punish those people who do these bad things. **v7** You must not be partners with them.

Verse 1 'You must try to be as much like God as you can.' By *grace God has made you his child. Children copy their parents. Therefore, copy God and continue to copy him. Then you will become more like him.

Verse 2 Our perfect example is Jesus himself. He lived his life on earth as we do. He loves us as the Father loves him. We must love other people as Jesus loves us (John 13:34; 1 John 4:10-11; 1 Corinthians chapter 13). Christ *sacrificed his life for us on the *cross. That is how he showed his love for us. Our love also should be a *sacrifice.

We see the meaning of *sacrifice in 1 John 3:16. It says, 'this is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ gave his life for us'. Then it says, 'and we ought to give our lives for our brothers (other Christians)'. The offering of Christ, however, was more than an example to us. It was an offering 'to God' and 'for us'.

The *Old Testament described a *sacrifice as a sweet smell. This meant that God liked it. There was, however, a far, far greater *sacrifice by Jesus for us. In the same way, we should give ourselves to God and to other people. This is our life of *sacrifice. It is like a sweet smell to God. It is also like a sweet smell to other people. Paul gives the same thoughts in 2 Corinthians 2:14-16.

Verses 3-4 The *Greek people could see nothing wrong in bad *sexual behaviour. It was quite natural for a man to have sex with any woman. He would do this whenever it pleased him. Paul gave a completely new way to think.

Paul now starts to teach about wrong and *sinful acts. People do *sinful things. They think that they are acting with love. But it is a false kind of love. Paul is speaking about wrong *sexual behaviour. There is a proper use of sex. It is in marriage. Paul teaches that any other kind of sex is wrong. Sex in marriage is not wrong or dirty. There is a shared pleasure and delight in sex between a husband and wife. It is a gift from God. It brings him *glory.

But, to use sex in the wrong way is *greedy. It pleases one person but it hurts another person. God gives us some wonderful powers. It is not right to use them wrongly. God does not allow it for his holy people. We should not even talk between us about such things. It is not right for the people of God.

Paul now uses three more words. These describe a wrong way to live and a wrong way to talk. These ways should have no place in the Christian life. The first is talk that is 'not suitable for God's people' or 'obscenity'. Obscenity is bad talk, especially about sex. The second is to say 'bad words'. These might be the words of a man who is drunk. Such words do not benefit the people who hear them. The third is to joke in a wrong way or to 'say silly things'. This could mean to tell jokes that are not suitable for a Christian. But it does not mean that a Christian should always be serious. He should be able to laugh about amusing things.

Paul adds the words, 'Instead, you should thank God.' You should consider other people when you talk. Your words should be helpful to those who hear. It should not be silly, foolish talk. To thank God is the best kind of talk. Some people want wrong things for their own pleasure. This is the opposite of thanking God. You should thank God for his gifts. You should not joke about them. However, Paul does not forbid talk about sex. Also, he does not say that we should not tell jokes. But he says that our talk should be helpful to God's holy people.

Verses 5-6 A person who has no morals is not pure. He is *greedy. Such a person does not *worship God. He or she has no place in the *kingdom of Christ and of God. Paul says that Christians should not listen to those who do not speak the truth. Otherwise, this will pull them away from God. God is angry with these people because of such things. They will have no place with God's people in heaven. They are people who continue in their *sin. They do not *repent. Paul says that they can be sure that his warning words are true. But some people think that they are not important. Those people laugh at them.

In those days, there were people who thought that only the *spirit was important. The body did not matter. So they thought that it was good to *sin. You could *sin as much as you wanted. It would not matter because the body was not important. Other people even went further than that. They thought that the more you *sinned, the more God would *forgive you. He would be able to give you more *grace (see Romans 6:1). So, they thought that it benefited both you and God. But this is false. Those who think like this may try to 'pull you away from God'. Such people are not part of the *kingdom of God. Only those people who turn away from their *sin can be in God's *kingdom.

Paul adds more warning words: 'God is angry with all those people who do not obey him.' God is holy. This means that he is separate and completely different from us. Everything about God is right. Everything that God does is right. Because he is God, he can do nothing wrong. He is completely good and pure. He cannot allow anything not pure or not clean to come near him. He is like fire. He burns and destroys anything that is not good and pure. It says in Hebrews, 'our God is like a fire that destroys' (Hebrews 12:29).

Because God is like this, it is not possible for a *sinner to come near him. God is angry with all of us because of *sin. We deserve punishment from God. We must *repent and receive God's gift of *forgiveness. There is no *sin in Jesus. 'Christ did not know any *sin. But God made him become *sin for us. As a result, we can receive God's goodness by him.' (2 Corinthians 5:21). God is angry with *sin. But he loves the *sinner. Jesus *saves us from God's anger. What Jesus did was to stand in our place in front of God's anger. He did this when he died for us on the *cross. God asks us to *repent and to accept Jesus' *sacrifice.

The *sins that Paul names in these verses are the same as those in verse 3. Here, however, Paul says that *greed is like the *worship of *idols. An *idol is a thing or a desire that we make more important than the *worship of God. A strong desire for money or for wrong sex is an *idol. The Bible says that *sexual *sins are serious. They result in broken marriages. Children usually suffer when a marriage ends. They lose the love and discipline of two parents. But pride, *greed and to live for oneself are also *sins.

Paul says that none of these people has 'a share in the *kingdom of Christ and of God.' These words put Christ and God together as equal. Jesus Christ became a man for us. But he is also God. The *kingdom of God is also the *kingdom of Christ. This *kingdom is only for people who are right with God. No one who is not right with God belongs to it. It is possible for any of us to *sin in many ways. But God will *forgive those who *repent. The story about David, Bathsheba and Uriah in 2 Samuel 11:1-27 is a good example. Some people continue in their *sin. They are the people who have no part in the *kingdom. They are without shame. They are not sad about their *sin and they do not *repent.

Verse 7 'You must not be partners with them.' We have to mix with other people in our daily lives. Otherwise, we would not be able to tell them the good news about Jesus. But Christians must not share in their way of life. We must not share with them in their evil actions. Christians should be holy, which means different or separate. (See Ephesians 1:4.)

5:8-14 ~ Live in light

v8 You used to live as they do. You were once darkness. And you lived without the light that God gives. Now you are light and you must live as God's children. You must live in the light of the *Lord. **v9** (This light produces in men all that is good and pure and true.) **v10** Discover those things that please the *Lord. And then do them. **v11** You must not have anything to do with the bad things that people do in the dark. Instead, you must bring them into the light. Such bad things produce no fruit. And you must say that they are wrong. **v12** They do these things in secret. It is a shame even to talk about them. **v13** We can see things that we bring into the light. **v14** The light shows us everything clearly. That is why men say, 'Wake up, you who are sleeping. Rise from death, and Christ shall give you light.'

Verse 8 God is light (1 John 1:5). Jesus is 'the light of the world' (John 8:12). You are united with him. Therefore 'you are light'. Light shows the greatness and *glory of God. It shows his perfect, holy nature. The opposite of that holy nature is darkness. Apart from God, people in the world live in darkness. God has transferred those who have life in Christ. He has moved them out of the power of darkness. He has moved them into his *kingdom of light (Colossians 1:12-13).

Paul says, 'you were once darkness'. You used to be like people who are living in the dark. He did not say 'darkness surrounded them'. Darkness was not only part of the world that they lived in. It was actually in them. But now 'you are light' in the *Lord. You are not only living in the light, but 'you are light'. You are children of light. So now, 'live in the light of the *Lord'. Be what you are. Life is like a path that God will light up. He will do this as you walk along it as God's children.

Verse 9 This verse is about 'the fruit of the Spirit' (Galatians 5:22). Fruit grows in a natural way. It is its nature to grow. It does not need to obey a book of rules. We should grow in the light as fruit does. Fruit is open for all to see. It does not hide itself because of fear. 'Live in the light as he is in the light' (1 John 1:7). The Christian needs to be honest with people.

Verse 10 Verse 9 is in brackets. Brackets are marks like this () that we use to separate words from the main part of a sentence. That means that verse 10 follows on from verse 8. So, 'live in the light of the *Lord' (verse 8). Then, 'Discover those things that please the *Lord. And then do them'. This means that you must learn for yourself what pleases God. You learn this in your daily life.

Verses 11-13 The *apostle warns the Christians again. He warns them about people who do not obey God. He warns them about what they do in secret (verse 12). Christians must have nothing 'to do with the bad things that men do in the dark'. Instead, 'you must bring them into the light'. Let everyone know that these actions are evil. The light makes them clear. Therefore, the Christian must have nothing to do with these bad actions. He must not even talk about the things that they do in secret. It brings shame even to mention these evil things.

Moreover, these things 'produce no fruit'. Fruit here means what pleases God. They do not just produce little fruit. They produce no fruit at all. The fruits of darkness are like weeds instead of wheat. We do not need always to be trying to be good. That way does not succeed. We should allow the *Holy Spirit to produce fruits of goodness in us. It is a natural development of the life of God in us. Fruit does not have to try hard to grow; it grows by nature. In the same way, Christians do not have to try very hard to produce good things in themselves. Instead, we should allow the *Holy Spirit to produce the good things in our life.

The steady, normal work of the *Holy Spirit in the life of the *believer will produce good things. People will see the *believer's good deeds. His life will be completely different from the life of someone who does not have the *Holy Spirit. He may not even need to tell a person about his *sin (verse 12). The life of Christ is like a light that shines through those who know him. It shows the darkness of the *sinner. The *sinner will then realise that his life is dark. And he will realise that he has no good things in his life. This will force people to make a decision. Either they must decide to accept God's light themselves or else they must remain in darkness.

If people hate the light, they will try to get away from it. If you pick up a big stone, all the insects underneath try to run away. This is because the light has come into their darkness. They do not like it. It is like that when the light of Christ shows through his people. Jesus spoke about this in John 3:19-21.

Verse 14 Paul writes, 'The light shows us everything clearly'. We may not want to show up darkness. But the action of light makes things clear. Light, because it is light, must show up the darkness.

'Wake up, you who are sleeping. Rise from death, and Christ shall give you light.' This could be a part of an early Christian *hymn. They might have used it at *baptism. The new Christian would come up out of the water and the people would sing these words. 'Wake up from the dark sleep of *sin. Rise up from the death of *sin. Rise into the new life of light that Christ gives you.'

5:15-6:9 ~ Wisdom

5:15-17 ~ What wisdom is

<p>v15 You must be very careful how you live. You should live as men and women who are wise, not as fools. v16 You must use every part of every day for good things, because these are bad days. v17 So you must not be foolish. You must try to find out what the *Lord wants you to do.</p>
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Verses 15-16 God has given us wisdom (1:8). We can ask God for wisdom (1:17). Therefore, God will make his wisdom known to the world. He will also make it known to the *spiritual powers. He will do this by us (3:10).

So 'be very careful how you live. You should live as men and women who are wise, not as fools. You must use every part of every day to do good things, because these are bad days.' (See also Colossians 4:5.) This advice is very practical. Take care, especially about how you use your time. Use it in the right way. Use every opportunity to turn people from darkness to light. Use it to show the life of God to other people. The days are evil and the time left is short. Therefore, rescue or buy back as much time as you can. You are rescuing your time from the evil things of this world.

Verse 17 Jesus taught us to pray, 'The things that you want happen in heaven. We want the things that you want here on earth' (Matthew 6:10). God has a general will or purpose for everything. We find this in the Bible. But there is also a special will or purpose for each of us. We find it by prayer and by thinking. We can also ask for advice from other people. We need to discover the will of God for ourselves. It is important to know God's plan for our lives. We must do everything that we can to know this. Otherwise, we cannot be certain about what we should do.

5:18-21 ~ Live full of the *Holy Spirit

v18 You must not drink too much wine or you will suffer. Instead let God fill you with his Spirit.
v19 When you meet together, sing *spiritual songs. Sing and praise the *Lord in your mind. **v20** Always give thanks to the God the Father for everything, in the name of Jesus Christ, our *Lord.
v21 You should *submit to each other, because you respect Christ.

Verse 18 Someone has said 'a man must fill himself with something'. The man who is not a Christian fills his life with wine and pleasures of the world. The Christian is happy when he allows God to fill him with the Spirit.

One of the evil ways of the old life is to drink too much wine. This causes a loss of control of one's actions. People have always tried to forget their cares and worries by drinking strong drink. It makes them feel good. That is true. But the feeling does not last. The Bible does not say that we should not have any strong drink. To those who would become leaders, the Bible warns about this (Titus 1:7). To drink too much alcohol and to lose control of yourself is clearly a *sin. Such people behave like animals. To drink too much wine is also a waste. That is the meaning of the *Greek word that Paul used here. We should control ourselves and not waste money. This is good advice for those who desire wisdom.

But Paul does not want to take away our joys and pleasures. In Acts chapter 2, the crowd saw wonderful things happening. People were becoming full with God's Spirit. Some people thought that these people had been drinking too much wine. It is the same here as in Acts chapter 2. To let God fill us 'with his Spirit' is a better way to have joy. It is also an instruction from God. It is not just something to do if we feel like it. Moreover, we should let the Spirit fill us more than once. We should let the Spirit continue to fill us all the time. Then the *Holy Spirit will control every part of our life.

Verse 19 Paul tells Christians what should happen when they meet together. They should be glad and they should *praise God. They should sing and so encourage each other. This is much better than the false happiness of too much alcohol. Joy comes from inside us. Music can be inside us too. It may be silent and we may be singing only to the *Lord. Christians have always sung to God. Every new movement of the *Holy Spirit brings new songs of joy.

Verse 20 Paul tells Christians always to give thanks to God the Father. This can be by songs or in any other way. To complain is a *sin. In the *Old Testament, it was one of the *sins of the *Israelites. It does not please God. *Believers who are filled with the *Holy Spirit should not complain. They should always give thanks to God for everything. There is only one way to obey this instruction: that is to have a complete *faith in God. We do not praise God for evil things. We praise him for the benefit that he will cause from them.

All this comes from 'God the Father'. But it is 'in the name of Jesus Christ, our *Lord'. This is because every good thing comes by him. Again, we see here our Three in One God. God fills us with the *Holy Spirit. We then give thanks to God the Father. We do it in the name of our *Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 21 Next Paul says, '*submit to each other, because you respect Christ'. This verse leads into the next part of the letter (5:22-6:9). That part is about how we should live our life. We should live at peace with each other. Paul tells us the secret. He tells us how Christians can live a good and happy life together. This is in the *church and in the world. But it is possible only if one person gives in to the other. Each person should not do only what he or she wants to do. It is wrong to be proud about our opinion. It is wrong always to be giving orders to other people. Such behaviour destroys our life together. Paul emphasises why we should *submit to each other. It is 'because you respect Christ'.

Here are some ways that we can live this kind of life. We should each be willing

- (a) to help each other;
- (b) to listen to each other;
- (c) to learn from each other;
- (d) to allow another person to correct us.

It makes no difference what kind of person you are. You can be a man or a woman. You can be young or old. You can be a master or a servant. You need to work out what it means to 'let God fill you with his Spirit'. Paul mentions practical ways to do these things. You can do them wherever you are.

All our actions then should be because of love and respect for Christ.

5:22-33 ~ Wives and husbands

v22 Wives, *submit to your husbands, as you do to the *Lord. **v23** The husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the *church. Christ *saved the *church. **v24** The *church obeys Christ. So the wife should allow her husband to have authority in everything. **v25** Husbands should love their wives as Christ loved the *church. And he gave his life for it. **v26** He did this to make the *church *holy. He intended to wash it with water by the word. **v27** He intended to make it pure, without any bad marks or stains or anything like that. Christ does this so that he will have a *holy *church without any *sins. **v28** Men should love their wives in the same way, just as they love their own bodies. A man who loves his wife loves himself. **v29** No man hates his own body. No, he feeds it and he looks after it. He looks after his body as Christ looks after the *church. **v30** We, the *church, are parts of his living body. **v31** The *Old Testament says, 'A man will leave his father and his mother. He will join to his wife. The two will become one body.' **v32** This is a great *mystery. But I am speaking especially about Christ and his *church. **v33** It also refers to you. Every husband must love his wife as he loves himself. And the wife must respect her husband.

The word '*submit' means to give in to another person. But sometimes we think that it is a sign of weakness. The words of Jesus Christ have brought many changes to society. In many countries, it has made a big difference to the state of women. In the time of Jesus, a girl was completely under the authority of her father. A wife was completely under the authority of her husband. A *Jewish man, in his morning prayer, would thank God for three things. These were that God had not made him 'a *Gentile, a slave or a woman'.

By *Jewish law, a woman had very few rights. Her husband could divorce her almost as he wanted. It was the same in the *Greek and *Roman societies. A husband could leave his wife and marry someone else. He could do absolutely what he wanted to do. Divorce was not a rare event. What Paul was teaching would therefore be new. It would seem strange. The word '*submit' has a new meaning.

Verse 22 This section follows verse 21. It is about *submitting to each other because of respect for Christ. We spend much of our lives in the home. At home, we can practise Paul's teaching in our daily lives. It is the first and most important place to do this. At home, husbands, wives and children work out the principles that Paul taught. What follows is not about our rights. It is about our duties to each other.

God made men and women equal (Galatians 3:28). It is important to remember this. In the *New Testament, they are equal in Christ. This means that to God they are equal. To *submit to each other is for everybody. We saw this in verse 21. It therefore applies to husbands and wives. All are worth the same to God.

However, God has made two different kinds of people, male and female. So, in this way, they are not the same. The way that God makes a man is something special to that man. The way that God makes a woman is something special to that woman. A man finds his place in God's plan by being a man. A woman finds her place in God's plan by being a woman. Because they are different, they can help each other better.

The Bible tells us in Genesis how God first made man and woman. God made man the head of the family. God also gave the wife her place in the family. That place is by the side of her husband. It is as his helper. It says, 'But for Adam there was no suitable helper... Then the *Lord God made a woman from the bone that he had taken out of the man. And he brought her to the man' (Genesis 2:20-22). The wife should not be against her husband. By her own choice, she should *submit to him. But to *submit is not something only for a wife. She should *submit as Paul asks each person to *submit in verse 21.

God is wise. And he knows that the world needs authority. When we *submit to authority, we agree with God's plan. God wants us to live peaceful lives. He does not want us to have unnecessary troubles. So God gives authority to those people who lead us. It is for our benefit. It is 'out of respect for Christ' that we *submit to authority. We do this in order to please our *Lord and Master, Jesus Christ.

There needs to be agreement and unity in the family. This requires a leader. God has given the husband and father the authority to be this leader. So Paul says, 'Wives, *submit to your husbands, as you do to the *Lord.' A wife *submits to the *Lord and she *submits to her husband. The two relationships are different. For example, she might do something for her husband. She should do it as she would do it for the *Lord.

Jesus himself was under the orders of his Father. He only did what the Father told him to do. He did not have ideas of his own. (See John 5:19-20.) But Jesus was not less important than God the Father (Philippians 2:6). We can understand, therefore, that to *submit does not make a person less important. But it does make him or her more like Jesus.

Those to whom God has given authority are responsible to him. So they should use their authority fairly. They should not use it to make life easier or better for themselves. Husbands should use their authority in love. Fathers should be gentle as they bring up their children. Masters should act fairly towards their servants.

Verse 23 When God made Adam and Eve, he gave them an instruction. He said that the husband should be the head over the wife. Paul does not explain this here in this letter. But he does explain it in 1 Corinthians 11:3-12 and 1 Timothy 2:11-13. Jesus also referred to what God had said 'at the beginning' (Matthew 19:4-6). This instruction about the relationship between husband and wife is for all ages. It is not just for the time when Paul lived.

Christ is the head and the leader of the *church. The *church is his body and he '*saved the *church'. As *Saviour, he gave his life as a *sacrifice for the *church. There is a connection with this truth and marriage. The husband is the leader in the house. So this is how the husband should be towards his wife. It is as Christ is to his *church. The husband must not be a hard and cruel leader. No, he should love his wife. He should give himself and his time. He does this for her benefit and for her happiness. He should guard her and protect her. No one should be able to attack her or hurt her.

Verse 24 'The *church obeys Christ. So the wife should allow her husband to have authority in everything.' Everyone would agree that Christ is the leader of his *church. All the people are under his authority. In the same way, the husband is the leader in the home. In front of God, the wife has taken on the duty of wife and mother. In the family, she should allow her husband to be leader. There are occasions, however, when these instructions may not apply. For example, husbands and wives may have different jobs. The husband does not have authority over his wife in her work.

Verse 25 There are 4 different *Greek words for love. One word is for *sexual love. Two more are about the ordinary relationships that people have with each other. The fourth is for a special kind of love that only Christians have. It is the kind of love that God has for every one of us. It is the love of Christ. It is the love that caused him to die for us on the *cross. 'Christ loved the *church. And he gave his life for it.' It is that kind of love. With this love, you do not think about yourself. With this love, you want only the best for the person that you love. It is the kind of love that we read about in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. This is the love that the husband should show towards his wife.

Verses 26-27 In these next verses, Paul writes about the kind of love that Christ has for the *church. Christ gave himself up for the *church to make us 'pure, without any bad marks or stains'. He wants us to be *holy (or set apart). The work of Christ washes us. That means that it makes us clean from the old way. And it sets us apart for the new way.

The *cleansing is 'by the word' (John 15:3; 17:7). These are not words like those that someone might speak at a *baptism. It is the word of the *gospel. It is the word of the Bible. A person needs to receive the word. Then it makes them clean and *holy.

There is something else in marriage that helps us to understand more about Christ. We see this in the way that the bride gets ready for her marriage. She wants to come to her husband looking as beautiful as she can. She wants to be 'without any bad marks or stains' or any other marks. It is the same with the *church, the bride of Christ. There is, however, a difference. The bride can make herself look beautiful for her husband but the *church cannot do this for itself. Christ did it for the church. So he makes it 'pure'. We cannot wash away the marks of *sin ourselves. Think about the marks of age on our faces. We cannot remove them ourselves. And we cannot take away the results of *sin. It is by the death of Jesus on the *cross. Only his death can remove the marks of *sin.

Verses 28-29 Paul says, 'A man who loves his wife loves himself'. He is thinking about Genesis 2:24. He writes about this later in verse 31. Genesis 2:24 says that the husband and wife are 'one flesh' or 'one body'. In the act of sex, they join together. They become one body. This is why an act of sex should only be between husband and wife. It is wrong for people who are not man and wife to join in sex. When a man and woman marry, they become one body. So, if the husband does not love his wife, he does not love his own body. Therefore, he does not love himself.

If a husband loves himself, he will try to discover the best kind of life. It will benefit him. But it will benefit his wife too. That is because the two are one body. His wife will share his good life. She will enjoy any good things that he enjoys.

The *Greek word for love describes the love that God has for us. We have seen that before. Here again Paul uses this special *Greek word. He is writing about something beyond the love of brother or sister. It is beyond the love that people have in *sexual acts. Paul is speaking about the best kind of love. It is the best possible love that you can give to another person. It is the same love, with which Christ loved us. He gave himself for us.

Paul never says that the wife is a less valuable person than the husband is. Neither does he say that the husband owns his wife. The wife is part of the husband because they join in marriage.

Paul adds to this the words, 'No man hates his own body. No, he feeds it and looks after it.' To love yourself in this way is not wrong. It is necessary. If you do not look after yourself, you will die.

Verse 30 In marriage, the wife becomes part of the life of her husband. He therefore loves her and helps her to know Christ better. Jesus is like that to us. He has joined us to himself. We are part of his life. No one can break this union.

Verse 31 Now comes the verse from Genesis (Genesis 2:24). 'A man will leave his father and his mother. He will join to his wife. The two will become one body.' This is God's plan for marriage. It is the most important statement in the Bible about marriage. It tells us that it is wrong for a man to have more than one wife. It is wrong too for a man to have sex with any woman who is not his wife. It tells us that God does not like divorce. Here is God's perfect plan for marriage. It is that a man and woman should stay together for life.

Someone asked Jesus about this. Why was there a law that allowed divorce? He said that it was 'because you were bad. You did not want to obey God' (Matthew 19:8). That is why there is need for such a law. It is because the world is not perfect. But this is not part of God's plan.

Before marriage, a man or woman share their lives with their parents. However, after they marry, they do not share their lives with their parents in the same way. But they still have a duty towards their parents. The parents have allowed their children to leave. They have ended all their rights over their children. God has now joined the husband and wife. They are like two pieces of wood that someone has glued together. You cannot separate them again. The two persons become 'one body'. God *blesses their life together and they *bless each other.

Verse 32 Paul now says, 'This is a great *mystery. But I am speaking especially about Christ and his *church.' Paul has already spoken about this *mystery (3:1-13). It is about God's great secret. It is his plan for everyone. It is for every age in history. God hid it before, but now he makes it plain.

This *mystery has great meaning. It is difficult to understand. Sometimes Paul calls it wonderful or great. In earlier times, God had hidden a very important truth. Now Christ makes it plain. Paul has been teaching about husbands and wives. But Paul makes it clear that the *mystery is more than that. It is about 'Christ and his *church'. 'Christ wanted to make the *Jews and *Gentiles into one people. He wanted to unite them with himself. He wanted them to have peace with each other' (Ephesians 2.15). The 'one people' is *Jews and *Gentiles together. (In the Greek language, it is 'one new person'.)

The husband is head of the family. In the same way, Christ is the head of the *church. The husband shows love and care for his wife. He does this by giving himself to her. This is the best example that Paul can give. Christ showed love and care for his *church. He did this by giving his life. The wife depends on her husband as guide and leader. In the same way, the *church depends on the *Lord.

Verse 33 But again Paul returns to the subject of husband and wife. He says, 'Every husband must love his wife, as he loves himself.' The duty of the husband is to love his wife. It is with the same kind of love that Christ has for his *church.

Paul continues, 'And the wife must respect her husband.' The *Greek word 'respect' used here is 'fear'. You might fear someone who frightens you. But it is not that kind of fear. It is about your relationship with someone that you love. You want to please that person. You might do something that will not please him or her. That is what you fear. That is what our relationship with God is like. It is the kind of fear and love that each of us should have towards God. The Bible says that this kind of fear of the *Lord is 'the beginning of wisdom'. When you fear the *Lord, you start to be wise.

Chapter 6

6:1-4 ~ Children and parents

v1 Children, you must obey your parents. This is because the *Lord has given them authority to look after you. And this is the right thing for you to do. **v2** 'Respect your father and your mother'. (This was the first *commandment with a promise.) **v3** God promised to give us a long and *blessed life if we kept this promise.

v4 Fathers, you must not make your children think that you are not fair to them. Instead, you must look after them. And you must correct them. You must do this as the *Lord has taught us.

Verse 1 Paul has finished teaching about husbands and wives. He now starts to teach children and parents. It is good to see children and older people together. Especially when they all come together to praise God. It is good, too, that the children have teachers. Jesus himself said, 'let the children come to me' (Matthew 19:14). The *Lord commands us to *submit to each other (5:21). Children are also included in this. But there is more than that. The instruction for children is, 'Children, you must obey your parents.'

- First, it is because 'the *Lord has given them authority to look after you'. The fifth *commandment is to 'Respect your father and your mother'. To respect is to obey. Colossians 3:20 tells us why children should obey their parents. It is, 'because this pleases the *Lord'. If the children love the *Lord, they will want to please him.

- Next, 'it is the right thing for you to do'. This means that it is the right and natural thing to do. It is for all children everywhere. It is right and natural in any society.

Verses 2-3 Paul now refers to the fifth *commandment. It is, 'Respect your father and your mother'. He adds that it was 'the first *commandment with a promise' (Exodus 20:12). In those days, a child might refuse to obey his parents. If he continued like that, it was a very serious matter. The authorities could kill him or her. That was the old law. Paul, however, refers to a promise. It follows the *commandment. If we obey this *commandment, God promises us 'a long and *blessed life'.

In most things, children should obey their parents. But this command could be difficult for some children. It could be difficult if their parents do not believe in Jesus. Their parents might refuse to allow their children to attend *church. Or they might not allow *baptism. The children should still obey them. However, there are some things that parents should not stop their children from doing. It would be wrong to tell them not to believe in Jesus. It would be wrong to tell them not to praise him.

There are different ages at which children need no longer to obey this command. In *Roman society, it was as long as the father lived. While he was still alive, his children had to obey him. In other societies, it could be when a child becomes an adult. The laws of each country would decide what this age should be. It could be when the law allows marriage. It could be when the children leave home to marry. The age would be different for each country. Each country will have its own customs.

Verse 4 A *Roman father could do anything that he wanted with his children. He could make them work in the fields. He could even put chains on them. He could sell them as slaves. He could punish them, as he liked. He could even kill them. When a girl was born, the father might throw her away.

Paul now gives instructions to parents and children. The Christian father must love his children. He should love them as God loves him. Do not make your children angry. Your children will do many wrong things. But most of those things will not be very important. Do not always be telling them that they are wrong. Decide on what is important and what is not. Decide on the things that you should not approve of. Do not be cruel to them. Do not always tell them that they are bad. If you do, they might stop trying to be good. Always try to say good and helpful things to your children.

Parents must help their children. Father's 'must look after' their children. And they 'must correct' them. They should train them in the ways of Christ. The *Greek word that Paul used here is the same as in 5:29. It referred there to a man who looks after his own body. To look after their children should be the parents' most important duty.

Sometimes education is hard and difficult. The child may not like this. The book of Proverbs has many words about this. But parents must always remember one thing. They should not be too hard or cruel to their children. A child is a person and not a thing. 'Train a child in the way that he should go. Then, when he is old, he will not turn from it' (Proverbs 22:6). Discipline at times may be hard. But we should always praise the child when he or she has done well.

6:5-9 ~ Slaves (servants) and masters

v5 Slaves, respect and obey your masters in this world. Be loyal to them, as you would be to Christ. **v6** You must not obey them only when they are watching you. You might do this only to make them think that you are good. But, because you are servants of Christ, you should be obeying God sincerely. **v7** You must work well and responsibly, as if you served Christ, not men. **v8** The *Lord will reward every man for anything good that he does. You know this. He will reward both slaves and free men.

v9 Those of you who are masters must also be fair to your slaves. You must not frighten them by saying that you will hurt them. Remember that you and your slaves have the same master in heaven. God is fair and you are all his slaves. He does not think that masters in this world are more important than their slaves.

Verse 5 In Bible times many families had slaves. They did all the work in the house. They were the property of their master. They had no rights. Their owner could buy or sell them. He could punish his slave if he wanted to. He could whip him or put him in prison. He could even kill him. A slave might escape. If the master caught him, he would whip him. Or he might kill him. Some slaves would kill themselves. They did this because they were so unhappy.

A slave did not always have an unpleasant life. It was certainly better for the master if he dealt well with his slave. The slave would then work harder. He would try to please his master.

Paul writes, 'Slaves, respect and obey your masters in this world. Be loyal to them, as you would be to Christ.' These instructions are right for any time in history. They are a benefit in the home or at work. A slave or worker should obey his master or manager. He does this as he would obey Christ. He obeys his master on earth. Then he remembers that he has a greater master. His greater master is the *Lord.

Also, servants should 'respect' their masters. This whole passage is about the way that we live with each other. Paul teaches that we should *submit to each other because of respect for Christ (5:21). This means that we should respect and value other people.

These instructions are for workers today. We work for our employers. We should do it as if we are working for God. It was more difficult in those days than it is today. We should be 'loyal'. We should do it as we would do it 'to Christ'.

Verses 6-7 Next Paul writes, 'you should be obeying God sincerely'. God wants us to do our work well. And that is why we should do it well. Christians are servants and even slaves of the *Lord. Therefore, they do their work for him and not for men. We can cook a meal as if Jesus is going to eat it. We can clean the house as if Jesus will be the visitor. Shop workers sell goods to people. Nurses look after people. They should do it as if they are doing it for Jesus Christ. The desire to do the work must be sincere. We do it to please the *Lord. The work must be good enough to show to him.

Verse 8 Paul also teaches this in Colossians 3:24-25. The *Lord sees everything that we do, whether good or bad. We will receive a reward from him. God will give us a good reward if we do good things. And he will punish us if we do evil things. Here Paul mentions only good things. This is to help the Christians and to encourage them. Paul tells them that God sees every good thing that they do. There may be no one to thank them on earth. But God will reward them for service that they do well.

This is not about our *salvation. No amount of good work will give us that. Our *salvation is not a reward for good work. It is God's gift of *grace. We will receive a reward from God for what we have done. But we receive it only by God's *grace. Some people think only about themselves. That is *sin. They need to *repent of it. They may give service to other people. But if they do not give it sincerely and to the *Lord, God cannot reward it.

Paul now talks to masters. Therefore, he adds the words, 'both slaves and free men'. Paul's words apply to everyone. They apply to those who are rich. And they apply to those who are poor. They apply to slaves and to free people. They apply to servants and masters, to workers and managers (bosses).

Verse 9 Masters must remember that 'you and your slaves have the same master in heaven. God is fair and you are all his slaves. He does not think that masters in this world are more important than their slaves.' God, who is master of both slaves and servants, is in heaven. There are no favourites with him. All are equal in front of God. But people may not be equal in the world. God has no favourites. He considers everyone the same. Masters must remember that they too are servants. They are under the authority of their master in heaven. It is the same for both masters and servants. They both have the same master and judge in heaven. When they remember this, they will behave well towards other people.

People allowed *slavery in those days. But now we believe that *slavery is wrong. It is wrong for one person to buy and sell another person. It is wrong to do as you please to another person. This is what the Bible teaches. All people are equal in front of God. Christians are like brothers and sisters in Christ. The letter of Paul to Philemon tells us about a slave called Onesimus. He had escaped from his master, Philemon. He had come to Paul and he had become a Christian. Paul then wanted to return him to Philemon. So Paul writes to Philemon. He asks him to be kind to Onesimus when he returns. He asks Philemon to receive Onesimus both as a man and as a brother (Philemon 16). Paul taught that a slave could become a Christian brother.

For the *Jews, there were laws about slaves. These laws were very generous. They are in Exodus chapter 21. Slaves should serve for 6 years. Their masters freed them in the seventh year. They would not need to pay their masters anything (Exodus 21:2). A slave might have a good master. If he did not want to leave him, they had a ceremony. The slave stood by a door. His master would make a hole through the slave's ear with a sharp tool. The tool would go into the door and fix the slave to the door. After that, there would be a hole in the slave's ear. This was to show that the slave wanted to stay with his master. He wanted to stay with him always (Exodus 21:6). This is an example of the Christian. He wants to be with his Master Jesus for ever. He will never want to be free from being a servant of Jesus.

The principles that Paul taught are true for today. Both workers and bosses have duties. The worker should give good work. And the boss should pay a proper wage. It is the worker's duty to give good work. It is the right of the boss to expect it. It is the duty of the boss to pay a fair wage. It is the worker's right to expect it. Sometimes things do not work out well at work. This is the reason. One side thinks only about its own rights. Or it urges the other side to do its duty. Paul tells each side to concentrate on their responsibilities, not their rights. That would lead to an improvement for everyone.

Later, this teaching led to the end of *slavery in many countries. It happened in one country after another.

6:10-20 ~ The Christian life as a war

6:10-17 ~ Be strong in the *Lord

v10 Finally, you must be strong in the *Lord. He will give you his great power so that you can do this. **v11** You must wear all the *armour that the *Lord gives to protect you. Then you can stand against the evil attacks of the *Devil. **v12** We are not fighting a human army, but we are fighting against the powers of this dark world. We are fighting against the rulers, authorities and evil *spiritual forces in the heavens. **v13** So, wear God's whole *armour to protect yourself. Then you will be able to stand firm on the evil day when they attack you with their great power. And, when the battle is over, you will still be standing firm. **v14** So, stand with the belt of truth round you. And wear the *breastplate of *righteousness. **v15** On your feet, put on the *gospel of peace like shoes that are ready to use. **v16** Always carry *faith like a *shield. This *faith will protect you from any attack of the *Devil. His attacks are like burning arrows. **v17** You know that God has *saved you by the love of Christ. Use this knowledge, like a hard hat that protects your head. Attack the *Devil with the word of God. This word is like a sword. It cuts with the power of the *Holy Spirit.

Verse 10 Paul knows from his own experience that he is in a war. His enemy is the *Devil (*Satan). *Satan will fight against all that God has done by Jesus Christ. He will work as hard as he can to destroy God's work. The new Christians now enjoy unity and peace. The *Devil will try to destroy that. We would all like to live peaceful lives. We would all like a life with no worries. But this is not possible in the world as it is. We need to know that we are in a battle. We need to know our enemy. We need to know how strong he is.

We have one important need as we fight this war. It is the power of God. We 'must be strong in the *Lord'. You cannot make yourself strong. God must give you strength. He must give it to you more than once. He must give it to you all the time. The *Greek word means 'continue to let God make you strong'. Then Paul says 'in the *Lord', not 'by the *Lord', although that would be true. The strength comes from being united with Jesus. It comes from being 'in Christ'. This is what Jesus taught (John 15:1-5). Apart from Jesus, the Christian can do nothing. So the strength that we have is in 'his great power'. You could also say, 'in the strength of his great power'.

Verse 11 In Ephesians 1:19, Paul talks about God's great power. It was the power that God used to raise Jesus from death. With that power, he defeated his enemies. Paul uses the same words here - power, strength and might. We are at war against our enemy, the *Devil (*Satan). We therefore need all these qualities. But we need something more. 'You must wear all the *armour that the *Lord gives to protect you. Then you can stand against the evil attacks of the *Devil.'

When Paul was in prison, they chained him to a *Roman soldier. Therefore, he could always see the soldier's *armour. But our *weapons for war are not *weapons with sharp points like a sword. They are *weapons of the Spirit. You need these so that 'you can stand against the evil attacks of the *Devil'. The word used here is 'stand'. It is as if you are in a castle. It is the castle of the *church of Jesus Christ. You are guarding the castle against all the clever and evil plans of the enemy.

Verse 12 This war is different from a war with *weapons like guns. This battle is not against people. It is against all kinds of '*spiritual forces'. They are in a world that you cannot see. 'We are not fighting a human army, but we are fighting against the powers of this dark world. We are fighting against the rulers, authorities and evil *spiritual forces in the heavens.' These evil forces will use people to do their evil work. The war is against the *Devil and his armies. These armies consist of many different kinds of *spirits.

In 2:2, Paul speaks about 'the king who rules the *spiritual forces in the air. He is a *spirit.' This means *Satan. He is the head of all the evil *spirits. We cannot see them. But they are working in this world. These *spirit forces are very real. We see this all through the *New Testament. Jesus fought and won against all these evil forces. He did this when he died on the *cross.

'Rulers' refers to world rulers. This does not mean human rulers. This refers to those who rule the whole world. And the chief ruler is *Satan. Jesus said that this ruler is *Satan. Jesus said that *Satan is 'the ruler of this world' (John 12:31; 14:30). John says that 'the whole world is in the control of the *devil' (1 John 5:19). Paul calls him 'the god of this age' (2 Corinthians 4:4). The world is in the power of the *devil. The *New Testament often states this.

The fight is against the evil rulers. They are part of the 'dark' world that you cannot see. They are powerful *spirits of *Satan. They are great evil princes of darkness. They rule this world. We fight against large numbers of wicked *spirits. These are in the *spirit world. We cannot see them, but they are real. They hate the light. They try to get away from it. Darkness is where they live. They have no rules of right behaviour. They have no kind, pleasant feelings. They know nothing about right. They know only about wrong things.

Only the power of God can keep us safe from the evil actions of the *devil. The *spiritual powers are strong, but the power of God is stronger. That power raised Jesus from death. God caused him to sit on the *throne in the *heavenly places (the *spiritual world) (1:20). He has also raised us up into 'the *heavenly places'. We sit there on the *throne with Christ (2:6). The *spiritual world is where this *spiritual war takes place. These powers attack us there and Christ defends us. Christ defeated these powers at the *cross. They are under his authority and under ours. This *spiritual world is where Christ has *blessed us (1:3). This is where these *spiritual forces will try to steal our *blessings.

Verses 13-14 These *spiritual forces are fighting against the Christians. The power of these forces is very strong. So Paul tells the Christians to 'wear God's whole *armour'. Paul encourages them. The evil day will come. They will have done everything possible. Then, after that, they will be able to stand. They will stand firm against the devil's attacks. He will not be able to knock them down.

Paul writes about a 'whole' suit of *armour. It was all the equipment of a soldier ready for battle. Our 'whole *armour' is from God. It is important to understand this. We find this in the *Old Testament. God himself wears things like *armour as he fights. 'He put on goodness like a *breastplate. He put *salvation like a hard hat on his head' (Isaiah 59:17). Now God gives these same *weapons to his people. It is to help them in the war against *Satan.

Notice how often Paul uses the word 'stand'. The first time it means, 'stand against' or 'stand firm'. It is because your enemy is very strong. A time will come, when the fight will be very hard. It will be in two places. It will be both inside and outside the *church. The fight will get more and more difficult. This will be as 'the day of the *Lord gets near' (Mark 13:4-23). Every day can be such an evil day. So the Christian should be ready for it. So Paul says, 'And having done all, you will still stand firm'. Then, 'when the battle is over, you will still be standing firm.'

Paul would have watched the soldier who was always near him. He would have seen him put on his *armour. The soldier put on each piece in the right order. So Paul tells his readers: Wear your *armour as the soldier does. The belt is first before any of the outer pieces. The clothes underneath must first be in place. Then the soldier can put on the outer pieces. The belt will hold all the pieces together. Then the soldier will be ready for action.

'Truth' can be everything that God has told us about himself and Jesus Christ. We read about this in the Bible. Jesus said, 'then you will know the truth and the truth will make you free' (John 8:32). The Bible speaks about 'truth in the inner parts' (Psalm 51:6). If we know truth, the inner part of us will be right. If we are not right inside, we will not feel right. We will have no inner *peace. We will not feel comfortable with people. We will not be right with God and with other people. We will lose our peace. This will stop us from doing the things that we ought to do. It will stop us saying the things that we ought to say. So, we must make the belt of truth firm round us.

The second piece to be put on is 'the *breastplate of *righteousness'. We read about this piece of *armour in Isaiah 59:17. It is God's *righteousness. God himself puts it on us (Romans 3:21-22). This is our *justification. It makes us right with God. It is as if we had never *sinned. It is goodness on the inside of us. A soldier wears the *breastplate at the front of the body. It will not be of much use if there is a hole in it. The purpose of all the *armour is to stop the enemy hurting you.

Verse 15 The third piece of *armour is for the feet. We should 'put on the *gospel of peace like shoes'. Paul is now thinking about the shoes of the *Roman soldier. They must fit well and they must be 'ready to use'. It could be about speaking the *gospel to other people. This is the good news about the *peace of God. We should always be ready to tell this to other people. The *apostle Peter said this too. He said, 'always be prepared to give an answer to everyone. Be ready when they ask you. Be ready to give the reason for the hope that you have' (1 Peter 3:15).

The *Roman soldier's shoes were short leather boots. These would grip the ground and they would keep his feet firm on the ground. They would prevent him from falling. The idea is that we should stand firm in the war. But this is not all. We should also tell the good news to other people. Our *gospel boots should be a proper fit. We fight the war. But we send out the good news about *peace at the same time.

Verse 16 Next comes the '*shield'. This protects all the rest of the *armour. It was a large object in the shape of a door. The *Greek word for '*shield' is from the *Greek word for 'door'. The *shield is '**faith', which is trust in God.

Before a soldier shot an arrow from his bow, he could set fire to the point of the arrow. The burning arrow would hit the *shield. So the wooden *shields needed a leather cover. They would also put the *shields into water. Then the wet shields could put out the fire quickly.

The evil plans of the enemy, *Satan, are like these 'burning arrows'. They could be angry words. They could be doubt. They could be fear, or they could be love of ourselves. They could be lies. The enemy puts these into our minds. One of these lies would be that God does not *forgive us. Then the enemy might remind us about all the *sins that God has *forgiven. God has forgotten them too. The enemy will try to use all these 'arrows' to destroy our *faith. God himself is 'a *shield to those who take shelter in him' (Proverbs 30:5). Only one thing can put out the 'fire' of these 'burning arrows'. It is a strong *faith in God.

The *Romans would fix their *shields together. That would make a larger wall. It would cover more soldiers. It is the same with the Christian *church. Christians can join together. Then they can be safe from the attacks of the enemy.

Verse 17 'You know that God has *saved you by the love of Christ.' Such knowledge is a gift from God. The gift is *salvation from *sin and the results of *sin. Romans 6:23 says, '*sin pays a wage and the wage is death. But the gift of God is *eternal life in Jesus Christ our *Lord.' We receive this gift from God. God rescues us from all the *sin in the past. God *saves us from the power of *sin today too. He also gives us hope to be free from *sin in the future. Such knowledge protects us, like wearing a 'hard hat'. Otherwise *Satan can hurt us. It is wonderful to know that God has *saved us. It makes us very happy. We can have confidence in our *salvation.

The hard hat covers the head. This is where we have our thoughts. We need something that will protect us from wrong and unpleasant thoughts. We should keep remembering that God has *saved us. Then we can enjoy good and pleasant thoughts (Philippians 4:8).

The last piece of *armour is the 'sword'. That is the word of God. The sword is the only piece of *armour that they used for attack. The other pieces are for protection. In the Bible, words are often like a sword (Psalm 57:4). The word of God is itself is like a 'sword' (Hebrews 4:12). The Bible is like a sword. We must hold it in a strong hand. The enemy, *Satan, attacks us. We must then use our *weapon. A good example of this is our *Lord himself. *Satan attacked him in the desert. *Satan put thoughts into his mind. These were not God's thoughts (Matthew 4:1-10). Jesus used the word of God against *Satan. When *Satan attacked him, Jesus said, 'it is written'. We should hold the word of God in our minds (Psalm 119:11).

There is another kind of word. This is any word (or message) that comes from the *Holy Spirit. But any such word must be in agreement with the Bible. Enemies of the *disciples would bring them to the courts. Jesus gave them this promise. He told them not to worry. The *Holy Spirit would tell them what to say. He would tell them how to say it. 'It will not be you who are speaking. It will be the Spirit of your Father. He will be speaking by you' (Matthew 10:20).

6:18-20 ~ A prayer for everyone

v18 At all times, pray in the Spirit. Then you can ask God for anything. So remember to be always ready, like a guard with his eyes open. And continue to pray for all Christians. **v19** And pray for me too. Pray that God will give me his words. And pray that I will speak boldly, whenever I open my mouth. I want to tell everybody about Christ's wonderful good news. **v20** God has appointed me as his special *messenger, although I wear chains. Pray that I will declare the message bravely, as I should do.

Verse 18 As we put on each piece of our *spiritual *armour, we need to pray. Four times Paul uses the *Greek word for 'all'. This is what he is saying. Christians should be praying at all times. They should pray about everything that happens. They should pray on all occasions ('at all times'). Life should be one great prayer to God.

But there is another kind of prayer. It is to pray when we do not really want to pray. We all know about this. Then we need to speak to ourselves. We should say, 'Yes, I do not feel that I want to pray. But still I will pray.'

Then Paul adds, 'Then you can ask God for anything.' We should pray with all kinds of prayers and requests. There are many kinds of prayers. In one kind of prayer, we tell God how good and great he is. There is the kind of prayer when we thank God. We thank him for who he is. Or, we thank him for what he does for us. There is the kind of prayer for other people. There is the kind of prayer for ourselves and about the events in our lives. We must ask God to guide us. And there is the kind of prayer for kings and our rulers (1 Timothy 2:1-2).

Then Paul adds 'continue to pray for all Christians'. Prayer should become a habit. Paul writes, 'So remember to be always ready, like a guard with his eyes open.' Jesus himself told his *disciples to 'watch and pray' (Matthew 26: 41).

Verse 19 Last, Paul asks for prayers for himself. He is still in prison. He wants to be free. He could ask people to pray that God would free him. That would have been a natural thing to ask. But he does not ask for that. He knows how important he is in God's plan. Even in prison, he works to spread the *gospel. Yes, he is in prison. But he knows that he is in God's war.

Paul asks for two things.

First, he asks them to pray 'that God will give me his words'. This is for whenever he is able to speak. Paul wants God to give him the right words and the right message each time that he speaks. Then everyone that he speaks to will clearly understand God's message.

Next, Paul always needs God's power to speak. He needs to 'speak boldly' and bravely. This is how he is asking the Christians to pray. He will *preach the *gospel. But he wants to do this without fear. He wants everyone to understand Christ's wonderful good news.

All the early *apostles were like this. They did not pray to be free from danger. They did not pray to be free from injury or even death. They prayed that they would be brave. Whatever happened, they had to *preach the *gospel of Jesus Christ.

Every Christian is in the war against *Satan. But a Christian prays not only for himself. He prays not only for his own part in the war. He prays also for the whole *church of Christ. He prays 'for all Christians' (verse 18).

Verse 20 Before this, Paul has not said much about himself. Twice he reminds his readers that he is in prison. But there is an advantage in that. He is God's 'special *messenger, although I wear chains'. An *ambassador (or special *messenger) represents his king in another country. He has a job to do in that country. It is to show all the good things about his king and country.

Paul thinks that his work is far more important than a *Roman *ambassador's work. He is the *ambassador of the King of kings. He brings a message from his Royal Master. It is a message with very great value. He speaks to people who are God's enemies. And he tells them how they can become God's friends.

Paul is in prison. But he does not tell the Christians to be sorry for him. They should not pray that God would free him. No, he wants them to pray that he will continue to *preach the *gospel. He must not stop. So this is how he is really asking them to pray. 'Do not ask God to free me from these chains. Instead, pray that God will free my mouth to speak. Then I will be able to *preach the *gospel.' He knows that God has given him this one main purpose. So far in his life, everything has been for this purpose. So, he asks his readers, 'Pray that I will declare the message bravely, as I should do.'

6:21-24 ~ Final greeting

v21 Tychicus is a dear Christian brother and he is a loyal servant of the *Lord. He will tell you everything. Then you will know how I am. And he will tell you what I am doing. **v22** This is why I am sending him to you. He will give you my news and he will encourage you.

v23 I am asking God the Father and the *Lord Jesus Christ to send *peace and love with *faith. I am asking them to send these things to all the brothers and sisters. **v24** Some people love our *Lord Jesus Christ with a love that will never end. I want God's *grace to be with all those people.

Verses 21-22 Paul has been dictating this letter. Now he takes the pen in his own hand. He writes these last few sentences himself. The writer may have been Tychicus. Now Paul mentions him by name. Tychicus is a Christian and he is a friend of Paul. He will take this letter to the Christians at Ephesus. Paul chose him also to deliver another letter. It was the one that he wrote to the Christians in Colosse (Colossians 4:7).

We see Tychicus's name also in Acts 20:4, Titus 3:12 and 2 Timothy 4:12. Paul wanted to give the Christians recent news. That is why he sent Tychicus with the letter. Also, Tychicus would 'encourage' them and make them strong.

The Christians probably worried that Paul was in prison. Paul has told them before that he is God's servant. This is by the gift of God's *grace (3:7). So Paul reminds them again about this. God is using all the events of his life. Everything would therefore bring *glory to God.

Verse 23 Now, we go back to the first words of Paul's letter. There, he wrote about '*grace and *peace' from God and from Christ (1:2). Here, Paul ends with the same two words, 'peace' in this verse and '*grace' in verse 24.

Paul has spoken often about three *blessings in his letter. The first *blessing is 'peace'. This peace is the peace of God. We can have it in our *spirits. It is peace 'to the brothers and sisters'. That means that it is for all the Christians.

Then comes 'love with *faith'. We have love from our *faith in Christ. We have this only by unity with him. '*Faith', or to be full of *faith, is a fruit of the Spirit. All these *blessings come from 'God the Father'. Everything comes from him in the first place. These *blessings also come from 'the *Lord Jesus Christ'. He brings us all the *blessings of the Spirit of God (1:3).

Verse 24. And Paul prays for all the people who really love the *Lord Jesus Christ. They love him 'with a love that will never end'. He prays that God's *grace will be with all of those people. As in the beginning of this letter, the final prayer is for '*grace'. In the *Greek language, it is 'the *grace'. This could mean the *grace that Paul has spoken so much about. The *grace is for all those who 'love our *Lord Jesus Christ'. They love him 'with a love that will never end'. *Grace is for everyone. But we need to receive it in love. Only such people can experience it completely. It is *grace that will never fail or end. The love of God never fails (1 Corinthians 13:8).

Word List

AD ~ AD 50 means the year that was 50 years after Jesus came, and so on.

ambassador ~ a person that a king of one country employs to act for him in another country.

Amen ~ a word that shows that one agrees (usually after a prayer).

angel ~ a servant from God who brings messages from heaven; angels are pure *spirits, greater than men and women; they give love to God; they do what he wants; they look after those who have come into God's family; a bad angel serves *Satan.

apostle ~ a man that God has chosen to lead his *church; one of the 12 men that Jesus chose to be his helpers and to teach about him.

armour ~ equipment that protects a soldier.

baptise, baptism ~ to put a person into water, or to put water on a person; it is to show the way that Christ makes us clean; when the *Holy Spirit comes into a person who knows Christ; the way we show to everyone that we belong to Christ and his *church.

being ~ a person or animal that is alive.

believer ~ a person who knows Christ.

bles ~ to cause good things to happen to someone.

blessing, blessed ~ the good things that God does for us; a blessing can be a prayer that God will *bless someone.

breastplate ~ a piece of *armour that protects the upper part of the body.

Caesar ~ a name for *Roman rulers.

centurion ~ a *Roman soldier in charge of a group of about 100 men.

church ~ a group of people who follow and believe in Jesus Christ; a group of Christians who meet together. It can also mean all the Christians in the world.

circumcise, circumcision ~ to cut off the loose skin from the end of the sex part of a boy or man; for *Israelites it was a proof that a man agreed to obey God's laws; a sign of a pure *spirit.

cleanse, cleansing ~ to make clean by washing.

commandment ~ a command that God gave; the ten important commands or rules that God gave to Moses on Sinai mountain.

create, creation ~ the act of God when he made the world and everything there is; everything that God has made.

cross ~ two pieces of wood that someone has fixed together. The *Romans punished people by fixing them to a cross to die. Jesus died on this; the cross is now the sign of the *church of Christ; not to put yourself first but to put Jesus and other people first in your life.

devil ~ another name for *Satan, the chief evil *spirit.

disciple ~ someone who follows another person and learns from him; a person who obeys what Jesus taught.

eternal ~ things that have always been and will continue for all time; a thing which has no beginning or end; a thing which never changes.

faith ~ the belief in someone or something; to agree with and to do the things that God teaches; to obey his commands even when they seem difficult; belief and trust in God and in Jesus his Son; belief that the Bible is true; 'the *faith' means the things that Christians believe about Jesus.

forgive ~ when someone stops being angry with another person who has done bad things.

Gentiles ~ people who are not *Jews; people who do not know God; people from all nations.

glory, glorious ~ the power and great importance of God; great beauty and like a great king; a bright light that comes from God or Jesus.

gospel ~ the good news that God has helped people who love Jesus; he has helped them by the life, death and raising from death of Jesus Christ; the good news about the things that Jesus has done for us; the message from God to us; one of the four books at the beginning of the *New Testament.

grace ~ a gift, from God or from people, that we do not deserve and cannot earn; what God or people give because they are generous; the help and protection that comes from God.

greed, greedy ~ a great desire for food or wealth; to have a great desire for these things.

Greek ~ the language of Greece. Paul wrote his letter in the Greek language.

heavenly ~ in or about heaven.

Hebrew ~ the language of *Jewish people.

Holy Spirit ~ The Holy Spirit is a person, but not human as we are; he lives and works for God; he is equal and joined with God and Christ; he does the work of God among the people in the world; God's Spirit that Jesus sent to help people; another name for God; also called the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ and the Comforter. We cannot see the Holy Spirit. But he joins with the *spirit of those that know Jesus; he helps them to follow Jesus and to do good things.

holy, holiness ~ description of God, set apart, perfect, wonderful; completely good, with nothing bad in it; belonging to God; separate from *sin, pure, clean.

hymn ~ a song to praise God, like those in the Psalms in the Bible.

idol ~ an image of a person or object that people love instead of loving God; a false god; an object out of wood, stone or metal for people to show love to instead of love to the real God.

inheritance ~ to legally pass on property after death; something that passes on to us to possess by right after the death of another person.

Israel ~ the name that God gave to Jacob; the name of the people from the family of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; the group of people that God chose; the nation of the *Jews and those who speak *Hebrew.

Israelites ~ the people from *Israel; people that speak *Hebrew; the people who are *Jews and live in *Israel.

Jew, Jewish ~ a person who is from the family of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; a person who believes the *faith of the *Jews, called Judaism.

justification, justify, justified ~ the act of God when he says that he sees us as good; this happens at the moment when we trust Jesus; the state of being right with God.

kingdom ~ where God rules as king; land where a king rules.

lord ~ someone with authority.

Lord ~ the name for God or Jesus; it means that he is head over all.

messenger ~ a person who brings messages.

Messiah ~ the special servant of God, the name that God chose for Jesus Christ. The person whom God sent to *save his people from their *sins. God promised the *Jews that Messiah would come. Jesus is that Messiah but most *Jews still do not believe it.

mystery ~ something hidden that we cannot explain; something that is secret and unknown.

New Testament ~ the last part of the Bible, which the writers wrote after the life of Jesus.

Old Testament ~ the first part of the Bible, which the writers wrote before the life of Jesus.

pastor(s) ~ men that God has chosen to look after the *church.

peace ~ when we are friends with God and with other people; freedom from mental troubles or troubles in the *spirit; a friendly attitude towards other people.

praise ~ words that say how good a person is; words that give love to God, as when we are praying and singing to him.

preach ~ to tell and explain the good news about Jesus Christ to a group of people.

prophet(s) ~ those who are able to tell other people what God wants; people who spoke for God; someone who tells about things that will happen in the future.

rage ~ extreme anger.

repent ~ to turn from *sin to God's ways; to change from past evil ways; a change of mind when we turn away from wrong things.

resurrection ~ to be raised from death to live again.

righteous, righteousness ~ to be right with God; people that God sees as clean and not his enemies.

Rome, Roman ~ Rome was the most famous city in the world at the time of Jesus. Their soldiers fought and defeated many countries. They made the people obey the rules of Rome. They made them pay taxes to Rome. The people could not rule themselves, but they had to obey the laws of Rome.

sacrifice ~ a gift to God to ask him to forgive *sins, or to thank him for something. An gift to God, often an animal or bird, by the *Jews to ask God to forgive their *sins. Jesus gave himself to die as a sacrifice for our *sins.

saint ~ a holy person; someone who knows Jesus Christ as *Lord.

salvation ~ rescue from the punishment and power of *sin.

Satan ~ a name for the chief bad *spirit; the top devil; he is also called the *devil.

save ~ to rescue someone from the results of their *sins

Saviour ~ Jesus, the person who rescues us from the results of our *sins.

seal, sealed ~ a sign that something is genuine.

sexual ~ matters that are the subject of sex.

shepherd ~ someone who looks after sheep; a *pastor.

shield ~ a piece of *armour that you hold to protect the front of the body.

sin, sinner, sinful ~ when people do things against God; when we do not do the commands of God; the evil nature that is in us that we were born with.

slavery ~ when one person owns another person.

spirit ~ evil spirit(s) from the *devil; part of a person when they are alive, which we cannot see; it decides what to do – good or bad; God's *Holy Spirit, whom Jesus promised to send to all who know him as the Son of God.

spiritual ~ life that relates to the *spirit.

steward ~ someone who looks after the property of another person.

submit, submitting ~ to give in to another person.

temple ~ a special building where people went to praise false gods. (See also Temple.)

Temple ~ the special building where *Jews went to praise God; the holy place in heaven where God is.

throne ~ a chair for a king or a god.

universe ~ everything that God has made.

weapon ~ a tool of war for attack or defence in war or fighting.

worship ~ to give thanks to God and Jesus; to show God that we love him very much. To tell someone that they are very great and that you love them. To love and *praise or thank someone (God) more than anyone else.

Book List

John R. W. Stott ~ The Message of Ephesians ~ BST ~ IVP

Francis Foulkes ~ Ephesians ~ Tyndale N.T. Commentaries ~ IVP

William Barclay ~ The Letters to the Galatians & Ephesians ~ The Daily Bible Study ~ The St. Andrew Press, Edinburgh

Charles John Ellicott D.D. ~ A Bible Commentary for English Readers by various writers ~ Cassell & Company Limited

Eight Translation New Testament ~ Tyndale

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