



**FOUNDATIONS  
OF FAITH**

The Message of the Bible

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**Week 31: Ephesians**

**The Teaching of Ephesians**

*The Prologue (1:1–2)*

1. As he did to the Galatians, Paul reminds us readers that he was an apostle by an act of God. Thus, his teaching was authoritative.
2. He addresses his epistle to the saints and the faithful. It is interesting to note that there is very little personal interaction between Paul and the Ephesians. As such, this is a great model of a book that would be ideal to read in all the churches (cf. Col 4:16).

*Salvation of the Church to the Praise of God's Glory (1:3–14)*

1. In this beloved “sentence,” Paul articulates clearly how the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit bring about salvation.
2. The Father...
  - a. blessed with every spiritual blessing
  - b. chose for holiness and blamelessness
  - c. predestined to adoption as children
  - d. bestowed freely His grace
3. In the Son (Christ) believers find...
  - a. redemption through His blood
  - b. forgiveness of trespasses
  - c. an inheritance
  - d. hope
4. The Holy Spirit seals the believer, giving confidence that God's promises in Christ will be realized.
5. All of these “spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ” (v. 3) are applied to the members of the church for a specific purpose—the praise of God's glory (vv. 6, 12, 14).

*Paul's Petition for the Church (1:15–23)*

1. Having outlined the blessings of faith, Paul gives thanks for the faith that is found in his readers.
2. Paul prays specifically that God would give them spiritual knowledge. Lest we wonder what this knowledge is, he gives us specifics:

- a. knowledge of the hope that our calling brings
- b. knowledge of the surpassing greatness of His power
3. This knowledge is based upon the power of God that was demonstrated in raising Christ to His seat of authority over all things.
4. Christ's authority is specifically demonstrated in his position as head of the church, which is His body.

*Salvation and Seating of the Church in Christ (2:1–10)*

1. Paul first reminds the believer of the walk of disobedience that characterized his/her state of deadness.
2. However, he also reminds the believer that the merciful God has drastically changed his/her position in Christ.
3. Moreover, having been saved through faith, the believer must remember that all of these things (including faith) are the gift of God that could have never been earned by works.
4. At the same time, Paul finally reminds the believer that he/she is God's workmanship. Thus, one's position in Christ was so that the walk of disobedience may be replaced by the "good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them" (v. 10).

*The Relationship of Jew and Gentile in the Church (2:11–3:13)*

1. Whereas Galatians answered questions about the Law from a Jewish perspective, Ephesians treats the same thing from a different point of view—the Gentiles.
2. Through the abolishing of the Law through the blood/cross of Christ, those who were strangers to the promises (Gentiles) were brought near and reconciled with Israel into one body, the church.
3. As such, the united building is "being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit" (2:22).
4. Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, had particular insight into "the mystery of Christ" (v. 4), which he seems to describe in v. 6:
  - a. Gentiles are fellow heirs
  - b. Gentiles are fellow members of the body
  - c. Gentiles are fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus
5. In my opinion, the mystery of which Paul speaks is less the fact that Gentiles were recipients of God's grace as it is the presence of Jew and Gentile on equal footing in this body called the church. In other words, it should not have surprised the reader of the OT that Gentiles were recipients of blessing—Paul even quotes the OT in 2:17. The mystery was the nature of the community of faith in Christ.

*Another Petition for the Church (3:14–21)*

1. Again in response to profound teaching about God and the gospel of Jesus Christ, Paul prays for strength through the indwelling Spirit, for the persistent presence of Christ by virtue of faith, and for the abiding fullness of God.

2. Paul also prays that the believer may be able to comprehend and know the unfathomable love of Christ.
3. Paul concludes by praying that God may receive glory “in the church and in Christ Jesus” (v. 21).

*The Conduct of the Church (4:1–6:20)*

1. Paul urges his readers to walk in a manner worthy of their calling. This is most demonstrated in the way they treat one another.
  - a. In attitude toward one another, they should be humble, gentle, patient, and tolerant (4:2).
  - b. In community with one another, they should diligently preserve unity (4:3).
  - c. In ministering to one another, they should each provide their necessary part for the benefit of the whole (e.g., 4:12, 16). An example of this would be the working of some for the equipping of the saints.
2. Some of the goals of this walk are (1) unity in faith and in the knowledge of Christ, (2) maturity (4:13), (3) sound doctrine (4:14), and (4) growth of the body (4:16).
3. In 4:17–32, Paul moves to an even clearer explanation of how this walk is accomplished within the church. The key, according to Paul, is a three fold process shown below.

	<b>Lay Aside ...</b>	<b>Be Renewed ...</b>	<b>Put On ...</b>
4:25	falsehood	by knowing that you are a fellow member	speaking truth
4:26–27	anger	by knowing that lack of resolution gives the enemy an opportunity	resolving conflict quickly
4:28	stealing	by knowing that the church is characterized by helping those in need	diligent labor for good
4:29	speaking unwholesome words	by knowing that edifying, well-timed words give grace	words that edify
4:30	grieving the Holy Spirit	by knowing that you were sealed	obedience
4:31–32	bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, slander, and malice	by knowing that you experienced the forgiveness of Christ	kindness, tender-heartedness, and forgiveness

4. Paul’s exhortation is for imitation of God and a Christ-like walk of love (5:1–2). So again, the exhortation is based upon a profound truth of salvation.
5. Furthermore, Paul warns his readers about immorality and impurity as well as the danger of those who deceive with empty words.
6. Being filled with the Spirit has specific results:
  - a. speaking to one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs

- b. singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord
  - c. giving thanks always for all things
  - d. being subject to one another
7. Wives demonstrate these things by submission to their husbands, because of the pattern of headship God set in place.
  8. Husbands demonstrate these things by loving their wife according to the high standard of Christ as demonstrated toward the church.
  9. Children demonstrate these things by obedience to their parents.
  10. Fathers demonstrate these things by not provoking their children and by raising them with godly discipline and instruction.
  11. Slaves demonstrate these things by obedience to their masters as to Christ.
  12. Paul brings to a close His discussion of the conduct of the church with the description of the armor of God. The key to understanding Paul's analogy is to understand that protection is found "in the Lord." Because of their identity with Christ, believers have the privilege of the armor claimed by Yahweh or promised to the Messiah:
    - a. loins girded with truth (Isaiah 11:5)
    - b. breastplate of righteousness (Isaiah 59:17)
    - c. feet shod with gospel of peace (Isaiah 52:7)
    - d. shield of faith (e.g., Ps 7:10)
    - e. helmet of salvation (Isaiah 59:17)
    - f. sword of the Spirit (Isaiah 49:2)

*The Epilogue (6:21–24)*

### **The Purpose of Ephesians**

Paul describes the profound wonder of the eternal Gospel that brought the church into existence and encourages his readers to walk accordingly.

Gentile Christians were shown their place in the purpose of God for the Church and urged to show the outworking of their call in their conduct. (Keith Essex)

### **How should I respond?**