

New Testament Letter: Ephesians – Intro and Saving Faith

Comments in red: Engelbrecht, E. A. (2009). *The Lutheran Study Bible*. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House.

Writer: Paul the apostle

Date: AD 60

Purpose: Paul demonstrates that Baptism unites all Christians.

Reading Ephesians: Baptism unites believers into one Body as easily as water meets and merges on a floor. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians shows that Baptism united Jews and Gentiles, leaders and followers, and all believers across all generations.

Setting: Ephesus was well situated as a trade center, with its harbor, access to the Cayster River, and location close to the Maeander Valley. It was a free city, famous for its temple to the Greek goddess Artemis and also for its thriving Jewish population, which enjoyed considerable privilege.

Central Issue: According to Ac 18–20, Paul spent nearly three years with the Ephesian congregation, more time than with any other mission congregation he served....

The key problem Paul addresses is division between the congregation's Jewish and Gentile members....

After Paul wrote Ephesians in c AD 60, he sent Timothy to Ephesus as a leader because false doctrine afflicted the congregation (1Tm 1:3).

Blessings for Readers: Ephesians

beautifully describes the important truths of the Christian faith that St Paul so eloquently emphasizes. The first chapter sees the entire Christian life in view of God's choosing His people in Christ. These words, rightly applied, offer incredible comfort in the midst of suffering and doubt. Likewise, no other place in the NT describes the relationship between grace, faith, and good works (justification and sanctification) quite so clearly as Eph 2. The



entire Letter leads us to treasure our Baptism into Christ and into His Church, where a new way of life prevails.

As you study Ephesians, the Lord will equip you for victory over temptation and strife, over sin and Satan, so that you may serve Him and His people in all unity and joy. Read Ephesians as God's plan for your family, your pastor, and your congregation as you serve together according to God's eternal purposes.

Outline:

- I. Salutation (1:1–2)
- II. Prologue on Unity (1:3–23)
- III. Proofs for Unity (chs 2–3)
- IV. Baptism Unites (4:1–5:20)
- V. Baptism Reorders Relationships (5:21–6:9)
- VI. Baptism Equips with Armor (6:10–17)
- VII. Conclusion (6:18–24)

Saving Faith

To understand what faith is and how it works, consider the following chart and the analogy of a person drowning in a vast ocean.

View of Faith	Source	Explanation	What Is the Difference?
Faith in faith <i>(Fideism)</i>	Existentialism	You should trust in something or someone, whether Christ, Buddha, or anything else. Your commitment itself saves you, not what you commit to.	If you are drowning in the ocean, will it matter what you cling to (life preserver, passing shark, anchor, etc.)? Faith in faith is misguided. Saving faith trusts in Jesus Christ, the only Savior.
Faith in feelings <i>(Emotionalism)</i>	Revivalism	You can confirm your salvation through an emotional or religious experience. If you have a positive feeling toward God, God will have a positive feeling toward you.	Feeling safe does not make you safe. E.g., if you were drowning in the ocean but convinced yourself that you would be rescued, would that save you? Feelings do not always grasp the true nature of a situation. However, God's Word and promise of salvation are faithful. Feelings should follow God's Word and faith (Rm 5:1; Eph 3:12).
Faith as work offered to God <i>(Synergism)</i>	Heresy of Pelagius (c. 354–420) and others	God does most of the work in salvation, but you must do your part by putting your faith in Him and living a good life.	If you drowned and died in the ocean, you would obviously have no power to cooperate with a rescuer. In a similar way, the Bible declares you dead in your sins (Rm 5:12; Eph 2:1). Unless God rescues you and resuscitates you through the Gospel, you are surely lost.
Faith as God's gift	Scriptural truth taught by Christ, the apostles, Church Fathers, and Martin Luther	God's promise of salvation creates faith, or trust, in your heart. Faith is a gift you receive through the Gospel of forgiveness in Christ (Rm 1:16; Eph 2:8–9).	Just as a dead person in the midst of the ocean is lost without the help of a rescuer, you are utterly lost unless God rescues you. God finds you dead in your sins (Rm 3:10–18; Eph 2:5). He sends His Son to rescue you (Rm 5:6–9; Eph 1:5). Through the Gospel, Christ resuscitates you—then you believe (Rm 10:14, 17; Eph 1:13)!

Engelbrecht, E. A. (2009). *The Lutheran Study Bible* (p. 2016). Concordia Publishing House.

New Testament Letter: Ephesians 1:1-23

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The Blessings of Redemption: 1:1-23

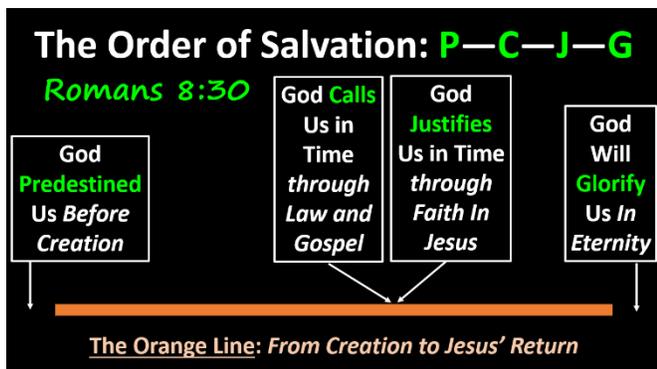
1. **1:1** Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are at Ephesus and *who are faithful in Christ Jesus*: ² Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - a. Whose idea was it for Paul to be an apostle of Christ Jesus? _____
 - b. Saints are h_____ o_____!
 - c. What does it mean that they were “faithful in Christ Jesus”? _____

2. ³ Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ, ⁴ just as He [the Father] chose us in Him [His Son] before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him.
 - a. What are some of our “spiritual” blessings? _____
 - b. God knows the end from the beginning (Isaiah 46:10), so He knew ✦Adam and Eve would fall, ✦we would inherit their sin nature, and ✦we would be helpless to escape condemnation, so God chose us in the Christ that we would be His holy children – *wow, we are so blessed!*

3. In love ⁵ He [the Father] predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, ⁶ to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.
 - a. When God *predestined* us – He determined our destiny, *our future in advance*. Even though He knew we would be poor miserable sinners, He chose to take all necessary actions – *by grace and kindness, not because we deserved it* – to wash us clean and bring us into His holy family through Jesus, who is the Christ.
 - b. What should be our proper response? _____

4. ⁷ In Him [the Christ] we have redemption [deliverance from sin, death, and condemnation] through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace [undeserved love] ⁸ which He lavished on us. // **2 Cor. 8:9** “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich.”

5. In all wisdom [understanding] and insight [intelligence] ⁹ He [the Father] made known to us the mystery [secret] of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed [planned] in Him [His Son] ¹⁰ with a view to an administration [God's arrangements for mankind's redemption] suitable to the fullness of the times, *that is*, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth.
 - a. When the first fullness arrived, the Son of God put on flesh: **Galatians 4:4** “But when the fullness of the time came,



God sent forth His Son, born of a woman...”

- b. When the second fullness arrives, Jesus will return: **Romans 11:25** “...a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in...”
6. In Him [the Christ]¹¹ also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His [the Father’s] purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will,¹² to the end that we [believers] who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory. // ...confessing that the blessings [of salvation] are due to God’s grace, not our merit.
7. ¹³ In Him [the Christ], you [Gentiles in Ephesus] also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation-- having also believed [faith comes by hearing, Rom. 10:17], you were sealed in Him [the Christ] with the Holy Spirit of promise,¹⁴ who is given as a pledge [down payment] of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God’s own possession [the fullness of eternal life in God’s presence], to the praise of His glory. // sealed. Baptized. A seal marked ownership. The word was used... for a brand on an animal or a tattoo on a slave or soldier. In the OT... circumcision sealed the Israelites as God’s people (Gn 17:11; Rm 4:11; Col 2:11–12).
8. ¹⁵ For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which *exists* among you and your love for all the saints,¹⁶ do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers;¹⁷ that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom [correct understanding] and of revelation [seeing what God is revealing] in the knowledge of Him.
- a. Since faith is in the heart and not visible to others, how did Paul know that his readers had faith?
- b. How might we imitate Paul in our prayers?
- i. By identifying those who show evidence of their faith, *then giving thanks to God*.
- ii. By identifying those who say they have faith yet seem to have no evidence, *then praying for repentance or growth*.
9. ¹⁸ *I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened [In biblical language, the heart is the seat of thought and will (not emotions)], so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,¹⁹ and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe.*
- a. When people are dead in their sins, they are either ignorant of what we know and believe, or they refuse to believe it.
- b. However, when God makes a person alive in Christ, he begins to see and understand the great blessings of God’s love, forgiveness, and plan for eternity.
10. *These are* in accordance with the working of the strength of His might²⁰ which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly *places*,²¹ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. // *God’s power was shown in the extraordinary acts of Christ’s resurrection and ascension. In Baptism, God raised us by that same power, and He continues to use it for our benefit (2:6; 1Co 6:14; 2Co 13:4; Col 2:12).*
11. ²² *And He* [the Father] put all things in subjection under His [Jesus’] feet [Mt. 28:18], and gave Him as head over all things to the church,²³ which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all. // The church includes all people of all time and all places who are repentant. All are united and members of the one body of Christ!

New Testament Letter: Ephesians 2:1-22

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Made Alive in Christ: 2:1-22

2:1-10 Summary: Judaizers threatened most early Christian communities, teaching that Gentiles had to obey the OT Law in addition to faith in Christ. But Paul insists that God saves both Jews and Gentiles by grace through faith, apart from any works. Today's self-help culture likewise tempts us to try to do it all ourselves.

1. Spiritually dead and deserving God's wrath:

2:1 And you [Ephesians] were [spiritually] dead in your trespasses [deviations from right living] and sins [wrongdoing], ² in which you **formerly** walked according to the course of this [fallen] world, according to [the devil,] the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience [unbelievers]. ³ Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

- Before being saved, everyone was dead and blind to ♦the condemning power of sin, ♦the saving truth of the Bible, and ♦the saving work of Jesus.
- Unbelievers, *by nature*, ♦belong to the fallen world, ♦think like the fallen world, and ♦live like the fallen world (Rom. 8:5-6). If we can look back to a time when we did not know Jesus, such things were also true in our lives ☹.
- We not only dishonored God in our lives – by ♦**not** acknowledging God, ♦**not** having godly sorrow, and ♦**not** trusting in Jesus, *but we were fully deserving of God's horrible wrath*.
- For people who might be dead in their sins, how can we point them to Jesus?

2. Saved by grace through faith: ⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when

we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶ and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus, ⁷ so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; ⁹ not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

- "But God..." – Since we were totally helpless, *GOD DID EVERYTHING!*
- "rich in mercy" – God was *generous* in holding back from us the eternal wrath we have earned and deserved.
- "His great love" – God's love is never selfish, but genuine. *He truly wants our best now and always*, He even gave His own Son to the terrible agony of being ♦beaten, ♦crucified, and ♦crushed – *with our sins and His eternal wrath*.
- When we were dead in our sins ☹, *God made us alive in Christ* ☺!
- "Raised... and seated" [aorist active] – Having been made alive in Christ, *we have been elevated to an amazing position*: "...we, by our conversion, have become partakers of [a heavenly mode of existence]. Our mind is now set, inclined, toward heavenly things. The exalted Christ has elevated our spirit into the spiritual, divine, heavenly life" (Kretzmann).
- "the surpassing riches of His grace" – "Our salvation here in time is an advance payment, earnest-money, assuring us of the last and most perfect manifestation of God's grace, which lies beyond the present age and world" (Kretzmann).

- g. “by grace you have been saved through faith” – Because of God’s undeserved love, *He sent His Son to redeem us*; then, *by the HS*, He gave us faith to trust in Jesus for eternal life.
- h. “not of yourselves, it is the gift of God” – Eternal life is God’s gift as well as the faith by which we receive that gift.
- i. “not as a result of works, so that no one may boast” – For all who are or ever will be saved, it is because of **God’s** love, **God’s** gift of eternal life, and **God’s** gift of faith – *by which we received His gift of eternal life*.
3. **Made alive in Christ to do good works:**
¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them. // Some comments by Dr. Kretzmann on “good works”:
- a. “These good works, which are the evidence of the new creature in us, by which our Christianity is tested and approved, have been made ready and set forth by God before we ever thought of performing them.”
- b. “Christ’s holiness, purity, humility, meekness, benevolence, and kindness appear in the lives of the Christians.”
- c. “A true Christian does not even boast of the good works which it is his privilege to perform, knowing that it is the power of Christ and God in him that enables him to follow the example of Christ.”
4. **Let’s see the BIG PICTURE of verses 1-10:**
- a. **1-3:** We were dead in our sins and deserving of eternal punishment.
- b. **4-9:** We were saved, raised, and seated – all because of God’s love and action to provide salvation through His Son, connect us to Him, and keep us in Him.
- c. **10:** Since God has saved us from a horrible eternity through Jesus and planned good things for us to do, we have every reason to gladly learn and do what God has planned for us!
5. **The former sad state of the Gentiles:**
¹¹ Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called [*in an offensive way*] “Uncircumcision” by [*the Jews*] the so-called “Circumcision,” which is performed in the flesh by human hands--
¹² remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. // Paul wanted those saved Gentile Ephesians to fully realize their former *sad position* and their current *blessed position* (2:1-10).
6. **Jews and Gentiles are united in Christ:**
¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you [*Gentiles*] who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴ For He Himself is our peace [**†**], who made both groups [*Jews and Gentiles*] into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, ¹⁵ by abolishing in His flesh the enmity [*the hostility that existed between God and people*], which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, ¹⁶ and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. // There is one body of Christ – to which all repentant Jews and Gentiles belong.
7. ¹⁷ AND HE CAME AND PREACHED PEACE TO YOU WHO WERE FAR AWAY [*Gentiles*], AND PEACE TO THOSE WHO WERE NEAR [*Jews*]; ¹⁸ for through Him [*Christ Jesus*] we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household, ²⁰ having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, ²¹ in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, ²² in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit. // In God’s kingdom, *through Christ*, Jews and Gentiles are first-class citizens!

New Testament Letter: Ephesians 3:1-21

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Paul's Stewardship: 3:1-21

1. **3:1** For this reason [because Christ has removed all sins and opened the way for all Jews and Gentiles] I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles – [“The thought of his apostolic ministry now causes Paul to digress with the purpose of bringing home to the Ephesians the scope and the glory of this ministry” (Kretzmann)]; then he continues to digress through verse 13]

proclamation of the Gospel among the Gentiles that had caused his arrest” (Kretzmann).

2. ⁴ By referring to this, when you read [the Scriptures] you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, ⁵ which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the

Spirit; ⁶ to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body [the body of Christ, which includes all who have been saved], and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel, ⁷ of which I was made a minister, according to the gift of God's grace which was given to me according to the



² if indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace which was given to me for you [since Christ sent me to bring God's truth and salvation to you Gentiles]; ³ that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery [that through the Christ salvation is for the Jews and the Gentiles], as I wrote before in brief. // Prisoner: “Paul was at that time bound, a prisoner in Rome, waiting for the disposal of his case before the imperial court. He calls himself the prisoner of Christ on behalf of the Gentiles, because he was suffering this imprisonment for work done in his capacity as minister of Christ, and because it had been principally his

working of His power. // Ministers are never worthy but called by God's grace – by His *undeserved* love and favor.

3. ⁸ To me, the very least of all saints [because of how I strongly persecuted followers of Christ], this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ [including full forgiveness, membership in God's kingdom and family, eternal life, etc. – none of which cannot be fully understood in this life], ⁹ and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things; ¹⁰ so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through

the church [the body of believers] to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places.

- a. "All men by nature are in the dark concerning the Gospel and its wonderful message of free grace. Therefore, it is necessary that they be enlightened, that they be shown, that they be turned from darkness to light (2 Corinthians 4:4; 2 Peter 1:19; Acts 26:18). They must be told that the mystery concerning the salvation of all men, including the Gentiles, is now openly proclaimed and applied to all men" (Kretzmann).
- b. rulers and the authorities... – evil angels. ^{NAS} **Ephesians 6:12** For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.
4. ¹¹ This [revealing] was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He [the Father] carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, ¹² in whom we have boldness [knowing our sins are forgiven] and confident access [knowing the way from us to God is open] through faith in Him [Jesus]. ¹³ Therefore I ask you not to lose heart at my tribulations on your behalf, for they are your glory. // Paul, in living out his calling, brought eternal benefit to the Ephesians and his own imprisonment.
5. ¹⁴ For this reason [because Christ has removed all sins and opened the way for all Jews and Gentiles – which connects back to 3:1] I bow my knees [indicating Paul's position of prayer] before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name [since the Father planned all of time and eternity; He should also be respected, trusted, and honored by all as Father], ¹⁶ that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that

you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸ may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹ and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.

- a. He would grant you – we are eternally blessed *because of God the Father!*
- b. riches of His glory – God's glory is His *highest and most exalted position.*
- c. strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man – The Father, by the HS, has given us trust in Jesus.
- d. rooted and grounded in love – "If Christ lives in the heart by faith, then love toward God and love toward one's neighbor will follow as a matter of course" (Kretzmann).
- e. the breadth and length and height and depth – Try to step back and picture the immensity of God, His love, His kingdom – from before time through eternity, including all who ever have died in Christ or will die in Christ or will be alive in Christ when He returns, and the awesomeness of spending eternity in God's glorious presence!
6. ²⁰ Now to Him [God the Father] who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask [in prayer] or think [in our minds], according to the power [of His Spirit] that works within us, ²¹ to Him [the Father] be the glory in the church [among the saved ones – since the Father planned and brought about their salvation] and in Christ Jesus [who was perfectly obedient to the Father's plan to win our salvation] to all generations forever and ever. Amen.

Ephesians 1-3 have focused on God's plan to save, then His work by the Spirit and through His Son to work His plan accomplish His great work to eternally save condemned sinners.

Ephesians 4-6 will focus on God's will for all who know Him as Father, Jesus as Lord, and are indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

New Testament Letter: Ephesians 4:1-16

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Unity of the Spirit: 4:1-16

1. **4:1** Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, ² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, ³ being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

- a. **Therefore** – recalls chapters 1-3.
- b. Paul being a prisoner – *partially because of his work among the Ephesians* – gave more weight to his plea.
- c. Because of the amazing, loving, powerful things that the Lord had done for the Ephesians to save them (and us), *it is certainly fitting for all of us to:*
 - i. Be humble – *considering others to be more important than we are.*
 - ii. Be gentle – *courteous, considerate.*
 - iii. Be patient – *enduring, steadfast.*
 - iv. Be tolerant – *enduring difficult Christians in loving ways.*
 - v. Be united – *with other believers, whenever such unity is possible.*

2. ⁴ **There is one body and one Spirit**, just as also you were called in **one hope** of your calling; ⁵ **one Lord, one faith, one baptism**, ⁶ **one God and Father** of all who is over all and through all and in all. // Picking up on “unity” from verse 3, notice all the references to **“one.”** What do they mean?

- a. **One body** – _____
- b. **One Spirit** – _____
- c. **One hope** – _____
- d. **One Lord** – _____
- e. **One faith** – _____
- f. **One baptism** – _____
- g. **One God and Father** – _____

3. Dr. Kretzmann summarized this section:
“This bit of information very properly follows the instruction concerning the union of all believers in the holy Christian Church, for it throws the responsibility upon the individual as a member of the whole”: ⁷ **But to each one of us grace** [*undeserved love*] **was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift.** // “With emphasis the apostle states that every single Christian has received special gifts or some special gift from God, which he should apply in the interest of the Church, for the benefit of the brethren. He is speaking of gifts of grace, evidence of which is to be seen in the various talents of preaching, teaching, organizing, governing, mission-work, tact in charity, etc. Every Christian, by reason of the grace which he has received, through the special spiritual talent which Christ distributes from His boundless hoard, is pledged to do his part toward the maintenance of unity and peace, as well as toward the further growth of the Church” (Kretzmann).
4. ⁸ **Therefore it says** [in Psalm 68:18], **“WHEN HE ASCENDED ON HIGH, HE LED CAPTIVE A HOST OF CAPTIVES, AND HE GAVE GIFTS TO MEN.”** ⁹ (Now this expression, “He ascended,” what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? ¹⁰ He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things.) // “...the promised Messiah, ...fully realized by His ascension to heaven, by His entering into the unlimited use of the authority and power which was transmitted to his human nature.... Of this exalted Christ Paul now says... that He bestows gifts upon men, various gifts of His grace...” (Kretzmann).

5. ¹¹ And He gave some *as apostles*, and some *as prophets*, and some *as evangelists*, and some *as pastors and teachers*, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; ¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.

a. The positions: "...the apostle does not exclude specific preparation for the ministerial office. But it is the exalted Christ that makes these persons willing, that works in their hearts the resolution to serve the Church, that blesses their study, that adds spiritual enlightenment to intellectual gifts, that distributes gifts for individual stations and special circumstances" (Kretzmann).

- i. **Apostles** – *sent by the Christ to proclaim the good news and call people to repent and believe.*
- ii. **Prophets** – *called to declare God's message publicly, and sometimes speak for God to foretell a future event.*
- iii. **Evangelists** – *announcers of the good news, can include missionaries, preachers, and teachers.* (In some African countries, there are men called evangelists who preach and teach, but are not ordained, not "stewards of the mysteries of God" (1Co. 4:1) – *so they do not Baptize or say the words of institution for the Lord's Supper.*)
- iv. **Pastors and teachers** – *Christian shepherds who lead a group of believers – primarily through the preaching and teaching of God's word.* (Today, many women serve in that role; does such service agree with the Bible or not?)

b. The purposes: Regarding the saints (all believers): The people in those positions above should be equipping them, training them, perfecting them.

i. **How?** The saints should *faithfully* and *purposefully* attend the preaching and teaching, as well as being devoted to daily Bible time and some memorizing of key verses. Then the saints should apply what they learn in their lives.

ii. **Why?** So they can serve in God's kingdom according to His plan for each of their lives (2:10).

c. The timing: For how long should such things continue? Until we are finally with God in the fulness of eternal life.

6. More benefits of growing up in knowing and living God's word: ¹⁴ *As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming;* ¹⁵ *but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ,* ¹⁶ *from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.*

a. V. 14 – By the work of the HS and our cooperation with Him in learning and living, let us clearly see the false teachings that continue to expand in the world, then, *let us never be drawn away to believe them.*

b. V. 15 – Since we are growing up, we know God's truth, *so let us SPEAK IT IN LOVE* – to be like Christ as we interact with others, always caring about them, being considerate of them, and speaking for their eternal benefit.

c. V. 16 – The body of Christ at Bethlehem is a complex body of approximately 100 parts – *100 active members*, each with a God-given role. May the Spirit keep ♦building us up, ♦drawing us together, and ♦moving us to action so we grow in speaking God's word and reflecting God's love to everyone!

New Testament Letter: Ephesians 4:17-32

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The Christian's Walk: 4:17-32

7. **Stop living like unbelievers:** ¹⁷ So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, **that you walk** [live] **no longer just as the Gentiles** [unbelievers] **also walk**, in the **futility** [nonsense, nothingness, emptiness] of their mind, ¹⁸ being **darkened in their understanding** [unable to understand], excluded from **the life of God** [forgiveness, spiritual life, eternal life, etc.] because of the **ignorance** [lack of knowing better] that is in them [**Why?**], because of the **hardness of their heart** [unwillingness to learn]; ¹⁹ and they, having become **callous** [dead to feeling], have given themselves over to **sensuality** [indecent and outrageous sexual behavior] for the practice of every kind of [sexual] **impurity with greediness** [covetousness, sinful desire].

8. **Lay aside the old self, put on the new self:**

²⁰ But you did not learn Christ in this way [as noted in verses 17-19], ²¹ if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him [pointing to the importance of believers growing up in knowing and living God's truth], just as truth is in Jesus, ²² that, in reference to your former manner of life, you **lay aside the old self**, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, ²³ and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, ²⁴ and **put on the new self**, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.

- a. As we continue in Christ, a constant battle will rage between the old self—*urging us to sin*, and the new self—*urging us to know and follow God's truth*.
- b. In this life the new self cannot defeat the old self, but the old self can defeat the new self:

- i. Paul wanted to please the Lord in everything, *but he still found himself falling into sin*: "...what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I *would* like to *do*, but I am doing the very thing I hate" (Rom. 7:15).

- ii. Peter wrote about people falling away: "...if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them" (2 Pet. 2:20-21).

- c. **Luther explained the proper outcome of our baptism into Christ**: "...the Old Adam in us should by daily contrition and repentance be drowned and die with all sins and evil desires, and that a new man should daily emerge and arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.

9. **Specific instructions for the new self:**

- a. ²⁵ Therefore, laying aside **falsehood** [lying], **SPEAK TRUTH EACH ONE of you WITH HIS NEIGHBOR** [a fellow believer – which is the meaning here], for we are **members of one another** [reminding us on the great unity among believers that Paul identified in vv. 4-6].
- b. ²⁶ **BE ANGRY, AND yet DO NOT SIN** [for example, be angry about the murder of preborn children, but don't murder the abortion doctors]; **do not let the sun go**

down on your anger, ²⁷ and do not give the devil an opportunity.

- i. If we hang on to our anger, we give the devil an opportunity to lead us into sin, so it is vital to let it go.
- ii. What can help us let go of anger? Remember or act in these ways:
 1. God knows the situation.
 2. If someone has sinned against us, let us follow these words of Jesus: “If you brother sins against you, go and point out his sin to him when you are alone with him. If he listens to you, you have won your brother” (Matt. 18:15 NET).
 3. God calls us to suffer patiently whenever we are wronged.
 4. Vengeance belongs to God; He will repay at the right time.
 5. As we have been forgiven by God in Christ, so we must extend forgiveness to others.
 6. Whenever we are having trouble extending forgiveness, let us pray for the ones who have angered us. The devil will hate such a prayer, but God will use it to remove our anger.
- c. ²⁸ He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have *something* to share with one who has need. // When people can work and earn what they need, they should. Today in America, millions of able-bodied people are not using their abilities but are being supported by those who are working – as the federal government gifts to them the taxes we have paid. What are the results? God is dishonored, laziness is promoted, a worker shortage is created, businesses endure substandard workers, the national debt increases, dependance on the government grows, and the strength of

our nation declines. LORD, HAVE MERCY!

- d. ²⁹ Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such *a word* as is good for edification according to the need *of the moment*, so that it will give grace to those who hear. // In other words, if you don’t have something positive and beneficial to say, SHUT UP! Test your words before you say them:
 - i. Are they true?
 - ii. Are they kind?
 - iii. Are they beneficial?
 - e. ³⁰ Do not grieve [*sadden, pain*] the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption [1:13]. // The HS is “the Lord and giver of life” [Nicene Creed] – since He is the One who works through holy baptism and God’s holy word to give people the benefits of Jesus’ saving work. Since He has done that and much more for each of us, let us strive to avoid all that brings Him sadness and pain – like knowing the truth, but not living it and sharing it. Jesus said: “Why do you call Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?” (Lk. 6:46).
 - f. ³¹ Let all bitterness [*resentment, animosity*] and wrath [*hot temper*] and anger and clamor [*shouting*] and slander [*harmful speech against someone’s reputation*] be put away from you, along with all malice [*evil, badness*]. // Even though such things are common today, they should be absent from us who know Jesus and have the HS living within us.
 - g. ³² Be kind [*good, pleasant*] to one another, tender-hearted [*compassionate*], forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you. // Think about the fifth petition! How has God in Christ forgiven you?
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New Testament Letter: Ephesians 5:1-33

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Be Imitators of God: 5:1-21

1. The desire of the new nature:

5:1 Therefore [because of who God has made you to be in Christ] be imitators of God, as beloved children; ² and walk in love [loving God—studying His word and doing it, and loving others—by seeing their needs and taking action to help them], just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.

// OT priests offered animal sacrifices for their own sins and for the sins of the people. All such sacrifices pointed ahead to Jesus, *the sinless Lamb of God*, who offered Himself to God for our eternal benefit.

2. Things that all believers should avoid:

a. ³ But immorality [generally, of every kind of extramarital, unlawful, or unnatural sexual intercourse fornication, sexual immorality, prostitution] or any impurity [moral uncleanness] or greed [coveting] must not even be named [known] among you, as is proper among saints [ones whom God has made holy in His sight];

b. ⁴ and there must be no filthiness [indecentcy] and silly [foolish, idle, useless] talk, or coarse jesting [vulgar talk], which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.

3. Things that destroy believers –

immorality, impurity, covetousness: ⁵ For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person [one who practices sexual immorality, a fornicator] or covetous man, who is an idolater [one who worships idols instead of fearing God], has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

a. Most today are not worshipping rocks or wooden statues, but they are worshipping ☹self, ☹money, ☹sports,

☹entertainment, ☹family, and

☹anything else they put BEFORE GOD.

b. ^{NAS 1} **John 2:15-16** “Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.”

4. **Do not be deceived:** Even though ♣church bodies, ♣pastors, ♣church members, and ♣decent hardworking people indulge in the contents of verse 5 and try to tell us and themselves that they are good with God, **let us not be deceived.** ⁶ Let no one deceive [mislead] you with empty [worthless] words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

5. Wise advice:

a. ⁷ **Therefore do not be partakers with them** [the immoral, impure, and idolaters]; ⁸ **for you were** formerly darkness, but **now** you are Light in the Lord [THEREFORE]; **walk as children of Light** ⁹ (for the fruit of the Light *consists* in all goodness and righteousness [upright behavior] and truth), ¹⁰ trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.

b. ¹¹ **Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them** [by showing them God's disapproval and calling them to repent]; ¹² for it is disgraceful [shameful] even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret. ¹³ But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light. ¹⁴ For this reason it says, **“Awake** [repent], **sleeper** [you who are dead in your sins], **And arise from the dead, And Christ will shine on you.”** //

The truth and light of **God's Word** not only exposes evil but can transform evil persons into good by the work of the Holy Spirit.

- c. ¹⁵ Therefore be careful how you walk [live], not as unwise [foolish] men but as wise, ¹⁶ making the most of your time [doing good toward others with the time you have], because the days are evil [as the devil himself, the fallen world in which we live, and the sinful nature in each of us try to pull us in their direction]. ¹⁷ So then do not be foolish [senseless], but understand what the will of the Lord is [as stated in the Scriptures].
- d. ¹⁸ And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation ["the act of one who has abandoned himself to reckless immoral behavior" (Friberg, BW)], but be filled with the Spirit [that is, let the HS be in control of every aspect of your life, which will produce these results:],
- ¹⁹ speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,
 - singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord;
 - praying by] ²⁰ always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father;
 - ²¹ and be subject [voluntarily subordinate yourself] to one another in the fear of Christ. // **Taking one's proper role in God's order and laying aside one's selfish interests.**

Marriage Like Christ and the Church: 5:22-33

6. **Instructions for wives – with an emphasis on Christ:** ²² Wives, be subject [voluntarily subordinate yourselves] to your own husbands, as to the Lord [in the same way that you voluntarily subordinate yourselves to the Lord]. [Why?] ²³ For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church [the one body of all believers], He Himself being the Savior of the body. ²⁴ But as the church is subject to Christ, so

also the wives *ought to be* to their husbands in everything. // Note the parallel: As believers are subject to Christ, so wives are to be subject to their own husbands.

7. **Instructions for husbands – with an emphasis on Christ:**

- a. ²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and [How great was that love? He:] gave Himself up for her, [Why?] ²⁶ so that He might sanctify her [make her holy in God's sight], having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word [that is, through baptism], ²⁷ that He [Christ] might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless [in God's sight through His finished work].
- b. ²⁸ So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. [How does a husband love his own body? ...] He who loves his own wife loves himself; ²⁹ for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also *does* the church, ³⁰ because we are members of His body. ³¹ FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND SHALL BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH. ³² This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. // **The one flesh reality is the key!** Even though we physically see two: *Christ and believers*, and *husband and wife*, it is critical to remember and function according to the **one flesh relationship!**

8. **Husband and wife summary:**

³³ Nevertheless, each individual [husband] among you also is to love his own wife even as himself [How? ...], and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband. // **...everyone should love and value the spouse God gave to him [/her].**

New Testament Letter: Ephesians 6:1-24

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Family Relationships 6:1-9

1. **6:1 Children, obey** [surrender to] your parents in the Lord, for this is right.
² HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER (which is the first commandment with a promise), ³ SO THAT IT MAY BE WELL WITH YOU, AND THAT YOU MAY LIVE LONG ON THE EARTH. // Quotes from Kretzmann:
 - a. **obey**: “The apostle does not make it a matter of choice or of disposition, but of duty: it is the right thing, it is in accordance with the Law of God, with His order from the beginning, that children yield obedience to their parents. It is also not a matter following upon a mutual agreement, but it is a state into which the children are born; by the fact of their birth God places them into subjection to their parents.”
 - b. “...parents... are God's representatives and will commit a grievous sin if they do not maintain the honor of their position. Christian children will therefore be obedient to their parents, not merely on the basis of natural right, but in the Lord, to give evidence of their relation to God in this manner.”
2. ⁴ **Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.** // This instruction to fathers also includes mothers. “Parents should nurture their children, take care of their entire physical, mental, moral, and religious training; their discipline in such education... should be that of Christ, such training as proceeds from Him and is prescribed by Him. The Lord's entire manner of educating is one calculated to win people for Himself, so that they willingly follow His leadership...”
3. ⁵ **Slaves** [employees], be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ; ⁶ not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. ⁷ With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men, ⁸ knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free.
 - a. **The following twofold generalization [is] a helpful guide [to] ...characterize master-slave relations in antiquity:**
 - i. ...slaves who were lazy, disobedient, disrespectful or who otherwise did not live up to the master's trust... usually had to endure stormy and unhappy relationships with their respective masters: perpetual humiliations, demotions, beatings and worse.
 - ii. ...slaves who did their best for the master and his interests and were hardworking, honest, and resourceful, usually found themselves on the master's good side, appreciated his rewards, and could enjoy an astonishing degree of independence and autonomy—even as slaves.... (TLSB, 2095).
 - b. Today, as Christian employees, we are called to do our best – *even if our employers mistreat us or we are underpaid*. Ultimately, we are serving the Lord and He will compensate us properly, either now or in eternity.
4. ⁹ **And masters** [employers], do the same things to them, and give up threatening, knowing that both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no partiality with

Him. // Paul is, of course, speaking to Christian masters/employers; they should remember their middle position between Christ and their employees.

The Armor of God: 6:10-20

5. ¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord [not in our own strength] and in the strength of His might. ¹¹ Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes [especially the false teachings] of the devil. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.
 - a. Behind the Church's earthly opponents stand demonic forces; therefore, the Church should not try to fight with worldly tools (2Co 10:3-4).
 - b. "...our fight is not physical, but spiritual... ✦against the rulers, those in charge of their designated areas, ✦against the authorities, those giving the forces of evil the right to come after us, ✦against the world rulers, those who hold a position over many others, and ✦against the spiritual forces of evil, not located in paradise with God but in very high places!" (Green, 9-2-18).
6. ¹³ **Therefore**, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. // "A Christian must be encased in the armor of God from his head to his feet, in order not to offer a single gap which may give the enemy an opening for successful attack" (Kretzmann).
7. ¹⁴ Stand firm therefore, **HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH** [as we study, memorize, and live God's word], and **HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS** [having been covered with the sinless life of Jesus – in baptism, by grace, through faith], ¹⁵ and having shod **YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE** [living with confidence that

we are at peace with God through Jesus]; ¹⁶ in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith [our God-given trust in Jesus and God's word] with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷ And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION [protecting our thinking from doubt and discouragement, knowing we are saved by grace, through faith, in Jesus, for eternal life], and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God [knowing it, believing it, applying it, and sharing it].

8. ¹⁸ With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, ¹⁹ and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in *proclaiming* it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak. // Once we have the full armor of God in place, let us stay close to God by praying for ourselves, our pastors, and all believers.

The Conclusion: 6:21-24

9. ²¹ But that you also may know about my circumstances, how I am doing, Tychicus [the carrier of this letter], the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will make everything known to you. ²² I have sent him to you for this very purpose, so that you may know about us, and that he may comfort your hearts. // "They would see that the case of their beloved teacher was not so hopeless as might have seemed to them from reports received before, and thus they would be cheered and encouraged" (Kretzmann).
10. ²³ **Peace** be to the brethren [assurance of forgiveness in Christ], and **love with faith** [taking loving action toward others from faith in Christ], from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ [both of whom we trust by the working of the HS]. ²⁴ **Grace** be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with incorruptible [genuine, undying] love.