

## PAUL'S LETTER TO THE CHURCH IN EPHESUS Ephesians Chapters 1 to 6

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The new life God gives us in our Lord Jesus Christ.</li> <li>• The importance of unity, honesty and respect in marriage.</li> <li>• Unity, honesty and respect in family, church and business life.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The power of prayer and the need to listen for answers.</li> <li>• How Satan makes spiritual war on God's people.</li> <li>• Living a holy and victorious life using the whole armour of God.</li> </ul> |
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**THIS BOOK** tells us that Paul planted the church in Ephesus (Turkey) and wanted to remind them of his many teachings. Paul was a Jewish believer in the Messiah, Jesus Christ, Son of God Almighty. He wanted to remind other Jewish converts to continue to live in the new way of trust in Jesus and in the power of God's Holy Spirit. Jewish believers and Christians from other nations were now one family of God. They should all give up their old ways of living and live, work and worship in love and unity, avoiding conflict. They must therefore learn to trust and serve each other. He reminded this New Testament church to remain strong against evil things that might come to test them. Paul's teaching is important for all Christians today.

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# EPHESIANS

## Paul's Letter to the Church in Ephesus

**A Bible Teaching Commentary  
for personal or group study  
Written by Fred Morris**



**EPHESIANS**  
**Chapters 1 to 6**



## To the reader or leader

These commentaries help to explain the Bible in a way that is easy to read and understand. They are also easy to translate. You can use Fred's books to study the Bible on your own or with others in a group. Each person should have his or her own book and a Bible if possible.



**Bible reading:** Where you see this heading, it means you or your group leader should always read the Bible verses first before reading this book.



**Talk about this:** Where you see this, there are questions to prayerfully answer yourself or to discuss in a group study. They also help the reader to remember the Bible verses.



**Think about this:** Where you see this, the questions require more time for personal meditation.



**Additional text boxes:** Where you see these, the information gives extra teaching about life at the time the Bible passage was written and helps to apply the teaching for today.

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***Revised Worldwide English edition first published in the UK in 2018***

Reprinted 2018: Cameroon (English)

Reprinted 2020: Cameroon for Equatorial Guinea (Spanish)

Reprinted 2022: Burkina Faso (French), Kenya (English), Dem. Rep. Congo (Kiluba, French), Zambia (English)

***Second edition first published in the UK 2024***

**Published by:**  
Manna Publications (UK)

**Typeset by:**  
MissionAssist (UK)

**Distributed by:**

**Printed by:**

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**Think about this:** Are you fighting Satan in your own strength? Do you go forward in faith and believe you can win spiritual battles with the spiritual armour God has given you? Have you put on ALL God's armour? Are you watching and praying and 'waiting on the Lord' daily?

## CONCLUSIONS

Paul wrote this letter to the Christians at Ephesus to remind them that they all have a totally new life because they know Jesus as their personal Saviour. Paul reminds them about all the good things that God has given them. Paul tells the church members to encourage and support each another. Paul also tells the Ephesians to be honest with each other, helping when things get difficult, being gentle in the things they do and say, encouraging each other, correcting at the right time, and always giving thanks to God. Finally, in Chapter 6 he tells us to make sure we protect ourselves in Christ by putting on our spiritual armour each morning.



### The spiritual blessings which are ours in Christ (1:3)

The first blessings which come to us immediately upon our 'believing unto salvation' include: forgiveness, justification, regeneration, family of God, baptism into the body of Christ.

The final spiritual treasures which are ours through the blood of the Lamb but will not come to us unless we make a determined effort to possess them. These are:

- deliverance from the sins of the flesh;
- victory over self;
- the constant flow of the Holy Spirit through our personalities;
- fruitfulness in Christian service;
- awareness of the Presence of God;
- growth in grace;
- an increasing awareness of union with God;
- an unbroken spirit of worship.

These are to us what the Promised Land was to Israel, to be entered into as our faith and courage grow.

## PAUL'S LETTER TO THE CHURCH IN EPHESUS

### Ephesians Chapters 1 to 6

#### INTRODUCTION

Paul wrote this letter to Christians who were living in the city of Ephesus, a Roman city in Turkey. He said their city was ruled over by Satan and demonic spirits (2:2). Therefore, the Christians were at risk of being deceived by false teachings (1 Timothy 1:3-4). That is why he wrote so much to them about the power and work of God through the Holy Spirit. God's power is greater than Satan's power.

Paul wrote this letter while he was a house prisoner in Rome. He had much time to meditate and pray. He reminded his readers of the great love of God Almighty for all who accept His Son, Jesus Christ, as their Lord and Saviour. He strongly believed that God had a great plan and purpose for every follower of Jesus (2:10).

Paul explained many important old and new covenant teachings in this letter. It was copied and sent to other churches. Paul's letter remains important for Christians today, to understand God's wonderful 'new life in Christ' and His purpose for His followers in the world. Read it with the same enthusiasm as when it was first written!

In this letter, Paul offers many opportunities for prayer, praise and thanks. He invites us to think about the 'mystery of Christ' and the 'grace of God' as well as the need to live in unity and to protect ourselves against Satan with the full armour of God.



### Bible reading: Ephesians Chapter 1

#### SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS THROUGH CHRIST

Paul wrote a familiar beginning to his letter:

- He claimed that he was an apostle of Christ Jesus, just as God planned. An apostle is someone sent with a message from God (1:1).
- His opening prayer for them was "May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you [His] grace and peace" (1:2).

Paul said these two things about the Christians in Ephesus (1:1):

1. They were **special** people. That is, they were now holy people of God.
2. They were **faithful** believers. That is, they trusted in Jesus as the Son of God and in His promised Holy Spirit.

Then, Paul eagerly told his readers the things he strongly believed about our God and Jesus our Saviour. In his original letter, verses 3 to 14 were one long sentence full of truth from God! He knew and understood the truth about God

direct from God Himself through the Holy Spirit. We can trust what he says is true.

First, Paul encouraged the Ephesian church to "give praise to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ". Why? Because we have "every spiritual blessing". Why? "Because we belong to Christ" (1:3). You cannot have these blessings unless you accept Jesus as your Saviour and seek to grow in Him.

God is righteous and just. Therefore wrong doing must be punished. Sinners deserve to pay the price and die. God is merciful so Jesus paid the price for us and died for our sins in our place.

Paul and the other New Testament writers agree:

- Everyone has sinned and is lost from God (Romans 3:23).
- Jesus came to earth and died to save us from our sins (1 Corinthians 15:3).
- His death was in our place as a punishment for our sins (1 Peter 3:18).
- God's grace has saved us from the punishment we deserve, because of our faith in Jesus. This spiritual blessing is our inheritance.

Paul believed all these things. And he taught these truths from God in his letters.



#### **God is three Persons in One:**

- God the Father who chose us before the world was created (1:4).
- God the Son, Jesus Christ, who saved us at great cost (1:7).
- God the Holy Spirit, who lives in us and has made us part of God's family (1:13-14)

### **GOD CHOSE US TO BE HIS HOLY SONS AND DAUGHTERS**

Paul reminded the Ephesians about the great mystery of God who blesses us so much. He said:

- "God chose us to belong to Christ before the world was created" (1:4).
- "He chose us to be holy and without blame in his eyes. He loved us" (1:4).
- "God chose us to have new life in Him. He adopted us as his children" (1:5).

Paul said, "All those things bring praise to His glorious grace" because of God's love for Jesus (1:6).

God chose to have spiritual sons and daughters who love and obey Him. He chose them to be holy and blameless like Himself. Without blame means to be without sin.

asleep instead of watching and praying (Matthew 26:40-41). We must watch and pray and listen as we sit, kneel, walk or stand.

If possible, find a time and a place to pray where you can speak to God alone in silence or aloud (Matthew 6:6). Jesus did this often. Listen as you pray and expect God to answer your prayer. His answer may be:

- "No. This is not My will."
- "Not now. Be patient and wait."
- "Yes. Go and step forward in faith."

Paul also said, "Pray all kinds of prayers" (Ephesians 6:18). So be ready to expect all kinds of answers!

We are often weak or slow to understand what God wants. The Holy Spirit knows our weak minds and bodies and He keeps on helping us when we confess our weakness. He prays for us, He prays with us, and He prays through us. He is our powerful partner in prayer. He brings prayers to our minds. He gives us strength to keep praying. He tells us what God's will is. He helps us to say 'no' to our own selfish ways. He searches our hearts (1 Corinthians 2:10-12). We do not know how He works "all things together for good" for people who love Him (Romans 8:28) but God promises to do this for us when we love Him and are doing His will.

Last of all, Paul makes a special request. It is not for his comfort, or for his health. He asks for the right words to say and boldness to speak for Jesus (Ephesians 6:19). He reminds everyone who receives a copy of his letter that he is in prison "held by chains". He repeats, "Pray that I will be bold as I preach the Good News." He knew that was what he should do even at risk of death (6:20).

Paul planned to send Tychicus to the Ephesian church to let them know how he was and what he was doing (6:21). He wanted them to know how God had answered their prayers for him and his friends.

Paul wanted Tychicus to encourage the Christians at Ephesus (6:22). He sent his own prayers to them for peace, love and faith (6:23). This was his prayer at the beginning of his letter (1:2). He ended with asking God to give His grace "to everyone who loves our Lord Jesus Christ with a love that will never die" (6:24).



#### **Talk about this:**

1. How should children and also workers obey God (6:1-9)?
2. What helps us to win battles (6:10)?
3. What helps us to resist Satan's attacks on us (6:14-17)?
4. How should we pray (6:18)? Do you 'watch and pray' to understand what God is doing?
5. Are you a bold witness for Jesus to both the saved and the unsaved (6:20; 2 Corinthians 5:20)?

ask Him to fill you with His Spirit. Paul said, "Our fight is not against human beings... It is against the spiritual forces of evil" (Ephesians 6:12).

Paul then describes the different pieces of armour worn by Roman soldiers. He did this to explain each piece of spiritual armour we need from God to win the battle of faith (6:14-17):

- *The belt of truth.* A belt held the soldier's cloak tightly round him. It held some of the other pieces of armour in place. Our armour enables us to be free to move but ready to resist the lies of the enemy with the truth from God. Reading the Bible confirms God's word within us and makes us ready to defend our faith and overcome doubts and fears.
- *The breastplate of God's righteousness.* In faith, we receive and put on His righteousness. Let us never doubt that we have been made righteous in the sight of God through the sacrifice of His Son for our sins. Satan tries to make us feel weak and unworthy. We must always remember that God has made us righteous because Jesus was punished in our place.
- *The shoes we wear to take the Good News of peace everywhere.* Christians know the Good News of Jesus Christ and carry it in their heart. They are sure of what Jesus has done for them and must be prepared to take the message of God's salvation plan to all people.
- *The shield of faith.* The Roman shield turned aside all arrows from the enemy. It was large enough to protect the whole body. Paul compared Satan's attacks to flaming arrows. When we lift up our shield of faith we can trust in God's power to protect us.
- *The helmet of salvation.* The helmet stops the enemy from destroying us by attacking our heads and our minds. Our salvation leads to divine thoughts and eternal life which Satan cannot take away from us.
- *The sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God.* The soldier takes his sword for when he is in danger. It is used to attack and to defend. The Bible is like a sword and our greatest weapon against Satan. We stand firm and use the Word of God against him. God's word defeats Satan. Speak God's truth and Satan will withdraw (James 4:7).

Notice that Paul requests his readers to put on ALL God's armour (6:11,13). We are often weak in body, mind or spirit. We need each piece of God's spiritual armour. If one piece is missing, then Satan will find a way in to attack us. So put on the whole armour of God each morning. You will notice the difference in overcoming the attacks of the devil. Others will notice the change in your lives.

### **WATCH AND PRAY**

Paul warned, "At all times, pray by the power of the Spirit... Be watchful... Always keep on praying for all of the Lord's people" (6:18).

It is easy to fall asleep or think of wrong things while praying. The enemy makes us feel tired and we lose our concentration. The disciples of Jesus fell

When He first calls us, we have little or no faith in God. He takes the first step towards us. He gives us a longing to know Him and adds faith so that we can believe in Him. That is God's grace, His free gift of love and mercy.

God did all this for us because He is rich in grace. "We have been set free because of what Christ has done. Because he bled and died, our sins have been forgiven." Through His sacrifice on the cross we have been spared the punishment we deserve (1:7).

Because God loves us, He wants freely to give us His blessings through Jesus from Heaven. He does not hold anything back from those who trust Him. "By giving us great wisdom and understanding, he has shown us the mystery of his plan... It was what He had planned through Christ" (1:8-9).

Sin keeps us away from God and His blessings, so He sent Jesus to save us from the punishment for sin. His death on the cross was the punishment for our sin. When we repent and believe this, God forgives our sins. Through Jesus, we are freed from punishment for sin. In another letter, Paul wrote, "Those who belong to Christ Jesus are no longer condemned [found guilty] by God" (Romans 8:1). And "Those who live in agreement with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires" (Romans 8:5).

### **WHAT HAPPENED WHEN CHRIST WAS PREACHED IN EPHESUS**

Paul preached this Good News about Jesus when he was in Ephesus. Read what happened there (Acts 19:11-41). Sick people were healed. Evil spirits (demons) were ordered to leave in the name of Jesus. Many came to Paul and openly confessed their evil deeds. People who had practised witchcraft brought their charms and books and burned them in the city square (Acts 19:11-20). Many people stopped buying silver idols of Diana, a pagan goddess. This made the silver merchants angry and they started a riot (Acts 19:23-41).

In his letter to the Ephesian church, Paul reminds the believers, "We were ... chosen to belong to God." This was part of His plan long ago. Paul adds, "He works out everything to fit his plan and purpose" (1:11).

The moment they believed, every good thing was theirs through Jesus. Forever after, they were "chosen to bring praise to God's glory" (1:12). Even their lives brought Him praise! The Christians in Ephesus were some of the first outside of Israel to believe in Jesus.

The temple of Diana, a heathen goddess, stood over the city of Ephesus. Many worshipped Diana. The Ephesians thought that the idol of goddess Diana would help them, and Satan tricked many into believing this.

Paul knew that idols made by man were not good for anything. All idol worship is Satan worship and behind every idol there are demon spirits. Demons often enter the person who worships an idol. The demon spirits cause

fear, anger, sickness, mental problems, addictions and many other bad things that happen to people who worship idols.

When Paul preached in Ephesus, many people believed and chose to follow Jesus. "You became believers in Christ. That happened when you heard the message of truth. It was the Good News about how you can be saved" (1:13).

## THEY RECEIVED A NEW BIRTH

Long ago, God's plan was unclear, even to His prophets. They looked in the Old Testament, trying to find the time and the place where Messiah would be born (1 Peter 1:10). Then Jesus came and made God's plan clear (Hebrews 1:1-2). "He made known to us the mystery of His will" (Ephesians 1:9). When we believed, God gave us His Holy Spirit that He promised (1:13). The Holy Spirit, living in our hearts, helps us to understand God's plan fulfilled in Jesus (1 Corinthians 2:12).

When a person believes and turns from their old life of sin, God's Spirit gives them a new birth (John 3:3). This is not a physical birth, but a birth by God's Spirit. Look at the parts of verse 13:

- "When you heard..." Listen to the Good News and understand it clearly.
- "When you believed..." God's gift of faith takes root in your heart when you understand and believe.
- "When you received the promised Holy Spirit..." The power of the Spirit comes into your life.

When we understand and repent and believe, we become part of God's family by the Holy Spirit. Paul says that God gives the Holy Spirit as a mark or sign to all who believe in Jesus (Romans 8:9). We are then born again and begin to reject the old life. We begin to seek the peace and purpose and provision of God in our new life. "The Spirit marks us as God's own... All these things will bring praise to His glory" (Ephesians 1:14).

Long ago, God's prophets said that His Spirit would come to live in those who believed (Joel 2:28-32). Jesus gave His disciples the same promise (John 14:16,17). God sent the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2:2-4). The Holy Spirit brings the blessings God gives us if we remain faithful to Him (2 Corinthians 1:22).

In the Old Testament, they were saved by obeying God and His laws through faith. In the New Testament salvation is through faith in Jesus and receiving and obeying His Spirit.

## PAUL THANKS GOD FOR THE BELIEVERS

While in prison in Rome, Paul said to the Ephesians, "I have heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus. I have also heard about your love for all God's people. I have not stopped thanking God for you" (1:15-16). He knew that they had heard, believed and received His message and he wanted them to have more

treated them kindly and some harshly. Paul told all the slaves, "Obey them just as you would obey Christ" (6:5).

Paul also called Christians "slaves of Christ". He said, "Be sure your heart does what God wants" (6:6). "Work as serving the Lord, and not as serving people" (6:7). God blesses all labour and service. He has asked us to serve Him at home, in the church and in work places.

Paul told Christian masters to treat their slaves or workers fairly and equally, in the same way. He said that "God treats everyone the same" (6:9).

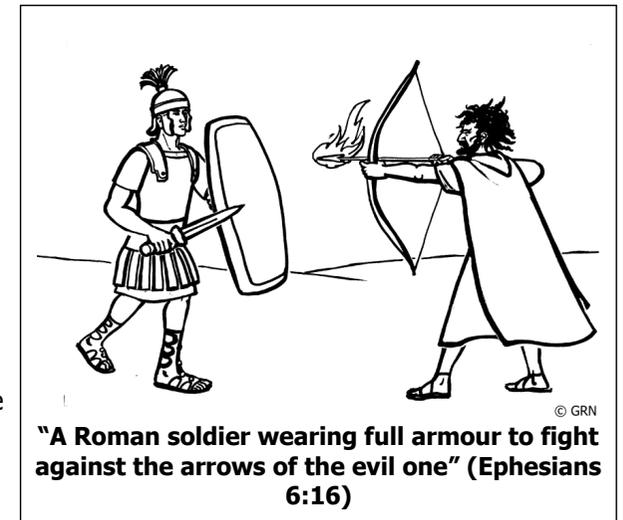
## FIGHT AGAINST SATAN WITH THE FULL ARMOUR OF GOD

Finally, Paul instructed his readers, "Let the Lord make you strong. Depend on His mighty power" (6:10). Satan is our enemy. We are fighting a spiritual war. This verse is the start of Paul's description of Christians in battle with Satan and His demons. Every soldier of Christ faces Satan's "spiritual forces of evil" and their "flaming arrows" (2:2; 6:16).

Faith in the power of the Lord will win battles. What also helps us to fight these evil powers in our daily battles? Paul said that every believer must put on the full armour of God. "Then you can stand firm against the devil's evil plans" (6:11). Jesus is our spiritual armour. He is our salvation and truth. He is our righteousness.

When we are "clothed in Christ", we are protected from Satan's attacks and his evil plans. We stand with Christ against everything that is evil. Paul says in another letter that we must "put on the Lord Jesus Christ as if He were our clothing. Do not think about how to satisfy sinful desires!" (Romans 13:14). Paul here goes further by saying we must reject sin every day or the enemy will win the fight. He attacks us all the time. God gives us our spiritual clothes or armour to protect us and we have the power of the Holy Spirit to help us.

We must put on this armour of God for ourselves. God does not put it on for us. Kneel in prayer; open your heart; read your Bible; listen for God to speak;



love is putting the other person's needs before our own needs. This is Paul's guidance for successful marriages, successful friendships and successful churches.



### **Talk about this:**

1. What must we do to shine with the light of God and avoid His anger (5:1-14)?
2. How do we use every opportunity to do what God wants us to do (5:15-20)?
3. How can we serve others in the church? (5:21)?
4. How is the relationship between Jesus and the Christian church like the relationship between a husband and wife (5:22-29)?



**Think about this:** What does Paul teach us about life in the church and also at home and at work? How can I best serve those I live with, worship with and work with? How can I bless others with words and songs that also give thanks to God for everything (5:19-20)? Think about how to shine with the light of Christ and the word of God upon us and within us.



### **Bible reading: Ephesians Chapter 6**

#### **HOW CHILDREN AND WORKERS CAN PLEASE GOD**

After Paul wrote advice for Christian parents and he also wrote about their children. Children should obey their parents "as believers in the Lord" to please God (6:1). This brings His blessing. Paul quoted "Honour your father and mother" from God's commandment given to Moses. It is one of the Ten Commandments with a promise: "Things will go well with you. You will live a long time" (6:2-3; Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16). Children in Israel were taught that if they obeyed their parents, God will bless them and give them a long life.

Paul added, "Fathers, do not make your children angry. Instead, instruct them and teach them the ways of the Lord" (6:4). Fathers are responsible to God for training and discipline in the home. They must not be harsh with their children; they should be kind but firm and fair. Do not lose patience with your children and do not have favourites.

All children need rules to live by. God's rules are the best ones. It is very important to train our children in the "ways of the Lord" (2 Timothy 3:16), with parent and child working together. This brings God's peace to the home and in life.

Paul also taught, "Slaves, obey your masters... Respect them and honour them with a heart that is true [sincere]" (6:5). Many Christian families owned slaves at the time of Paul. Some slaves became Christians. They were part of the family. Some Christian slaves served heathen masters. Some masters

bestowed blessings from God. He gave thanks to God for these Christians in Ephesus and prayed for them:

- He asked God to give them "the wisdom and understanding that come from the Holy Spirit" (1:17).
- "I want you to know God better" (1:17).
- "I pray that you may understand more clearly... the hope God has chosen you to receive" (1:18).
- He asked that they would "know that the things that God's people will receive are rich and glorious" (1:18).
- He asked for all who believe in Jesus to "know God's great power" (1:19).

Paul wanted these Christian believers to understand all that God had done for them. He wanted them to praise God with hearts filled with the Holy Spirit. They knew God, but they needed to know Him better. Even Moses, the great man of God, cried out to know Almighty God better (Exodus 33:13).

Before, Satan had blinded their eyes (2 Corinthians 4:4), but now, the Holy Spirit opened them. They understood the great mysteries of God:

- He gives us great hope.
- He calls us His family.
- His great power works in our lives.

God's power in us is like the resurrection power that raised Jesus from death. And this power is "for us who believe" today (1:19).

When we preach the Good News of the Gospel, God's power can break Satan's power in the lives of people when they believe (Romans 1:16). God wants to work in us and through us to bless others.

#### **WE ALL NEED GOD'S POWER**

God the Father glorified His Son, Jesus Christ, by raising Him from the dead and now Jesus is with His Father in Heaven (Ephesians 1:20; Hebrews 1:3). "God placed all things under Christ's rule. He appointed him to be ruler over everything for the Church. The Church is Christ's body" (1:22-23).

God gave Adam and Eve authority to rule over everything He created. When Adam sinned, mankind lost this authority. Satan took it from us. Now Satan has power over people and nations. He is "the prince of this world" (John 12:31). Beware, Satan rules over all those who do not follow Jesus.

Jesus broke Satan's power. When a person truly believes that Jesus is the Son of God, Satan's power over that person is broken. All who are joined to Jesus share in His victory over Satan. Jesus protects us and our homes and families when believers follow Him. Jesus overcomes evil spirits and we rejoice because Jesus has won the victory! (1 John 5:4-5).

As God in human form, He (Jesus) humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross. God lifted Him up and gave Him

the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow down to worship ... and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord (based on Philippians 2:8-11).

Satan and his demon spirits controlled the city of Ephesus. Tradesmen and citizens worshipped idols and ate the food offered to them. At their feasts people got drunk and men had sex with temple girls (Acts 19:23-34). Paul knew how much the Christians needed the Holy Spirit's power to keep them from these sins. The Holy Spirit gives Christians the power to say no to seducing and deceiving spirits and other evils. We already have this power if we let Jesus reign in our lives (Romans 5:17). We must learn to use this power to protect our leaders, marriages, families, churches and governments from the destructive work of the enemy.

One day, all governments will submit to Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:22). We may not see this happening in our world now, but God is at work to make it happen soon. God is Spirit and God's Kingdom is a spiritual Kingdom of love, justice and righteousness (John 18:36; Acts 13:41). Satan will be destroyed (Revelation 20:13).

#### **Talk about this:**

1. What did Paul say about the Christians at Ephesus (1:1)?
2. How can we have every spiritual blessing (1:3-8)?
3. What was God's plan for men and women from the beginning (1:4,12)?
4. Why did Paul give thanks (1:15-16)?
5. What was Paul's prayer for Christians (1:17-19a)?
6. How could the Ephesian church have God's power to resist Satan? How can we enjoy the mighty power of God today (1:19b-22)?

 **Think about this:** Think about how important it is to encourage other Christians with praise, reminding them of God's purposes, giving thanks for them, with promises of prayer support. We should also remind each other to remain holy in an unholy world by the power of His Spirit. Why did Christians need this power in Ephesus? Why do we need it today? Pray to "understand these things more clearly".

### **Bible reading: Ephesians Chapter 2**

#### **CHANGED THROUGH NEW LIFE IN JESUS**

Before Jesus saved the Christians living in Ephesus:

- They were living in their sins and far from God (2:1); they were spiritually dead.
- They disobeyed God and followed the evil ways of the world; they "served the one who rules over the spiritual forces of evil" (2:2).

Paul knew there could be no peace in the churches if there was no peace between wives and husbands. Paul said, "Husbands, love your wives. Love them just as Christ loved the Church. He gave himself up for her. He did it to make her holy" (5:25-26).

Paul also said we should submit to parents (6:1) and to employers (6:5). Paul believed that in addition to keeping peace with family and church members

especially church leaders, we should strive to keep peace between servants and their masters and workers and their bosses.

Several years later, the apostle John was given a vision of a new heaven and a New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:1-10). "The New Jerusalem was coming down out of Heaven from God. It was prepared like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband." The same vision also says that Christ, the Lamb of God, is married to His Church (Revelation 19:7).

God holds the husband responsible for leading his family. He has a responsibility to care for them, not to crush or to control them. It means husbands loving wives as Christ loves the church and sacrificed Himself for her. Men often fail to do this, but that is the aim. Paul said, "He [Christ] wants a church that is holy and without blame. In the same way, husbands should love their wives" (Ephesians 5:27-28).

The members of the church at Ephesus accepted the teaching from the Old Testament about marriage. They knew that "a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife. The two will become one" (5:31; Genesis 2:24). Paul says it is a deep mystery that a man will leave his father and mother to be joined to his wife. In the same way, it is a mystery about Christ and the church (5:31-32).

The relationship between husband and wife is the closest human relationship of all. It is closer even than the relationship between a mother and child. Let there be the same relationship between husband and wife that exists between Christ and His Church. And let the wife submit to her husband as the Church submits to Christ.

Paul therefore reminds husbands and wives to love and respect each other (5:33). This is a self-sacrificing love usually seen only among Christians. True



these writings of Moses and the prophets through the wisdom and understanding of the Holy Spirit promised by Jesus.

Paul also warned, "Do not fill yourself up with wine... Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit" (5:18). "Speak from the Spirit of Christ within you" and "sing from your heart to the Lord" (5:19).

So be wise and be true to Jesus. Paul said in another letter, "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:21). So, to please God we must:

- keep away from evil;
- expose it when we find it;
- do good works;
- stop doing foolish things that anger God;
- understand what the Lord's will is;
- be filled with the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit does not come to fill an empty space, but to fulfil a life which has received Jesus as Saviour. We must be under His control every day. God said we are to ask for this control of Holy Spirit power in our lives (Luke 11:13). We should keep on asking. We come often, we come boldly, we come asking: that pleases our Father (Hebrews 10:19-22).

So, let us speak and sing from the heart, "always giving thanks to God the Father for everything... in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (5:19-20).

## **RESPECT BETWEEN WIVES, HUSBANDS, FAMILIES AND CHURCH MEMBERS**

Next, Paul gave advice about being humble. "Follow the lead of one another because of your respect for Christ" (5:21). Paul warned against trying to control others in the fellowship. This causes division. Instead, respect and follow the spiritual leadership of mature believers. This is what it means to serve one another in love.

Paul also applied this teaching to wives and husbands. He said, "Wives, follow the lead of your husbands as you follow the Lord" (5:22). This means to respect them and submit to them as they stay committed to Jesus. This means both husbands and wives should put the other person's needs before their own needs.

The husband in Christ is given authority over the wife for the benefit of the family. In the same way, Jesus is the head of the church family of believers and sacrificed much for the benefit of its members (5:23).

Satan stops people from seeing the truth. Paul says that he does this so that he can keep them as slaves. All who do not trust in Jesus are slaves to their own sinful nature. They cannot change the way they live. They need to hear God's truth and believe His Good News about Jesus. He is the only One who can change us.

## **POWER OVER SATAN AND DEMONS**

All of us lived sinful lives at one time. We followed our own desires and thoughts (2:3). But Jesus sets Satan's slaves free. Satan is angry about this and goes around making trouble (1 Peter 5:8). You won't see him, for he is a spirit, ruling over the angels of darkness. Satan's demons are very busy at work in the lives of people who do not obey God. They make people ill and violent and confused. Satan is a cruel master.

Jesus cast out demons with a word; His apostles did, too. His followers have the same authority to speak God's word and resist Satan in the name of Jesus (6:11). God has therefore given us authority over Satan through Jesus.

## **WE ARE SAVED BY GRACE, NOT BY GOOD WORKS**

When we followed the wrong ways of the world, God was angry with us (2:3). "But God loves us deeply. He is full of mercy" (2:4). Because of this, Paul wrote, "He gave us life even when we were [spiritually] dead in sin. God's grace has saved you" (2:5).

It was God's love and mercy that saved Paul and then sent him to Ephesus. He went there to preach the Good News. When people hear the Good News of Jesus and receive it and believe it, He sets them free from sin. Many in Ephesus believed the Good News about Jesus and were saved.

The truth from God reveals the darkness in people's souls. It also brings the light of Jesus to them (2:5-6):

- It gives men and women new life in Jesus.
- It frees them from the power of death caused by sin.
- It gives us a place with Jesus in His heavenly Kingdom.

God's grace is shown to us "because of what Christ Jesus has done." Paul repeats, "God's grace has saved you through faith in Christ" (2:8). These are Paul's amazing words describing salvation. He adds, "It is God's gift" (2:8). God did this work when no-one else could. "He saved us from the kingdom of darkness. He has brought us into the Kingdom of the Son He loves" (Colossians 1:13).

Two things worked together for good. First, God's grace came to these sinners. Then, when they heard the truth, faith rose up in their hearts and they believed (Romans 10:10; Hebrews 4:1). The Christians in Ephesus were not saved because of anything good they did to earn salvation. No-one could say, "Look what I have done!"

A sinner cannot change himself. We try hard. We want to look good and appear righteous, but God sees our hearts and reads our thoughts. We are saved and made holy when we believe that Jesus Christ alone has saved us. Paul calls this God's grace. "Your salvation does not come from anything you do" (Ephesians 2:8-9). It is through faith in God's grace alone that we may enter His Kingdom. It is not through 'good works'. However, "God created us to belong to Christ Jesus. Now we can do [His] good works. Long ago God prepared these works for us to do" (2:10).

It is faith in God's grace through Jesus alone that enables us to receive His salvation and then do His good works to extend His Kingdom. Paul's last words in this letter ask for God's grace to be given to all who love the Lord Jesus Christ (6:24).

### ONE NEW FAMILY IN CHRIST

In verses 11 to 13, Paul wrote mainly to the Christians who were Gentiles, not Jews. They were often called "the uncircumcised believers" by the Jewish believers (2:11). Paul, a Jew, now fully believed that circumcision, the special mark of the Jews, was not required for other believers. He also wanted the Gentile believers to remember what faith in Jesus had saved them from (2:12). They had been:

- **separated** from the Almighty God of Israel;
- **put outside** the family of Israel;
- **excluded** from God's Old Testament covenants of promise;
- **without hope** of God's salvation in the world of sin.

All this changed for those Gentiles who trusted in Jesus, the Jewish Messiah. "You were far away from God. But now you belong to Christ Jesus", Paul said (2:13). "He spilled His blood for you. This has brought you near to God." God also says: "I will also make you a light for the Gentiles" (Isaiah 49:60).

God is holy and sinners cannot come near Him. But the blood of Jesus covered over their sins and made them holy in God's sight. Jewish converts and the believers who were not Jews were now joined together in Jesus. Followers of Jesus are no longer separated from God.

Paul states that "Christ Himself is our peace". He makes peace between God and mankind and between Jewish and Gentile believers from other nations. He makes peace between all who believe Jesus is the Son of God, whatever their religious background. Christ fulfilled "the Law with its commands and rules". He makes us into "one new group of people. He has destroyed the hatred that was like a wall between us. He wanted to make peace between them" (2:14-15).

In another letter, Paul spoke of the rich heritage of the Jews: they were God's people, they had His glory, His laws, His covenants, His Temple, His promises, His patriarchs (Romans 9:4). Now Jesus brings believers together as 'one body' in Him.

be in control and bring renewal and unity and revival, for the glory of God? Consider also reading the Word of God daily.



### Bible reading: Ephesians Chapter 5

#### LIVING IN AND REFLECTING THE LIGHT OF CHRIST

Paul said to the Christians at Ephesus, "You are the children that God dearly loves. So follow His example" (5:1). In this way, you will become more and more like Jesus as you let the Holy Spirit work in your life. This will help you to "lead a life of love, just as Christ did" (5:2).

Then Paul listed some of their past sins (5:3-5). Like us, they had to leave these behind and live as God's holy people. Some had sinned with their bodies, others with their mouths and others with their minds. There must be no thought of sexual sin. Unholy jokes and foolish talk needed to stop. In its place, they should give thanks to God for saving them (5:4). Paul knew that the Holy Spirit would change their talk as they followed Him. Any person who continued to sin would not "share in the kingdom of Christ and of God" (5:5). He said, "God is angry with those who do not obey. Do not go with people like that" (5:6-7).

Paul continued, "At one time, you were in the dark. But now you are in the light because of what the Lord has done. Live like Children of the Light" (5:8). "The Light produces good things. Find out what good things please the Lord!" (5:9-10). Darkness produces nothing good. Paul said, "Everything that the light shines on becomes light. It make everything clear. Then Paul quotes a popular saying of that time: "Wake up! Rise from the dead! Then Christ will shine on you" (5:13-14). These words are often read at the baptism of new believers. May we reflect the Light of Christ wherever we go.

The prophets of Israel also told God's people to let His light shine in them. Daniel said, "Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the sky. Those who lead many others to do what is right will be like the stars and last for ever" (Daniel 12:3). We must let our light shine in the dark to expose evil. We will reflect God's light if Jesus Christ is in our lives. This can have an everlasting effect!

#### TAKE EVERY OPPORTUNITY TO DO GOOD

Paul said again and again, "Be very careful how you live your life" (4:1,17; 5:2,8,15). He also explained, "Make the most of every opportunity. The days are evil. Do not be foolish... Understand what the Lord wants you to do" (5:16-17).

Only the Old Testament Scriptures were available at that time for everyone to read and follow. Paul encouraged the believers in Israel's Messiah to build on

Do not say evil things. Say only what is helpful to others who listen (4:29). In this way, you help to build others up in their faith.

## **DO NOT MAKE THE HOLY SPIRIT SAD**

We must stop doing things that make the Holy Spirit sad. The Holy Spirit within you is the sign to others that you belong to God who “will set you completely free” (4:30). When we stop listening to the Holy Spirit, He withdraws from us.

Also, if we do good things without the Holy Spirit’s power in our lives, we do things our way and in our own strength. Tell God you are sorry, repent of your sin and ask God for more of His Spirit (Luke 11:13).

We all need self-control. This is a fruit of God’s Spirit. If you do not see any self-control in your own life or another person’s life, then you can be sure there is no Spirit-control.

Do not get angry or lie or hate people (4:31). “Be kind and tender to one another” (4:32). Work hard to be kind to others. Remember these familiar words of Paul: “Forgive one another, just as God forgave you because of what Christ has done [for you]” (4:32). God forgives and we must forgive. If you do not forgive the other person, you cannot love them. Jesus said, “Make peace with your brother before you serve God” (Matthew 5:24). Whatever our gifts and skills are in life, be tender to others and true to God, then He will use us even more in His Kingdom.

Sadly, leaving the old ways does not happen once for all times. Old habits quickly come back to control us again. We have to resist them in the name of Jesus and in the power of the Holy Spirit. We must ask for the blood of Jesus to protect us against Satan. It is unwise to say you will never sin again. But you can say that from this day you choose to follow Jesus with more determination. Amen!

Many years before Paul was a prisoner in Rome, he wrote these words to the Christians in Rome. “Do not give any part of yourself to serve sin. Do not let any part of yourself be used to do evil. Instead, give yourselves to God. You have been brought from death to life. Give every part of yourself to God to do what is right. Sin will no longer control you... God’s grace has set you free” (Romans 6:13-14).



### **Talk about this:**

1. What is this new life Paul talks about (4:23)?
2. How can we control our tongues (4:25)?
3. What does forgiveness achieve (4:26-27)?
4. How should Christians talk to others (4:29)?
5. How do we upset the Holy Spirit (4:30)?



**Think about this:** Consider how to pray daily for repentance and forgiveness in your life and in your church fellowship. How can the Holy Spirit

In Jesus, different groups around the world are made into one new group of people. We become one group or family because the dividing wall of hatred is broken down. Paul said, “Christ put hatred to death on the cross” (Ephesians 2:16). In Jesus, we are all equal before God. When we come together in Jesus there is no spiritual difference between Jew or Greek (Gentile), male or female, rich or poor. Paul believed strongly that it is God’s plan to unite Jews and Gentile believers. We can all be united in Christ Jesus through the cross (Galatians 3:26-28). Therefore, exiles, migrants and aliens all have unity with other believers.

Christians are ‘one body’. This body of Christ is the whole group of believers (Ephesians 1:23). God welcomes Jewish and Gentile believers, and Christians from every nation. He accepts men and women, young and old, educated and disabled, popular and strangers. He sees a new community of believers with faith in Jesus as Son of God. We are the family of God. So, let us welcome believers from near and far, even if their faith and knowledge is not fully grown. But beware of those claiming to be believers whose spirits are not controlled by God (2:2).

## **JESUS PREACHED PEACE**

God planned to bring all believers as one body back to Himself through the cross of Christ. Jesus put all fear, anger and rejection to death on that cross so that we can have unity with God and our Creator. Paul then wrote more words for the Gentile believers. He said, “Jesus came and preached peace. He preached peace to you who were far away from God” (2:17). To the Jewish Christians Paul said, “He also preached peace to you who were near God.”

Paul and others went to Ephesus and preached the Good News about Jesus to all. The apostles taught and shared about Jesus when there were few Christians. These faithful believers laid for us the foundation of the New Testament church. These people were called by God for this purpose.

In Christ, people are united with God and also to one another. Jesus took away the barrier between us and God and also between us and mankind, and made peace. As each one is at peace with God, so we can be at peace with other believers. This was the prayer of Jesus. “Father, I pray they will be one, just as you are in Me and I am in you” (John 17:21).

Paul said that through Jesus we all come to the Father by the power of the Holy Spirit (2:18). Because of this, those believers who are not Jews are no longer strangers to God but members of God’s family (2:19).

We carry this same message of peace. Men may try to bring peace to countries where there is hatred between people groups, but only Jesus, the Prince of Peace, can ever give lasting peace (Isaiah 9:6).

## “YOU ARE A HOUSE WHERE GOD LIVES”

The Christians at Ephesus were centred around the most important person, God’s Messiah, Jesus Christ. He is the foundation that the prophets and apostles had laid (2:20-21). The Old Testament prophets spoke about God’s promised Messiah. The New Testament apostles preached this same Messiah to all the world. They laid the spiritual foundation of today’s Christian Church. Jesus is described by Paul as the chief foundation stone called the corner stone.

As you read this, Jesus is building His Church spiritually. He is adding to it men and women from every nation, tribe and language (Revelations 5:9). Paul said that the believers at Ephesus were “being made into a house where God lives through His Spirit” (2:22; 1 Corinthians 3:16). Paul understood that God’s people are like a holy temple. It includes believers on Earth together with the saints who have gone to Heaven.



### Talk about this:

1. How can we be certain that we have new life in Jesus (2:4-5)?
2. How does God’s Good News of Jesus change us and build us up spiritually (2:6)?
3. How are we saved (2:8-9)?
4. What did God plan long ago through His grace and through our faith (2:10)?
5. How was it possible for converts from other nations to become united with Jewish believers (2:13)?
6. What keeps the peace (2:14)? How (2:16)? Who for (2:17)?
7. Who is the foundation for the Christian church of believers? Who helped to build the foundation (2:20)?
8. Who helps to build God’s Church of believers today (2:22)?



**Think about this:** What divides believers today in Christ’s Church? What unites Christians? What is God’s plan for us all (2:10)?



### Bible reading: Ephesians Chapter 3

#### PAUL PREACHED THE “MYSTERY OF CHRIST”

Paul wrote, “I am a prisoner because of Jesus Christ... and my work among you” (3:1). Paul was a Jewish believer and suffered greatly to take the Good News of Jesus to the Jews and the other nations. Jesus Himself met Paul (called Saul) on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:5). After three days Jesus sent Ananias with a message to Paul. “I have chosen this man to work for Me... I will show him how much he must suffer for Me” (9:16). Paul was now a prisoner in Rome because he preached about Jesus and His resurrection.

Paul reminded them, “That is not the way of life in Christ that you learned about... What you learned was the truth about Jesus. You were taught to renew your thinking. You were taught to start living a new life... truly good and holy, just as God is” (4:20-24). It is the life created in the image of God. Renewing the mind comes through dying to your old sinful life and being born again

by the Holy Spirit. It also comes through regularly reading the Bible, both Old and New Testaments, and asking the Spirit to give you divine understanding.

Several years later, Jesus Himself gave a warning to the Church in nearby Sardis through the apostle John. “Remember what you have been taught and have heard. Obey it! Turn away from your sins! Wake up!” (Revelation 3:3),

God calls us to live in the light, seeking His will and to be free from sin in our spirits. We must think godly thoughts and follow His Son Jesus. That is what God created us for. We do this by God’s grace through the power of the Holy Spirit living in us.

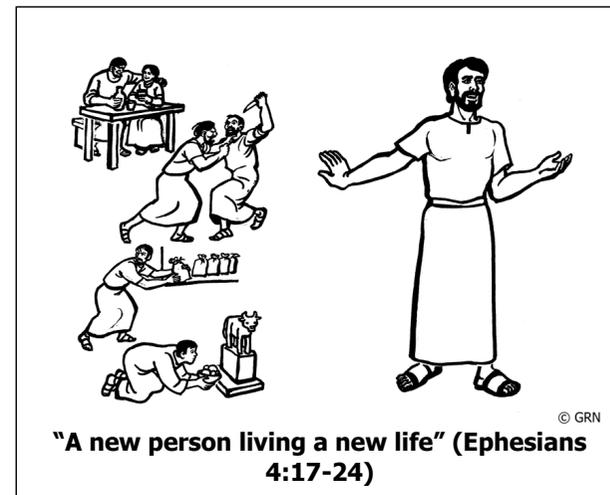
The tongue is the last part of our body to be brought under the control of the Holy Spirit (James 3:6). So, Paul warns us here to stop lying but speak only the truth to our neighbours and others who respect God (Ephesians 4:25).

Ask God to help you control what you say. Encourage others with your words. Every time you meet another Christian, talk about Jesus and what He has done for you (Malachi 3:16). Share a Bible verse.

When you are angry, be humble, loving and forgiving. “Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry” (Ephesians 4:26). If you feel your brother or sister has done something against you, go to them and tell them, “I forgive you”. This will set your spirit free. Many try to hide their hurts, but God sees and knows them. “Do not give the devil a chance” (4:27).

Did Paul tell Christians not to steal? Yes, he did! (4:28). We can steal in many ways: by not doing a good day’s work; by borrowing and not paying back. Stop doing things that give the devil a way into your life.

Be honest and support yourself and your family and have some money left over to give to others (4:28).



best to remain as one." God's peace keeps believers together (4:3). Jesus was humble (Matthew 11:29). He calls us to be the same. Paul describes His unity at work in His Church today: one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism and one Father (Ephesians 4:4-6).

### **EACH ONE JOINED TO THE OTHER IN LOVE AND UNITY**

Through the grace and mercy of God we have also each received a unique gift. Paul says, "These gifts (of God's grace) are given to us by Christ" (4:7). These personal gifts include apostles (evangelists), prophets, preachers, pastors and teachers for the church (4:11), as well as gifts of healing and caring. Paul said, that Jesus gave us these gifts "so that they might prepare God's people to serve" (4:12). In this way the Church, which is the body of Christ, is built up, as we are united by faith. We are joined together "in the knowledge of God's Son" (4:13).

Paul said that when we first received Jesus, we were like infants, easily deceived by false teaching and error (4:14). With the gifts of God's grace, we will "grow up in every way to become the body of Christ. Christ is the head of the body" (4:15).

We cannot make peace where there is none. God gives peace when His Spirit works in our hearts (John 14:27). As the Spirit bears fruit in our lives (Galatians 5:22-23), so we have peace. Our peace touches others and makes them peaceful, just as our stress and fears can make others feel troubled. With Christ as the head, "He makes the whole body grow and build itself up in love" (Ephesians 4:16).

In Christ's body:

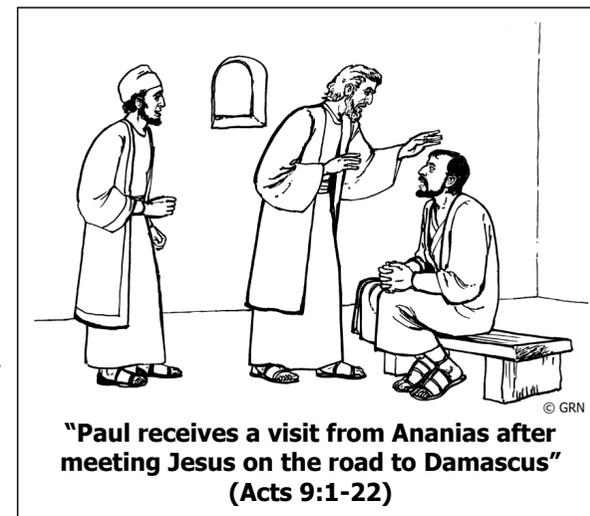
- each part is joined to the other (4:16);
- each part needs the other (Romans 12:5);
- each part cares for the other (Galatians 6:2).
- each part does its own work (Ephesians 4:1-12).

Jesus brought God's grace to mankind (4:7; John 1:14). Grace is when God reaches out in love to sinners who do not deserve His mercy (Romans 5:8).

### **TEACHING HOW TO LIVE A NEW LIFE**

Next Paul warns the Ephesian church not to live as they did before they believed (Ephesians 4:17). At the time of Paul, most of the people in the nations did not believe in one true Almighty God as in Israel. They worshipped false gods and idols. They were unholy and their thoughts were useless. They did not know God or understand His truth. They were stubborn and sinful. They had lost "all feeling of what is right". They were full of greed (4:18-19).

Christians at Ephesus knew this (Ephesians 3:2). Paul told them that God showed him "the mystery of Christ" (3:3-4). This mystery was not known before. "But now the Holy Spirit has made this mystery known to the apostles" (3:5). The mystery was that Jews and Gentile believers from other nations would be joined together in one body, the Christian Church. "They share in the promise" (3:6). This was the "mystery of Christ". "Both groups [of believers] are parts of one body... They belong to Jesus Christ."



### **GOD SHOWS HIS WISDOM THROUGH PAUL**

Paul said "God gave me His grace... His power is at work in me. I am by far the least important of all the Lord's holy people. But he gave me the grace to preach to the non-Jews [Gentiles] about... Christ" (3:7-8).

Paul often spoke in his letters about the need for Christian unity in the New Testament churches. Satan tries to find many ways to divide Christian churches and Christian families. Paul said, "God told me to make clear to everyone how the mystery [of Christ] came about... It was kept hidden in the past in the mind of God" (3:9). He wanted the rulers and authorities in the spiritual world [demons and angels] to know His great wisdom. And the Church would make it known to them. That was God's plan from the beginning. "He has fulfilled his plan through Christ Jesus our Lord" (3:10-11).

Paul believed strongly that through faith in Christ, we can approach God freely and without fear. He tells us that this was God's plan, worked out through Jesus Christ our Lord. The ministry of preaching the Good News of Jesus Christ must therefore include taking authority in His name over demons and alien religions in the spirit world.

This unity of all who believe that Jesus is the Son of God brings salvation, eternal life and access to the Lord God Almighty. "Through Him [Christ] and through faith in Him, we can approach God. We can come to Him freely. We can come without fear" (3:12). This is all part of the mystery. Satan's demons know that when Christ's Good News is preached on Earth, it leads to our

salvation. Satan also knows the power of Christian unity. This is why he tries to destroy unity in the churches.

Paul had studied the Law of Moses all his life, but he had not fully understood God's plan. Then God's eternal purposes were revealed to him and he believed that all people and tribes can approach a holy God through Jesus. Because Jesus forgives all our sins, when we believe and repent, we can come to the Father "freely and without fear" (Hebrews 3:12). This is why he was called to preach to the people from other nations who were not Jews, and bring unity of faith in God with Jewish believers through Christ.

### PAUL'S PRAYERS FOR THE EPHESIANS

Paul pleads, "Do not lose hope because I am suffering for you... I bow in prayer to the Father because of my work among you" (3:13-14). In this way, Paul worshipped God and prayed for the Christians in Ephesus.

Paul wanted these Christians – and all Christians – to live as true children of God. Paul knew we are sons and daughters of God, adopted as part of His family in Heaven and on Earth (3:15). Paul prayed that:

- God will make us strong (3:16).
- His Holy Spirit will give us power (3:16).
- Jesus will live in our hearts through faith (3:16).
- Our love will have deep roots – a strong foundation (3:17).

It was Paul's great desire that everyone will understand the love of Jesus and be filled with the fullness of God Almighty. The Holy Spirit shows us how wide and long and high and deep is God's love and power for us (3:18). Paul believed that we will receive everything God has planned for us (3:19).



#### Paul prayed to the Father for the Church (3:16-19):

- that they will have strong faith;
- that they will know how rich they are in Christ;
- that Jesus will dwell deep in them by His Spirit;
- that the love of Jesus will be rooted in their hearts;
- that they will experience how great His love is;
- that they will be filled with all the blessings of God.

Paul also said, "God is able to do far more than we could ever ask for or imagine. Give Him glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus... through all time and forever and ever" (3:20-21).

Paul's main prayer is for God's love and power to be at work within the Church throughout all generations. It was a prayer of blessing for the Ephesian church and also for churches today.

God is able to do more than Paul or the Ephesians could ever imagine, and the glory belongs to God (Isaiah 42:8). God will do this work in Christians today as they come to Him through Jesus, who prays for them (Hebrews 7:25).

We must not only preach the Good News of Jesus but respond to it and live it out in our lives. We cannot look at someone without care and compassion when we have Christ's Spirit, the source of love, within us. We are not perfect, but we are empowered to love others. This is God's work of grace within us. It enables us to work and worship in unity but each member must play their part despite many differences.



#### Talk about this:

1. What was God's special gift to Paul (3:2,7)?
2. How was Paul suffering for the Christians at Ephesus (3:13)?
3. Why did God include Gentiles in His plan of salvation (3:6,9-11)?
4. What were Paul's constant prayers for the Christians in Ephesus (3:14-19)?



**Think about this:** What mystery has been revealed to your church to declare to the world (3:9-11)? If God can do so much more than we imagine, what blessings should we be looking for? How should Christians pray for each other today? How do we bless God and bless others (3:21)? How can we bring glory to God both in Church and State?



### Bible reading: Ephesians Chapter 4

#### GROWING TOGETHER IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

In the first three chapters, Paul wrote about God's plan. He said this plan was to build unity in the body of Christ with each local church. His plan was to give these men and women new lives to live with Him in Heaven.

In the last three chapters of Ephesians, Paul tells us how God's sons and daughters should live now. Paul again reminds his readers that he is in prison in Rome, "as a prisoner of the Lord" (4:1). When these Christians said that they would follow Jesus, they agreed to a new way of life. This means a daily calling to follow Jesus and serve God, whatever the cost. Our new life in Christ is for the whole of life and for ever.

"I ask you to live a life worthy of what God chose for you", Paul said (4:1). When God calls us and we answer His call, our job is to be worthy of that calling. To be worthy of our calling, means to live to honour God. We do this as we worship God together and love, forgive and help each other. We call this 'living out the gospel message'. Our witness is seen when we are humble and gentle and patient and "put up with [accept] each other in love" (4:2; Galatians 6:2).

Being humble is not being weak. A humble heart shows a strong spirit. A humble heart also brings unity through the Holy Spirit. Paul pleads, "Try your