

Introduction

The name “Prison Epistles” is often given to four of the letters of the Apostle Paul, written during his first imprisonment in Rome in A.D. 61-63. The four are: Ephesians (3:1), Philippians (1:7), Colossians (4:10), and Philemon (9). It is not completely clear whether Paul was in prison in Rome one or two times, but twice seems to better fit the information we have.

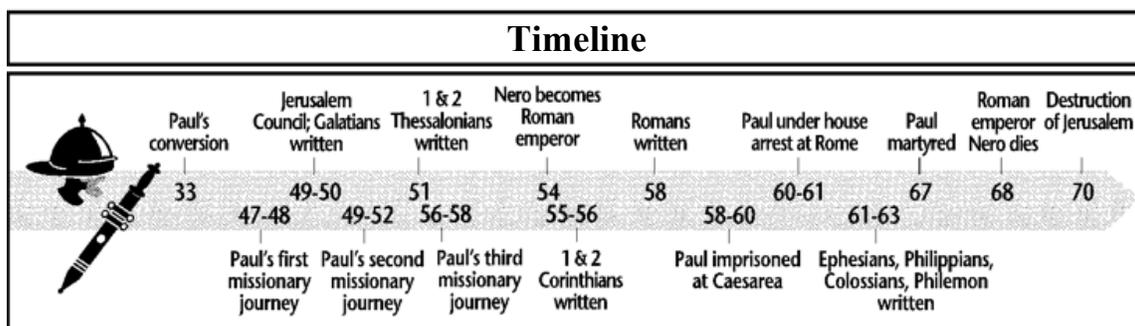


Paul’s Ministry

Paul was converted on the road to Damascus after a vision from Jesus Christ, who commissioned him as an apostle to bring the Gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15). Paul’s ministry was to proclaim a new revelation from God, that the Mosaic Law had ended as a way to access God, and the church age, which began at Pentecost in Jerusalem (Acts 2), was a mystery not revealed to the Old Testament prophets. That new revelation was that both Jews and Gentiles were to come to God through faith in Christ.

After about 10 years of independent study of the Old Testament Scripture and some time with the other apostles, Paul was recruited by Barnabas to help teach new converts in Antioch. From there, Paul went on three missionary journeys. The first was to various cities in Galatia, after which he wrote the book of Galatians, Paul’s first epistle. The second journey was to various cities around the Aegean Sea, focusing on a year-and-a-half stay in Corinth. The third journey was a three-year stay in Ephesus, from which Paul wrote 1 and 2 Corinthians and Romans, followed by a brief revisiting of the Greek cities of his second journey. Then Paul journeyed to Jerusalem, where he was arrested and sent to Caesarea for two years, then to Rome, where he was imprisoned under house arrest for another two years (Acts 28:30). During these two imprisonments, Paul’s companion Luke wrote the books of Luke and Acts, and Paul wrote what we call the “Prison Epistles.”

Then Paul’s history becomes less clear. Most likely, he was finally brought before Caesar and released. Hoping to go take the Gospel to Spain, Paul first revisited the Aegean Greek churches and sent Timothy to Ephesus and Titus to Crete, and wrote 1 Timothy and Titus to them, probably from Troas. Then Nero became Caesar and Paul was arrested again, taken to Rome and beheaded in the mid-to-late A.D. 60s. The Apostle Peter was also killed by Nero. All the other apostles were also killed or disappeared at this time, except the Apostle John who moved to Ephesus and survived until the mid-A.D. 90s. [Below is a “Timeline of Ephesians” from the “Ryrie Study Bible.”]



The Author of Ephesians

Paul refers to himself as the author of the epistle two times (1:1; 3:1). Recently, some have questioned the Pauline authorship, claiming that some of the vocabulary, style, and doctrine are different from Paul's other works. But this would assume that someone falsely put Paul's name in the book, a practice called pseudonymity, which the first-century Christians never did. It would assume that the author lied when he said, *I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles*. Also, one wonders if these critics have read the book of Romans, which is written by Paul and parallels the theology of Ephesians. Furthermore, without any dispute, Ephesians was completely accepted in the early church as Paul's letter. There is no reasonable argument for denying the Pauline authorship of Ephesians.

The City of Ephesus

Apparently, Christianity first came to Ephesus with Aquila and Priscilla. Acts 18:18-19 tells us, *Paul, having remained many days longer, took leave of the brethren and put out to sea for Syria, and with him were Priscilla and Aquila ... They came to Ephesus, and he left them there*. But on his Third Missionary Journey, Paul stayed in the city for about three years. During this time, Christianity spread throughout all of Asia Minor because he was *reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus*. *This took place for two years, so that all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks* (Acts 19:10).

Ephesus was an influential commercial, political, and religious center of the Greek/Roman world. It had the great temple of Artemis (Diana), and it ranked with Alexandria and Antioch as a major



trading center (Acts 19:27). After Paul, Timothy was sent to appoint overseers in the church at Ephesus (1 Timothy 1:3), and from about A.D. 70-95, the Apostle John made this city his headquarters.



Ephesians as an Encyclical Letter

An encyclical letter is one that is intended to be circulated among many different groups. There are several indications that Ephesians is such a letter:

- Three good quality early Greek manuscripts do not have the words *at Ephesus* in 1:1.
- There are no church issues discussed in this epistle as there are in many of Paul's letters.
- There are no names of specific friends mentioned. Since Paul had worked at Ephesus for about three years on his Third Missionary Journey (Acts 20:31), and because he usually mentioned personal friends in his letters, it does not seem like this is a letter meant only for the Ephesians.
- This letter was likely sent first to Ephesus, carried by Tychicus (Ephesians 6:21-22; Colossians 4:7-8), with the expectation that it would be read, copied, and passed along to other churches.
- This is probably the letter referred to in Colossians 4:16, *And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea* (KJV).

The Purpose of Ephesians

Paul sent this to inform the believers of Ephesus, and the other churches of Asia Minor, about the *mystery of the gospel*. They knew the Gospel—salvation by grace through faith was in the Old Testament (Genesis 15:6). But the church was something God had not revealed in the Old Testament. It was a *mystery which for ages has been hidden in God* (Ephesians 3:9). It sat between Daniels 69th and 70th week (Daniel 9:24-27). The *mystery* was about what could be called an *age*, *administration*, or *dispensation*, which was after the Mosaic Law, and before the Millennial Kingdom (*the dispensation of the fullness of times*). That mystery is the one we live in. Paul wrote to make sure the believers understood that they were part of that mystery, not part of Israel, and not yet part of the future fullness of time.

The Theme of Ephesians

The theme of any piece of literature is in two parts:

A **subject**, what the author is talking about and

A **complement**, what the author is saying about what he is talking about.

In Ephesians, the apostle is talking about the unity of the church, the body of all believers from the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2) until the Rapture (John 14:1-3; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 1 Corinthians 15). This group of believers, which has now stretched over 2000 years, is one body in Christ.

There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all (Ephesians 4:4-6).

What Paul is saying, about what he is talking about, is that each individual believer is called by God to have a personal role in that unified body of Christ. The apostles never suggested any institution to sit between the individual and the unity of the body.

But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift (4:7).

Subject of Ephesians: The unity of the body of Christ, the (universal) church

Complement of Ephesians: is accomplished as each believer develops his or her individual grace given by God.

The Outline of Ephesians

A Personal Greeting, 1:1-2

I. As Saints, You Are Called by God from Eternity Past, 1:3–3:21

A. Predestination, 1:3-23

B. Salvation, 2:1-22

C. A Previously Unrevealed Mystery, 3:1-21

II. Therefore Walk Worthy of Your Calling, 4:1–6:20

A. In unity, 4:1-32

B. By Imitating God, 5:1-21

C. In Marriage and Family, 5:22–6:4

D. As Slaves and Masters, 6:5-9

E. In the Spiritual Warfare, 6:10-20

Personal Comments and a Benediction, 6:21-24

A Personal Note—I shall consider this Epistle sentence by sentence, i.e., I will make my small division points at the sentences, not the verses or paragraphs. Outlines, brackets, and numbers placed (in parenthesis) throughout this text are mine.

A Personal Greeting, 1:1-2

Paul, A clear identification of the author of the epistle.

An apostle of Christ Jesus, An apostle was not necessarily one of the 12 (1 Corinthians 15:5-9) but one to whom Jesus personally, bodily appeared, after His resurrection from the dead, and one He commissioned (apostle means “sent one”) to start the church.

By the will of God, The word *will* is commonly used for *desire*. The point is, Paul’s calling was God’s doing and according to God’s desire, not Paul’s.

To the saints, All true believers are saints, holy ones because of the cleansing of the blood of Christ.

Who are [at Ephesus], This phrase does not occur in three of the best and earliest manuscripts.

And who are faithful in Christ Jesus, The evidence that a person is a saint is that he or she is faithful. If they are not faithful, then they should not have assurance that they are saints.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, Paul’s signature greeting.



I. As a Saint, You Are Called by God from Eternity Past, 1:3–3:21

A. Predestination, 1:3-23

1:3-4

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, The word *blessed* [εὐλογητός (*eulogetos*)] is a combination of two words, (*eu*) *happy* and (*logetos*) *words*. The word means “pertaining to being worthy of praise or commendation” (Louw & Nida Lexicon). This is saying God is good. It is not the word for *blessing* in the Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5.

Who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, Repeating the word for “blessed,” Paul indicates that God has conferred commendation (good words) upon His saints. Notice the blessings are not on earth but *in the heavenly places*.

Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, God the Father [ἐκλέγω (*eklego*)] *chose* or *elected* us, from all those who would ever be born, to be His saints. This was not done when we were born or when we believed but *before the foundation of the world* [κόσμος (*kosmos*)], which would be creation as recorded in Genesis 1 and 2. Therefore, it is impossible for a saint to lose their salvation or God would not be sovereign over His election.

That we would be holy and blameless before Him, The purpose of the election of the saints is not just their salvation but that they be holy and blameless (literally, *without spot*) as they stand before God. But we are not yet holy and blameless. So He chose us to be something we have not yet become. Our position is not yet our experience.

1:5-6

In love, Traditionally placed in verse 4, the phrase ἐν ἀγάπῃ (*en agape*) properly belongs with this sentence and addresses God’s choice, defining it as a gift that cannot be reciprocated.

He predestined us, Meaning to *decide beforehand* or *predetermine*.

To adoption as sons, This phrase is all from one Greek word [υιοθεσία (*huiiothesian*)], literally, *to put* or *place as sons*.

Through Jesus Christ to Himself, God the Son is the means for the Father to have adopted sons.

According to the kind intention of His will, The defining word [εὐδοκία (*eudokia*)] is a combination of the words *good* and *thoughts*. Louw & Nida define it as “that which is desired on the basis of its appearing to be beneficial,” probably best translated *good pleasure*. Everything is about the desires, benefits, and good pleasure of God.

To the praise of the glory of His grace,

- Praise is to point out, or proclaim value
- *Glory* indicates *majesty* or *brightness*
- *Grace* is unmerited favor, you can't work for it



Which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved, Beloved refers to Christ as God's beloved.

1:7-8a

In Him we have redemption, [ἀπολύτρωσις (*apolutrosis*)], This is a purchase, which sets free, often translated *release*. It is the same word translated *divorce* (NASB) and *put away* (KJV) in Mark 10:2. The idea is, we are *divorced* or *set free* from sin. There are three New Testament words for “redemption”:

- First is ἀγοράζω (*agorazo*), a purchase of the whole world while they are in sin.
- Second is ἐξαγοράζω (*exagorazo*), a purchase that removes us from the market place of sin.
- Third is this word ἀπολύτρωσις (*apolutrosis*), to release us or set us free to follow Christ.

Through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, Of the major world religions, only Christianity includes a blood sacrifice and *without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness* (Hebrews 9:22).

According to the riches of His grace which He lavished on us, Lavished is the common word for *abundance*, here best translated *make abundant toward us*.

1:8b-10c

In all wisdom and insight, Either of these words can be translated *wisdom*.

He made known to us the mystery of His will, Paul will explain *mystery* more specifically in chapter 3. A *mystery* is a previously unknown revelation, i.e., something the Old Testament prophets were unaware of, which was revealed to the apostles and prophets of the New Testament.

According to His kind intention, The word is [εὐδοκία (*eudokia*)] is better translated *good pleasure* (KJV).

Which He purposed in Him, Better, *Himself* (KJV)

With a view to an administration, The word [οἰκονομία (*oikonomia*)], translated *administration* (NASB) or *dispensation* (KJV), is literally *management plan*, from the words for *house* and *laws*. The idea is that God has a management plan for specific time periods.

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, This is probably a reference to the future one-thousand-year (millennial) reign of Christ over the earth (Revelation 20:1-10), when all of history will be summed up in Christ (1 Corinthians 15:27).

1:10d-12

In Him also, Although many commentators claim that *Him*, *His*, and *He* is Christ, it is certainly God the Father that predestines us, and later (verse 17), it is clearly the Father. I, therefore, suggest that all the references to *Him*, *His*, and *He* from verses 10-19 are God the Father.

We have obtained an inheritance, These five (NASB) words are the translation of one Greek word [ἐκκληρώθημεν (*eklerothemen*)]. Harold Hoehner's comment is enlightening here:

“[This]...is not the same word used in verse 4 (ἐξελέξατο). The word in verse 11 (used only here in the NT) means “to cast a lot” or “to appoint or obtain by lot.” In this context, it is best rendered “to be chosen, appointed, or destined.” Jewish believers were chosen because they were predestined. But this predestination is not a matter of whim or caprice on God's part; it is according to the plan (πρόθεσιν, “purpose”; cf. Rom. 8:28; 9:11; Eph. 3:11) of God, who works out everything in conformity with the purpose (βουλήν, “counsel or deliberation”) of His will.”

So it is God's choice, but, unlike the Muslim view of God, it is not an arbitrary choice.

Having been predestined, Decided beforehand

According to His purpose, The choice of those elected to be saved are chosen because they fit into God's overall purpose for creation.

Who works all things after the counsel of His will, God is at work in all things that happen, so that they work out according to His purpose, which is according to His *will* (the word also means *desire*) for creating those things.

To the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory, It is not clear whether *the first to hope* refers to the Jewish believers, the apostles, or the early church, but the next sentence leans us toward understanding the phrase *first to hope* as the early Jewish believers.

1:13-14

In Him, you also, This sentence begins the same as the previous one, except there is a separate word emphasizing *you*, probably a reference to the Gentiles.

After listening to the message [λόγος (logos)] of truth, Brought to them by missionaries

The gospel of your salvation, having also believed, The Good News is the salvation of the Gentiles who believed. The word *salvation* is one of many (like *church* and *love*) that the apostle borrowed from the Greek language (where it meant physical deliverance) and gave it a new meaning.

You were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, This indicates that every believer is saved and sealed at the time they believe. The key word is σφραγίζω (*sphragidzo*). The Louw and Nida Lexicon says this word means “to use a seal to close or to make something secure.” It seems that the salvation a believer receives is one he cannot lose.

Who is given as a pledge, The underlined is one word meaning *a down payment*.

Of our inheritance, The inheritance is something believers do not yet have, but the Holy Spirit is a down payment, securing it for them in the future.

With a view to the redemption, This is the same word for *redemption* used in 1:7.

Of God’s own possession, to the praise of His glory, The reason for the believer’s inheritance is because each of us is for God’s possession (something He owns), praise (someone who will advertise or make value known), and glory (someone who declares His majesty or brightness).



1:15-17

For this reason, The reason for the letter is to let the believers know they are part of a new age, the *mystery*, which the apostles called the church. That meant Paul wanted to inform them of the following things.

I too, having heard, This phrase sounds like Paul is addressing people he does not know personally. But Paul had lived in Ephesus for three years. It appears this is a letter he expected to be read among believers in many of the Asia Minor cities.

Of the faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you and your love for all the saints, The two pieces of evidence Paul gives for their predestined calling, which he is about to discuss, is (1) their faith in Christ and (2) their love for all the saints, not just local ones but *all the saints* in the church.

Do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers, This introduces the next significant section as a prayer request.

That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him, The verb *may give* is an aorist subjunctive. Aorist is a timeless tense. Subjunctive is the mood of uncertainty. So God may or may not give to believers *a spirit of wisdom*. However, Paul prays for these believers to get it, so it is always desired, it is a part of a believer’s maturity, even though it is not a guaranteed answer to prayer (as, for example, Philippians 4:6-7 is).

- *Wisdom* is a firm grasp of the obvious.
- *Revelation* is a disclosure from God.
- *Knowledge* is the acquisition of information.

So Paul prays for them to have a capacity to grasp revelation (the information that God has disclosed about Himself). Revelation is of two types:

- **General revelation**, through nature (Romans 1) and our conscience (Romans 2)
- **Special revelation**, through words, written in Scripture and spoken by Christ (2 Timothy 3:16)

1:18-19a

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, 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, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe, This enlightenment of God to believers allows us to see God's perspective through (general and special) revelation in such a way that it is understood to be true. This would also include back-reading this enlightenment into Scripture, thus allowing the believer a fuller understanding of the character and desires of God through the written Word. This is not the "Doctrine of Illumination," which incorrectly says the Spirit illuminates believers to understand the meaning of a text. This is an enlightenment of God (the Father), which allows us to understand that the text is true and to understand it from God's perspective.

Enlightenment, Not Illumination

To understand how enlightenment differs from illumination, suppose I am a small boy who has been told at school that toys under the Christmas tree were made by elves at the North Pole. I also see various movies and Santas in the mall that confirm this. Then my father takes me aside and tells me, "Son, you need to understand that toys are made by toy manufacturers, assembled in factories, and sold in stores. They are not made by elves at the North Pole." And as I look at what has been disclosed by my father, I understand it to be true. Now I have, from my father, *a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge* of where toys come from.

Next, suppose I get on the Internet and find a Wikipedia article and read about how toys are made. With the *spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge* of toy making, which I received from my father, I can now better understand the Wikipedia article I am reading on toy making. It is not that my father interpreted the article for me. I could understand what it said without him. But I would not understand it to be true, if I understood toys were made by elves at the North Pole. But now with my father's *spirit of wisdom and of revelation*, I can understand the Wikipedia article in such a way that I don't just understand what it says, but I understand it to be true.

This passage is not about the Holy Spirit illuminating the meaning of a text of Scripture. But it is about God *the Father of glory enlightening* believers so that they see things from His point of view, the result being they focus, not on the benefits to man, but on the glory of God. Not just on **their** hope, **their** calling, and **their** inheritance but on *the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance*. And that's the *spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him*.

Near as I can tell, there is no way to know **how** God enlightens His saints to have *a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him*. We can only know that it exists, that it is a good thing to pray for, and that it is part of Christian maturity, granted by *the Father of glory*.

1:19b-21

[*These are*], The NASB adds these words, which are not in the Greek text.

In accordance with the working of the strength of His might, The enlightenment of verse 18 comes from the power of God.

Which He brought about in Christ, when He
[A] *Raised Him from the dead and*

[B] *Seated Him at His right hand* (predicted in Psalm 110:1) *in the heavenly places, far above*

(1) *All rule and*

(2) *Authority and*

(3) *Power and*

(4) *Dominion, and*

(5) *Every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.*

(1)-(4) apparently described different orders of angels (as in Romans 8:38; Ephesians 3:10; 6:12; Colossians 1:16; 2:10, 15; Titus 3:1). (5) May include human rulers. The word here translated *age* is αἰών (*aion*) the same word elsewhere translated *eternity*.

1:22-23

And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things, First, Paul restated the previous description.

To the church, which is His body, This is the most concise definition of the church, and points toward the theme of the book, the unity of the church. Ryrie has the following comment about Paul's statement:

"[This is] the universal church to which every true believer belongs, regardless of local church affiliation. It is a spiritual organism entered by means of the baptism of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13). Christ is the risen Head of the church, and its members are subject to Him (Eph. 5:24). Local churches should be miniatures of the Body of Christ, though it is possible to have unbelieving members in local churches who are not, therefore, members of the Body of Christ."

Therefore, "local churches" cannot be "miniatures of the Body of Christ," since they will likely have "unbelieving members."

The fullness of Him who fills all in all, The word "fills" is a present middle participle. The middle voice has the idea of someone **himself** causing the action. So Christ, the Head of the body, fills (for Himself) the church with blessings. It could, therefore, be translated, *the church which is His body, which is being filled by the One who fills all things with all things*. So Christ fills the church, which is then the fullness of Christ.



Applications from Ephesians 1

1. As believers in Christ, we are members of a group of saints from all ages, who are blessed in the heavenlies. So we should focus on heavenly blessings (vv. 1-3).
2. The reason God chose us (before the foundation of the world) was that we be holy and blameless. So if we are not moving in the direction of being holy and blameless, we should not assume that we are chosen by God (v. 4).
3. Our lives were written out in eternity past for the good pleasure of God. God has not delegated our wellbeing or our destiny to anyone else, so we should not blame anyone else for our life situation (vv. 5-6).
4. Even though we have a prepared destiny, it is just as true that we are sinners, totally dependent on the redemptive price paid by Christ. So we should understand that our sin is real and, without redemption in Christ, our sin will keep us from God and heaven (vv. 7-8).
5. It was also the good pleasure of God to reveal to us the future dispensation of the fullness of time (the Millennial Kingdom) on earth. We should, then, see our lives as a preparation for possible service in that final kingdom on earth (vv. 9-10).
6. Besides a role in the future, earthly, fullness of time/Millennial Kingdom, we have our own future heavenly inheritance as part of the glory of Christ. So we should also be preparing ourselves for heaven (vv. 11-12).
7. Believers are sealed by the Holy Spirit as an insurance of our eternal destiny. So our eternal confidence is in the sealing of the Holy Spirit (vv. 13-14).
8. Our prayers for other believers should prioritize their increasing wisdom, knowledge, and understanding about:
 - (a) The hope Christ has
 - (b) The fact that we are His inheritance
 - (c) The power of God which raised Christ from the dead
 - (d) God putting all things in subjection under Christ's feet, and
 - (e) Christ being the head of the church, His body (vv. 16-23)

Questions about Chapter 1

1. When Paul said he was *an apostle of Christ Jesus* (verse 1), he meant
 - A. He was one of the 12 apostles, a replacement for Judas
 - B. He was an apostle, but not one of the 12
 - C. He was a “sent one,” not an ordained apostle
2. Ephesians is written to
 - A. The saints who are at Ephesus
 - B. The saints including those at Ephesus
 - C. The saints of the universal church
3. Ephesians 1:3 says that God blesses us
 - A. In heaven
 - B. On earth
 - C. Both in heaven and on earth
4. The reason God predestined us from the foundation of the world was so that we could
 - A. Have an inheritance
 - B. Be His witnesses
 - C. Be blameless
5. The redemption of verses 7 and 14 means we have been
 - A. Bought
 - B. Paid for
 - C. Released
6. The *mystery of His will* in verse 9 is
 - A. Something that cannot be known
 - B. Something the Old Testament prophets did not know
 - C. Something that will be revealed in the future
7. *The fullness of time* in verse 10 is
 - A. The church age
 - B. The Millennial Kingdom
 - C. The eternal state
8. The predestination of verse 11 means
 - A. Our salvation has been predetermined
 - B. Our whole life has been predetermined
 - C. Everything that happens has been predetermined
9. Verse 13 says *having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit...* This means
 - A. The saved cannot lose their salvation.
 - B. The saved, who continue to believe, cannot lose their salvation.
 - C. The saved will continue to believe.
10. The enlightenment of verse 18, in the context of verse 17, means
 - A. Only believers can understand God’s revelation.
 - B. Believers can understand God’s revelation better than unbelievers.
 - C. Believers can understand that God’s revelation is true.

Answers: 1. B. 2. All are correct, but B is the best answer, assuming “at Ephesus” is not part of the original writing, since it is not in three of the best manuscripts. 3. A. 4. C (verse 4). 5. C. 6. B. 7. B. 8. A (Although C is probably true, it is not the point of verse 11.). 9. A. 10. C.

B. Salvation, 2:1-22

2:1-2

And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, Death is a permanent separation. The point is, we were permanently separated from God because of our sin.

Here are two words for “sin.” The first word [παράπτωμα (*paraptoma*)] is rightly translated *trespass*. It is literally *false steps* or *trespassing*, walking where you don’t belong. It is similar to the word Paul used in 4:1 for *walk* [περιπατέω (*peripateo*)] *worthy of the calling*. The second word for *sin* is the common word [ἁμαρτία (*hamartia*)] *to miss the mark*. That assumes there is a mark, an absolute standard, to miss. The character of God, what is pleasing to God, is the target, the mark. Sin is anything that misses that mark.



In which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience, The sins in which you formerly walked as unbelievers are described in three ways. That which is according to

1. *The course of this world*
2. *The prince of the power of the air*
3. *The spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience*

The *course of this world*, be it liberal or conservative, secular or religious, ignorant or educated, will operate according to Satan (*the prince of the power of the air*) and his work among unbelievers. Notice the word *spirit* is descriptive of the nature of unbelievers. Therefore, unbelievers have a spiritual nature.

2:3

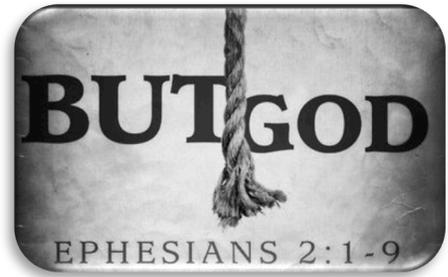
Among them we too all formerly lived, Before believers were saved, they were part of Satan’s world system, even if God predestined them for salvation. They may have been conservative, patriotic, or religious, like Paul was before his conversion.

In the lusts of our flesh, indulging [better translated, *doing*] ***the desires of the flesh and of the mind*** [better translated, *thoughts*]. So as unbelievers, we were not thinking that we were following Satan’s program. We were just thinking about doing things according to the lusts and desires of our flesh and our thoughts. And that is Satan’s program, because Satan wants you to think, “It’s all about you.”

And were by nature children of wrath, So we were destined, by the nature of our sin, for the wrath of God, ***even as the rest.*** In other words, unbelievers who are predestined to be saved (chapter one) were not better people, as unbelievers, than other unbelievers.

2:4-7

But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, Paul bases our salvation on God's **mercy** (unmerited non-judgment), which is a **work** of God, based upon God's **love** (unqualified giving), which is an **attribute** of God. The difference between a work and an attribute is that attributes are always present. God is always loving (doing the best good) but not always merciful (as in the times of judgment, say, at Noah's flood, the destruction of Sodom, and the dispersion of the Jews).



Even when we were dead [hopelessly separated] ***in*** [or by reason of] ***our transgressions*** [better, *trespasses*, walking in the wrong place], God did three things for us. These are presented in the Greek aorist tense, as a timeless fact, yet all have a future fulfillment. For believers, they are positionally present, but experientially future.

1. ***Made us alive together*** [instead of separated from God, we are joined] ***with Christ (by grace you have been saved)*** [which Paul will discuss in depth in the next sentence], ***and***
2. ***Raised us up with Him***, just as we have not yet experienced being made alive (we will still die), we have not yet experienced our resurrection (we are still in a physical body), ***and*** [God also]
3. ***Seated us*** [placed us in His presence] ***with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus***

All these are future, yet God sees them timelessly, as if already completed.

The reason God did all this for us was ***so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.*** Once again, it's all about God and what He is doing to demonstrate His own character.

2:8-9



For by grace you have been saved through faith, Grace is unmerited favor. Faith is to trust the evidence. Salvation is a two-sided coin. Grace is God's part. Faith is our part. Those who are delivered from eternal punishment have been saved by the unmerited favor of God through a decision to trust the evidence that the death of Christ was a payment for their sin.

And that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, Grace was clearly a gift of God, but faith is a decision of man. Some suggest that this *faith* is also a gift of God because the phrase *that not of yourselves* immediately follows the word *faith*. But the Greek word order does not demand that. To the extent that our faith comes from God, it is not of our concern. What we need to focus on is that faith is a decision to trust what God has revealed (John 1:12).

Not as a result of works, so that no one may boast, The grace of God is not a result of works. Grace is unmerited, therefore, by definition, it cannot be of works, therefore, no one may boast about having been given grace. Faith is not a work in the sense of a moral accomplishment. Therefore, the act of receiving is not something to boast about. But faith is something that we must do to receive the grace of God. Faith is a decision to trust the evidence God has provided. That decision is not something to boast about, but it is an action man must take. We are saved, not just because God has

offered salvation by grace. The predestined of chapter one are the saved in chapter two, but they are saved by the faith in chapter two, not the predestination of chapter one.

2:10

For we are His workmanship, [literally *His doing*].

Created in Christ Jesus for good works, So, although we are not saved **by** good works, we are saved **for** good works. Actually, that's why we were created, not just to be saved but to please God with good works.

Which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them, The works that we were created to do were previously prepared for us to perform in eternity past, and we were created to perform those works.



2:11-12

Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called "Uncircumcision" by the so-called "Circumcision," which is performed in the flesh by human hands — [remember] The word *remember* is not repeated (as in the NASB), but Paul wants them to remember what ***you were at that time***. This is not just the time when they were unsaved, but the time before the death of Christ on the cross and before the beginning of the church age. At that time, the Gentiles were:

1. ***Separate from Christ***, Gentiles did not have a Messiah.
2. ***Excluded from the commonwealth of Israel***, Gentiles were not part of God's promises to Israel as a nation because God has never established any other commonwealth [πολιτείας (*politeias*), literally, *republic*] ***and***
3. ***Strangers to the covenants of promise***, Gentiles did not have the Old Testament Abrahamic or Mosaic Covenants. Gentiles had no conditional or unconditional promises from God.
4. ***Having no hope***, Gentiles had no hope of eternal life ***and***
5. ***Without God in the world***, Gentiles had no God at all. From the scattering at the tower of Babel, the world was *without God*. Then God chose Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (Israel), and the twelve tribes of Israel from Jacob's sons. But the rest of the world was still *without God*.

2:13

But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ, Notice that the Gentiles were not saved by the blood of Christ. They were *brought near*, in other words, they were made savable, by the blood of Christ.

2:14-16

For He [Himself] is our peace, This sentence is about peace between the Jews and Gentiles. It is described four ways:

1. ***Who made both groups into one***, The difference between the age of the Mosaic Law and the church age is there is only one group, believers in Christ, not Jewish believers and Gentile believers. By way of application, this eliminates all racial distinctions in Christianity.
2. ***And broke down the barrier of the dividing wall***, Some think *the barrier* referred to the curtain in the Jerusalem Temple between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. But that was a curtain, not a wall. Paul may have in mind the dividing wall in the Jerusalem Temple

precincts that separated the Court of the Gentiles from the Court of the Jews. This wall was still standing when Paul wrote this epistle. Whatever structure Paul had in mind, the expression is a symbol of Christ breaking down the God-established division between the two groups. God established the barrier, and God broke it down.

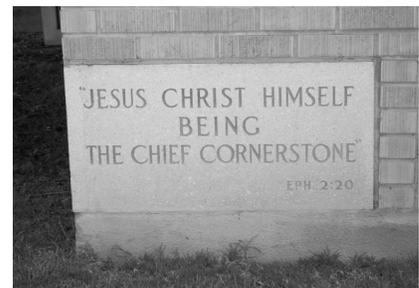
3. ***By abolishing in His flesh the enmity, [which] is the Law of commandments [contained] in ordinances,*** The dividing wall that God established between the Jews and the rest of the world was the commandments and ordinances [δόγμα (*dogma*), *decrees* or *doctrines*] of the Mosaic Law. It was impossible for Gentiles to keep the Mosaic Law. The Law required being in the land of Israel, having a Levitical priesthood, and offering sacrifices at the Temple.
4. ***So that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity,*** This unity, which is the theme of the epistle, is given with two metaphors, *one new man* and *one body*. The unity was created by reconciliation. In 2:14, the reconciliation is between Jewish and Gentile believers, and in verse 16, the reconciliation is between all people and God. Reconciliation ἀποκατάλλασσω (*apokatallasso*) is a positional (non-experiential) change that removed the enmity (or hatred) between Jews and Gentiles and between man and God. But, like the other three descriptions, this did not result in the salvation of either group. It only made their salvation possible. *To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them* (2 Corinthians 5:19, see also Romans 5:10; Colossians 1:20).

2:17-18

And He came and preached peace to you who were far away, and peace to those who were near; for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father, As in the previous sentence, *peace* is not that everybody, *far* and *near*, are saved, but that both the Jews and the Gentiles needed to have access to God, and it is available only in the *one Holy Spirit*.

2:19-22

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, The believers of this new body are fellow citizens with saints like Adam, Noah, Abraham, Job, and the believers of Israel. They did not join Israel. They joined all the saints.



And are of God's household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, God's household began at the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2), not with the Mosaic Law. This is not about the church taking over the promises to Israel, but about both being built upon a new foundation, the revelation of the New Testament *apostles and prophets*, with Christ as the *corner stone*.

In whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit, This new foundation, the new body, the church, is next identified as a replacement for the Temple, a physical place of worship. This spiritual body is *a whole building, a holy temple, and a dwelling of God in the Spirit*. *Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we*

*worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But an hour is coming, and now is, when the **true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth**; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers” (John 4:21-23).*

Applications from Ephesians 2

1. All spiritual understanding and thinking must begin with the realization that people without Christ (i.e., the world) are:
 - a. Dead in (i.e., incapable of being free from) sin
 - b. Following Satan’s world system
 - c. Living by lusts
 - d. Destined for the wrath of GodWe should not expect them to keep biblical commands because they do not understand them to be true (vv. 1-3).
2. We should realize we received the mercy of God because of God’s love for us, not because we could do anything for God. There is nothing we can do for God, except keep His commandments and not grieve Him. He doesn’t need anything, and He doesn’t need anything done for Him (vv. 4-6).
3. One reason God saved us by grace is to demonstrate the riches of this grace in the ages to come. So we should see ourselves as eternal examples of the grace of God (v. 7).
4. The salvation message we should proclaim is that we are saved by God’s grace—His unmerited favor—not by our works (vv. 8-9).
5. The salvation message we should proclaim is that we are saved for the purpose of performing the good works God has foreordained for us to do (v. 10).
6. Remember, as an unsaved person, you were—and all unsaved people are—separated from:
 - a. Christ
 - b. The nation Israel
 - c. The promises to Israel
 - d. Any eternal hope
 - e. God (vv. 11-12)
7. Our gospel message should include the teaching that Christ’s death on the cross ended (for this church age) the significance of being Jewish (vv. 13-18). Our gospel message should include the teaching that believers today do not become part of Israel. Both Jews and Gentiles become part of the household of God,
 - a. Built upon the New Testament apostles and prophets, not the laws of Moses
 - b. With Christ Jesus, not the Old Testament laws, being the cornerstone (vv. 19-22).

Questions about Chapter 2

1. When Paul said, *you were dead in your trespasses and sins* (verse 1), he meant
 - A. Unbelievers do not have a spiritual nature.
 - B. Unbelievers cannot understand the Gospel without the Holy Spirit.
 - C. Unbelievers are separated from God.
2. In verse 2, *the course of this world, the prince of the power of the air, and the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience*
 - A. Are all basically the same
 - B. Are all different
 - C. Are all descriptions of Satan
3. In verses 5-6, *made us alive together with Christ, raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus*
 - A. Are all basically the same
 - B. Are all different
 - C. Are all things that have not yet been done
4. *For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God*
 - A. Means that grace is a gift from God
 - B. Means that faith is a gift from God
 - C. Means both the grace and the faith are a gift from God
5. The statement in verse 12, *that you were at that time separate from Christ*, means at that time
 - A. They were unbelievers.
 - B. They were Gentiles.
 - C. Their sins were not paid for on the cross.
6. Concerning the word *reconciliation* in this chapter,
 - A. In both 2:14 and 2:16, the reconciliation is between all people and God.
 - B. In 2:14, the reconciliation is between all people and God, and in verse 16, the reconciliation is between Jewish and Gentile believers.
 - C. In 2:14, the reconciliation is between Jewish and Gentile believers, and in verse 16, the reconciliation is between all people and God
7. *And He came and preached peace to you who were far away, and peace to those who were near*,
 - A. Means that both Jews and the Gentiles needed to have access to God
 - B. Means that access to God is available only in the one Holy Spirit
 - C. Means that both Jews and Gentiles can be saved
 - D. A and B
 - E. All of the above
8. *So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints*, means
 - A. The Gentile believers are *fellow citizens* with Noah's family.
 - B. The Gentile believers are *fellow citizens* with the Israelites.
 - C. The Gentile believers are fellow citizens with the Old Testament prophets.
 - D. A and C
 - E. All of the above

Answers: 1. C. 2. A. 3. C. 4. A. 5. C. 6. C. 7. D (C is true but the passage is about access not salvation.) 8. D (B is incorrect because some Israelites were unbelievers.)

C. Previously Unrevealed Mystery, 3:1-21

3:1-3

For this reason, For the reason of 2:19-21, that is, because the Gentiles are included as

- *Fellow citizens with the saints, and are*
- *God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone*
- *Part of the whole building, being fitted together... growing into a holy temple in the Lord*

Because of all that, Paul comes to **the purpose of the letter**, to tell them about the mystery of God.

I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles, Paul was in prison, first in Caesarea and then in Rome, probably writing this as a prisoner in Rome. The reason he was in prison in Rome was because he appealed to Caesar for a trial, and the reason he did that was to get to Rome, where he could be part of the church there and reach more Gentiles.

If indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace, The word the NASB translates *stewardship*, the KJV translates *dispensation*. It's the word οἰκονομία (*oikonomia*), which can mean *administration* (as in administrating certain affairs), *stewardship* (to be in charge of someone else's project), or *dispensation* (to dispense something, as in a paper cup dispenser). It can be used of a personal administrative task (Luke 16:2-4; 1 Corinthians 9:17) or an era of history set apart by God from other ages (Ephesians 1:10; 3:9; Colossians 1:25). Here it is both a personal task and a historical era, in that it is an assignment given to Paul concerning this new previously unannounced dispensation called the age of grace or the church age.

Which was given to me for you; that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief. This was an *administration, stewardship, or dispensation* given to Paul to deliver to the church, the body of Christ. It was not something Paul figured out by thinking, reasoning, or studying the Old Testament. This was an ἀποκάλυψις (*apokalupsis*) a new revelation from God, and a special kind of revelation called a *mystery*, which Paul is about to explain. He had written about it before in brief, possibly meaning earlier in this epistle.

3:4-7

By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight, The way to understand the revelation given to the apostles, was simply to read it. It did not require the Ephesians to have any personal revelation from God, or circumstantial leading by the Holy Spirit. We learned in 1:18-19 that believers might also be *enlightened* to have God's perspective. This is a work of God in the life of the believer. But that is not needed to understand what the apostles wrote. That only required reading it.

Into the mystery of Christ, Not mysticism but *mystery*, those things about Christ not known before the revelation given to the apostles.

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, This is the purpose of the epistle. The Ephesian church needed to know that it is not part of the Abrahamic Covenant or the Davidic Covenant or the Palestinian Covenant, or the Mosaic Covenant. The church is not connected to the blessings, or cursings, or promises to Israel. The church is not an extension of Israel. And, although Christ is

foretold in the Old Testament, the church age is not. No one in the Old Testament knew about the church age. It was hidden from the prophets up through and including John the Baptist. That's why he questioned whether or not Jesus was the Messiah when Jesus did not appear to be going to Jerusalem to begin the Kingdom of Israel on earth. Jesus was going to die for the sins of the world, and His apostles were going to start a church before the return of Christ to start a kingdom.

To be specific, The most distinctive feature that distinguishes the church age from the Israel is

- **That the Gentiles are fellow heirs** [συγκληρονόμος (*sugkleronomos*), co-inheritors] **and**
- **Fellow members of the body** [σύσσωμος (*sussomos*) or *the same body* (KJV)] **and**
- **Fellow partakers** [συμμέτοχος (*summetochos*) co-members] **of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel,** The Gospel is the Good News that the Gentiles are co-equal beneficiaries of the promise of salvation by grace through faith.

Of which I was made a minister, according to the gift of God's grace which was given to me according to the working of His power, This ministering to the Gentiles is Paul's calling, which began on the road to Damascus and was the driving force of his life thereafter.

3:8-10

To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, Paul considers himself the least of the saints because of his persecution of the church (1 Corinthians 15:9). Paul's ministry/calling had two parts:

1. **To preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, and**
2. **To bring to light what is the administration** [οἰκονομία (*oikonomia*)] **of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things,** And this is the **purpose** of this encyclical (Ephesians) letter. The *God who created all things* and planned all things also predestined an age where Gentiles would be saved and serve Him apart from the Mosaic Law. And this new revelation was not a new way of salvation, but a new οἰκονομία (*oikonomia*), a new way of ordering His people, not the Mosaic Law but *the law of Christ* (1 Corinthians 9:22; Galatians 6:2), which is the commandments of Christ revealed through the apostles to the church (*If you love Me, you will keep My commandments*—John 14:15).

So that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places, Not even angels, demons, or Satan knew about the church age. God predetermined this secret church age, which fits between a disobedient Israel and its future kingdom, to reveal His wisdom to angelic authorities.

3:11-12

This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and confident access through faith in Him, Through faith in Christ, believers of this age, unlike Old Testament Israelites, can have (παρρησία (*parresian*) *freedom, courage or boldness* (Hebrews 3:6; 4:16; 10:19, 35) and προσαγωγή (*prosaogen*) the right of access or approach to God with confidence (Ephesians 2:18; Romans 5:2).

3:13

Therefore I ask you not to lose heart at my tribulations on your behalf, for they are your glory, Paul seems to be concerned that they would think Paul's ministry was not of God because he was suffering. A false idea that was common all through history, as depicted by, for example, Job's friends, and the disciples who asked Jesus if the man born blind or his parents had sinned.

3:14-19

For this reason I bow my knees, Here Paul uses kneeling as a symbol for prayer. This is only one of several postures for praying (standing, kneeling, lying prostrate) seen in the Scriptures.



Before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, Hoehner has a good comment here.

“Paul was not saying that God is the Father of all but rather that He is the Prototype of all fatherhood. “Father” is derived from God, not man. He is the first Father, the only One with “underived” fatherhood. Thus every human family **derives its name**, that is, exists as a family with a father, because of Him.”

That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, The word for *dwell* [κατοικῆσαι (*katoikesai*)] does not refer to the indwelling of Christ at salvation but rather that Christ may (literally) *be at home in* the life of the believer. The prayer is that, through the Holy Spirit, the believer would conduct his or her life in such a way that Christ would be at home in their inner man.

And that you, being rooted [like a plant] *and grounded* [like a building] *in love*, As emphasized in 1 Corinthians 13, ἀγάπη (*agape*) love (doing the best good without expectation of reciprocity) is the foundation for greater comprehension of Christ.



May be able [ἐξισχύσητε (*exischusete*) *to have inherent strength*] *to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God*, The measurement words are not about how to measure *the fullness of God* but the immensity of the God to be measured. Also, notice again how Paul emphasizes all three persons of the Trinity, as in 1:13-14; 1:17; 2:18; 2:22; and 3:4-5.

3:20-21

Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly [*super-superabundantly* ὑπερεκπερισσοῦ (*huperekperissou*), used only here and in 1 Thessalonians 3:10 and 5:13] *beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us*.

His power [δύναμιν; (*dunamin*)] **that is at work** [ἐνεργουμένην (*energoumenen*)] **within us**.

To Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen, This doxology serves as a fitting conclusion for the letter’s first three chapters, which may actually have been written as a letter and the last three chapters added later.

Applications from Ephesians 3

1. The spiritual life (described in Ephesians chapters 4 through 6) must be understood as something that was not revealed in the Old Testament. The offer of the grace of God to the individual is unique to this age of grace, from Acts 2 until the Rapture (vv. 1-5).
2. Both Jews and Gentiles are equal fellow heirs, not of God's promises to Abraham, but of God's promises of the Gospel (grace through faith) in Christ (vv. 6-7). We must not practice any racial preferences in the church, the body of Christ.
3. Our calling should be seen as proclaiming the uniqueness of this age of grace so that the obedience of the church would result in giving understanding to the angels (vv. 8-13).
4. Our hope and prayer for those we minister to should be (vv. 14-21):
 - a. That they be strengthened, through faith, by the Holy Spirit, in the inner man (v. 16).
 - b. That they be rooted and grounded in love that is for all the saints (v. 17).
 - c. That they be able to comprehend the vastness of God (v. 18).
 - d. That they be able to know the love of Christ (v. 19).

Questions about Chapter 3

1. Paul calls himself a *prisoner of Christ Jesus* in 3:1 because
 - A. He is physically a prisoner in Rome.
 - B. He is physically a prisoner in Caesarea.
 - C. He is metaphorically a prisoner of his calling in Christ.
2. The best translation of the word οἰκονομία (*oikonomia*) in verse 2 is
 - A. *Administration*
 - B. *Stewardship*
 - C. *Dispensation*
3. The best translation of the word οἰκονομία (*oikonomia*) in verse 9 is
 - A. *Administration*
 - B. *Stewardship*
 - C. *Dispensation*
4. The best understanding of the phrase *mystery of Christ* in verse 4 is
 - A. *Administration*
 - B. *Stewardship*
 - C. *Dispensation*
5. According to 3:5, which one of these people knew about the church age?
 - A. Daniel
 - B. Isaiah
 - C. Matthew
6. In verse 8, Paul was *least of all the saints*. He probably said that because
 - A. He had persecuted the church.
 - B. He was humbled by his imprisonment.
 - C. He was called as a minister to the Gentiles.
7. In verse 12, the *boldness and confident access through faith in Him* refers to
 - A. Salvation
 - B. Predestination
 - C. Sanctification
8. In verse 17, the phrase *that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith* refers to
 - A. Salvation
 - B. Predestination
 - C. Sanctification

Answers: 1. A (C is also true but not why he used the word *prisoner*). 2. B. 3. C. 4. C. 5. C. 6. A. 7. A. 8. C.

II. Therefore, Walk Worthy of Your Calling, 4:1—6:9

A. In Unity, 4:1-32

In chapter 4, Paul *implores* his readers to promote the unity of the church through humility (vv. 1-6), equipping the saints (vv. 7-13), and speaking the truth in love (vv. 14-32). Whereas chapter 3 focused on the **purpose** of the letter, this chapter gives us the **theme** of the letter, unity through individual grace.



4:1-3

Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, A

designation Paul carries over from 3:1. His Roman imprisonment was a metaphor of his ministry as a prisoner of Christ.

Implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, Believers are believers because they have been called by God to believe (Romans 1:5-6; 1 Corinthians 1:9). That calling is from a holy God offering grace (2:8-9). So the Christian life should be an intentional movement forward, *to walk* in the context of that holiness and grace. Specifically, that walk is described as:

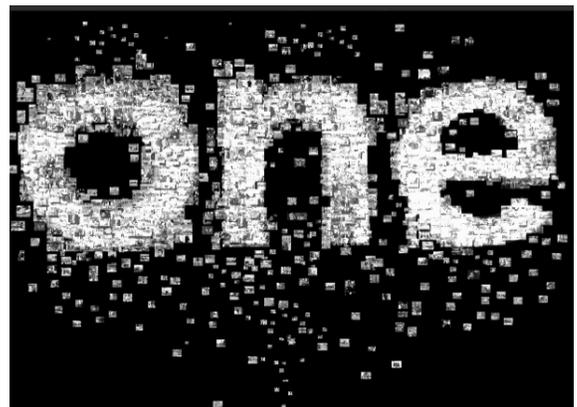
- **With all humility**, This seems to be the guiding virtue here. Humility is seeing your value as dependent upon God (as opposed to pride, which is value independent from God), **and**
- **Gentleness**, Or consideration
- **With patience**, Or *longsuffering* (KJV)
- **Showing tolerance for one another in love**, The word ἀνεχώ (*anecho*) NEVER means “tolerance” as translated by the NASB. It’s basic meaning is *to hold up* or *bear with*, sometimes *to endure* or *put up with*, but “tolerance” implies that we should ignore sin and false teaching, which would violate the whole last part of chapter 4.
- **Being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace**, This is the theme of the epistle. An important distinction must be made between preserving God’s unity and creating an artificial, organizational, ecclesiastical, or institutional unity. Christians are never told to make unity but to keep or guard the unity God made in creating from Jews and Gentiles *one new man* (2:15-16).

4:4-6

There is one body, The universal church

And one Spirit, One Holy Spirit indwelling that one church

Just as also you were called in one hope of your calling, The one hope of the church is to be united with Christ, as a unique group of believers (called His bride—Revelation 19:7-8) in the heavenlies.



One Lord, A reference to Jesus Christ as the one head of the church (Romans 10:12; Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:18). There is no other (Mormon, Jehovah's Witnesses, or Muslim) Jesus.

One faith, This is most likely a reference to what the one church believes in, which is one body of truth, one theology and one morality, namely, that revealed by the apostles.

One baptism, There are legitimate arguments made on both sides of whether this is Spirit baptism or water baptism. The view of Spirit baptism is favored by the fact that all believers are baptized with the Spirit, which is a figure of speech declaring universal church membership (Matthew 28:18-20; 1 Corinthians 12:13). The view of water baptism is favored by the fact that the context does not refer to the work of the Spirit, but the actions a believer makes to *preserve the unity of the Spirit*.

One God and [1] Father of all [2] who is over all [3] and through all [4] and in all, The four uses of *all* refer to God's relationship to believers. Certainly, these characteristics are not common to all people. God is the *Father of all* His children (John 1:12; Galatians 3:26), sovereign *over all* His children, living (making Himself known) *through all* His children, and manifesting Himself *in all* His children.

In verses 7-13, Paul talks about unity through equipping the saints.

4:7

But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift, There is an individual grace of God given to the individual believer. This characterizes the church. Individual grace was never promised to individual Israelites. On the other hand, no collective or national promise was given to the church.

4:8

Therefore it says, λέγει (legei) can mean he says, so Paul may not be referencing Psalm 68:18 as is usually taught. The psalm talks about the triumphant warrior who receives gifts from the conquered people and then distributes those gifts to his followers. This verse is about the distribution of gifts.

When He ascended [an aorist participle, having ascended] on high, At that time, Christ did two things, both of which Paul will discuss individually in the next verses:

1. *He led captive a host of captives, and*
2. *He gave gifts to men*

4:9-10

(Now this expression, "He ascended," what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things), The parenthesis added by the translators is unfortunate because it gives the impression this is a questionable text. It is not. The translators just consider this parenthetical to the main thought. The genitive expression τῆς γῆς (*Tes ges*) of the earth can be understood in one of three ways:

1. It can be a genitive of apposition, meaning *into the lower parts, namely, the earth*. Then it would refer to Christ's incarnation, His 30 + year descent to the earth.

2. It can be a genitive of comparison, meaning *into the parts lower than the earth*. This would mean that Christ descended into hades (Old Testament sheol) between His death and resurrection.
3. It can be genitive of possession, meaning *into the lower parts, which belong to the earth*. Then it might refer to Christ's death and His burial in the grave.

The second option seems best to this author. It also seems to fit Peter's quote, *You will not abandon My soul to hades, nor allow Your Holy One to undergo decay* in Acts 2:27, 31. Also, Luke 16 describes two parts to hades, and only the unbeliever part is resurrected to the Great White Throne Judgment in Revelation 20:11-15.

4:11-13

And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, These are not the personal gifts of 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12. These are gifted people given to the universal church. There are several issues here. First, there are three ways to understand these gifted people:



1. They are all gifts that exist today. Only more radical groups like the New Apostolic Reformation (NAR) would suggest that.
2. The last three, but not the first two, are in existence today. The prediction that prophecy would cease (1 Corinthians 13:8; Revelation 22:18), and the apostles died without replacements, supports this. But it requires breaking the list into two parts, which is not indicated in the passage.
3. They are all temporary gifts given at the time of Christ's resurrection, none of which are present today. This best supports the unity of the passage but has the problem of observable evangelists, pastors, and teachers in the church today. But since there are other ways of explaining those gifts today, this author favors option #3.

Another question is whether or not pastors and teachers are one gift. The support for this is that the connective *and* changes from the Greek word *δε* (*de*) to the word *και* (*kai*), which can mean one is a part of another (like priests *and* Levites). But this must be translated *pastors and teachers*. It would not be legitimate to leave the word *and* out and translate it "pastor-teacher." The word for *shepherd* is only translated *pastor* here in the New Testament. But there are several exhortations about teachers and a gift of teaching. Remember, the whole context of Ephesians is the unity of the universal church. There is absolutely nothing here about a local church. So if there is a "pastor-teacher," it is meant to be a gift for the whole church, not one local church. Also, if one postulates the idea that each local church should have a "pastor-teacher," then one would also have to assume that every local church should have its own evangelist, exclusive to that church. Not only is that absurd, it never occurs in the New Testament churches.

For the equipping of the saints

for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ, It would seem that the list of gifts were *for the equipping of the saints* and the saints were to do the service (ministry) of building up the body of Christ (the definition of the church).

Until we all attain to [1] the unity of the faith, [2] and of the knowledge of the Son of God, [3] to a mature man, [4] to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ, In his typical grocery list fashion, Paul expresses the goal of the equipping of the saints in four overlapping objectives.

In verses 14-32, Paul discusses the unity of the church by *speaking the truth in love*.

4:14-16

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; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, Paul's idea of unity was not that we all tolerate each other but that we all agree with the truth. Unity is to come about by NOT being immature children, NOT being influenced by strange doctrines, and NOT being tricked by false teachers.

The way this was to happen was for each of us to speak the truth in love. The word ἀληθεύω (*aletheuo*) means to speak or to tell the truth. This truth telling is in the context of ἀγάπη (*agape*) love, which means the best good we can do for one another is to tell each other the truth about correct doctrine and morality. The truth that we are to speak in love is what the apostles taught, what we call the New Testament. Anything contrary to that is divisive. It is being conformed to this truth that brings unity and causes the body of Christ to grow up to be Christ-like.

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, Here it is important to notice that the growth of the universal church, the body of Christ, is not done by everybody conforming to one individual, or one group of individuals. It's done by *what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part.*

4:17-19

So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, ἔθνος (*ethnos*) is the word for *Gentiles, nations, or outsiders* [better translated *outsiders* or the *world*]. Then Paul lists eight characteristics of the way the world walks:

1. *In the futility of their mind,*
2. *Being darkened in their understanding,*
3. *Excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them,*
4. *Because of the hardness of their heart; and they,*
5. *Having become callous,*
6. *Have given themselves over to sensuality*
7. *For the practice of every kind of impurity*
8. *With greediness*

4:20-24

But you did not learn Christ in this [worldly, Gentile] way, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him [by the apostles], just as truth is in Jesus [making all other religions not true], that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self [literally, the old man], which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self [literally, the new man], which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth, This assumes that when we become believers we are given a new man, but we still have the old man because we need to take it upon ourselves to *lay aside the old man* and *put on the new man*. But we (*you*) are more than either the old man or the new man because you must decide between the two. Apparently, we are spiritual creatures who choose between two spiritual natures.

Beginning with verse 25, Paul gives **five exhortations** for the church. Each of the five has three aspects:

- (A) A negative command
- (B) A positive command
- (C) A reason for the positive command

Verse 30 may be part of the 4th Exhortation, but it seems more likely a reason for all five of them.

4:25, Exhortation #1

- (A) **Therefore, laying aside falsehood**, This is one of the Ten Commandments. The devil is the father of lies (John 8:44). When you speak false things, you imitate the devil. A lie is an intention to deceive. But a *falsehood* goes beyond that. It may not be an intention to deceive but simply be wrong. It is not knowing and, therefore, not speaking about things the way they actually are. So knowledge should precede speech.
- (B) **Speak truth each one of you with his neighbor**, Truth is the way things actually are, which assumes the speaker knows how things actually are and speaks about them without deception.
- (C) **For we are members of one another**, The reason for this is because we, the body of all believers everywhere, are members of one another, and that is church membership.

4:26-27, Exhortation #2

- (A) **Be Angry, and [yet]**, *Be angry* is one word [ὀργίζω (*orgizo*) *anger* or *enraged*]. It's a second person plural, middle, imperative, which might be translated, *take it upon yourselves to be angry*. It seems this is what John the Baptist, Jesus, and the apostles did on several occasions (Matthew 3:7; 12:34; 23:33; John 2:13-16; Galatians 1:7-8).
- (B) **Do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger and**, Anger can be good when it is aimed at sin, that which offends God. If it keeps you awake at night, then you are probably angry about what offends you, rather than what offends God.
- (C) **Do not give the devil an opportunity**, The devil gets an opportunity whenever anger is against something other than what offends God. When we are angry about people who offend us, it is hard to resolve before the sun sets, and that gives the devil an opportunity to create bitterness and divide the body of Christ.



4:28, Exhortation #3

- (A) **He who steals must steal no longer; but rather**, This is also one of the Ten Commandments. Stealing assumes that God does not have my best interest in mind because He has not given me what I should have. Instead, God gave it to someone else, and I have a better plan than God, so I will take for myself what He gave to someone else.
- (B) **He must labor, performing with his own hands what is good**, Working is the way to acquire more material wealth. And we should accumulate enough...
- (C) **So that he will have something to share with one who has need.**

4:29, Exhortation #4

- (A) **Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but**, Thayer says the word *unwholesome* [σαπρός (*sapros*)] means, *rotten, putrid, corrupted by age and no longer fit for use, worn out hence, in general, of poor quality, bad, unfit for use*. It would seem to include “trash talk.”

(B) *Only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment*, Our words should build up people, and that includes a sensitivity to know what is good for that moment's need.

(C) *So that it will give grace to those who hear*, The reason is to give an unmerited favor to those we speak to.

4:30

Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption, This seems to be the reason for all five exhortations. It tells us:

1. There is something we can do for God—not grieve Him.
2. The Holy Spirit is a person because He can be grieved.
3. The Holy Spirit is the seal of our ultimate redemption.
4. We can grieve the Holy Spirit and be sealed by the Holy Spirit at the same time.

Only when sin is being justified should one question the assurance of his or her salvation. Sin does not terminate our relationship with God when we confess it (agree that it is sin) and we repent of it, that is, change our mind and lifestyle. But even sin that is confessed and repented of grieves the Holy Spirit.

4:31-32, Exhortation #5

(A) *Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice*, Paul uses six words to govern our relationships as believers. These attitudes usually lead to gossip, and they assume some other person is responsible for our situation, rather than God. They all deny the sovereignty of God over our lives.

(B) *Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other*, Forgiveness is the basis of fellowship.

(C) *Just as God in Christ also has forgiven you*, The reason for forgiveness is also the model for forgiveness.

Applications from Ephesians 4

1. We must always do all we can to work for unity in the body of Christ. For example,
 - a. We should not have competitive attitudes about our organizations.
 - b. We should practice our gifts and exercise our calling in various different organizations.
 - c. Our giving should be to needy believers and full-time workers anywhere they may be, not just from our group.
 - d. We should choose to be wronged or offended rather than create disharmony in the groups we are in.
 - e. Always see the church locally as all believers in a city, area, or region—not in an organization or regular meeting (vv. 1-6).
2. If you are an evangelist, pastor, or teacher, your basic ministry is equipping the universal church saints for ministry (vv. 7-12).
3. The unity we should be working toward is not an ecumenical tolerance of different doctrines but teaching the knowledge of the Son of God until we all reach a maturity where we are no longer influenced by false teaching. Unity comes through speaking the truth, not by tolerating error (vv. 13-15).
4. The unity we should be working toward comes by developing the unique contribution of each individual, not sacrificing individuality for the community (v. 16).

***Diversity, not conformity,
Is the key to unity***

5. Believers are still capable of thinking like the world, so we must continually be sure we are not walking with the futility of the unbelieving mind (v. 17).
6. Evangelism is through education, but we must also realize the education of the lost is blocked by the hardness of their hearts, which is, in turn, caused by their immorality, which is caused by following their lusts (vv. 18-19).
7. In order to live the Christ-like spiritual life, we believers must consciously take it upon ourselves to put off the old man, or sin nature, which we carry with us from our unregenerate life, and put on the new nature, which we have from God (vv. 20-24).
8. The result of feeding the new man and ignoring the old man will be five things we should look for in our own lives and in the lives of those we disciple:
 - a. Speaking the truth with each other (v. 25).
 - b. Not allowing the sun to go down on your anger (vv. 26-27).
 - c. Working to supply your needs and to have something to give (v. 28).
 - d. Speaking with grace and edification, not unwholesome words (vv. 29-30).
 - e. Forgiving one another, instead of being angry (vv. 31-32).

Questions about Chapter 4

1. The basic reason for Ephesians 4 is
 - A. To promote unity in the church
 - B. To promote humility in the church
 - C. To promote truth in the church
2. The word for *tolerance* in verse 2 means
 - A. We should forgive people who sin against us.
 - B. We should tolerate people but not their sin.
 - C. The word is mistranslated and does not mean tolerance.
3. The phrase *There is one body* in 4:4 means
 - A. There should be no independent local churches.
 - B. There should be no independent church denominations.
 - C. All local churches should co-operate with each other.
4. In verse 9, when it says *He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth*, it could mean
 - A. He descended into the lower parts, that is, the earth.
 - B. He descended into the lower parts, that is, hades.
 - C. He descended into the lower parts, that is, the grave.
 - D. A and B
 - E. All of the above
5. The gifts of 4:11
 - A. Should be present in every local church
 - B. Should be present in every local church, except for apostles and prophets
 - C. Should be present in every local church, except for apostles, prophets, and evangelists
 - D. None of the above
6. Paul's idea of unity was that all believers should
 - A. Agree with each other
 - B. Agree with the Bible
 - C. Agree with him
7. Paul refers to truth four times in this chapter, two times he says we should speak the truth. That means
 - A. We should tell people everything we know about a subject.
 - B. We should tell people what will be edifying, gracious, and merciful.
 - C. We should tell people the way things actually are.
8. The phrase *lay aside the old self* [literally the *old man*] in verse 22 means
 - A. Believers still have a sin nature.
 - B. Believers have laid aside their sin nature.
 - C. Believers should live as if they did not have a sin nature.
9. *Laying aside falsehood* in verse 25 means that believers
 - A. Should not lie
 - B. Should not be wrong
 - C. Both A and B
 - D. Neither A nor B
10. True or False? The command ***Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God*** implies there is something we can do for God.

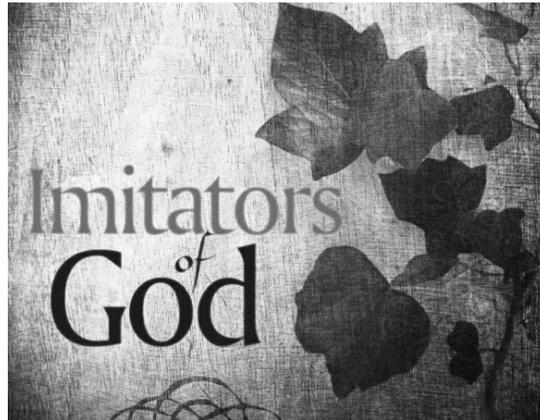
Answers: 1. A. 2. C. 3. A. 4. E (but your answer may depend on your view of the passage). 5. D (These are gifts to the universal church and are not about local churches.). 6. C (Unity was to agree with the apostles. Remember, the Bible was not finished being written yet, so Paul could not have that in mind.). 7. C. 8. A. 9. C. 10. True.

B. By Imitating God, 5:1-21

5:1-2

Therefore be imitators of God, My title for chapter 5 suggests that this whole chapter is about imitating God. One might ask how that is different from any other chapter of the Bible, but the focus here is not on doctrine, the person and work of God, who God is or what He does, but on how we can imitate His character. The Greek word for *imitate* is μιμητής (*mimetes*). Obviously, English gets the words “mime” and “mimic” from that. It means “to follow as a model.” Clearly, there are things about God we either cannot, or should not, model. And even though we represent the attributes of God in a limited way, we cannot imitate things beyond our ability, and we should not attempt to imitate things outside our created capacity. In this list of the 12 attributes of God, only the last four should be imitated completely. The others we have only in a limited way.

1. Omnipresence
2. Omnipotence
3. Omniscience
4. Eternality
5. Sovereignty
6. Unity/Trinity
7. Infinity
8. Immutability
9. **Truth**
10. **Holiness**
11. **Justice**
12. **Love**



To imitate God is not to become gods ourselves, as was the goal of Satan (*I will make myself like the Most High*—Isaiah 14:14), the point of some cults (like Mormonism), and liberal philosophy (as in the poem “Invictus,” “It matters not how strait the gate, How charged with punishments the scroll, I am the master of my fate: I am the captain of my soul”). Paul’s idea of imitating God is spelled out in this chapter. The idea is not being a god, or even being like God, but modeling the character of God. It is probably said best in verse 10, *trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord*.

As beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma, There is one sense in which God so loved the world, *He gave his only begotten Son* to pay for their sins (John 3:16). There is a similar sense in which Christ so loved the church, *He gave Himself up for us*. This love is giving without the thought of reciprocity for the gift. That’s the sense in which we are to walk in His love.

5:3-4

But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints, The point is not just to avoid *immorality*, *impurity*, and *greed* but to not live in such a way that anyone would even accuse us of it.

And there must be no filthiness [or shameful] *and silly talk* [*foolish talk*, literally, “moron-talk”] *or coarse jesting* [vulgar talk], *which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks*, I may be wrong, but I don’t think *silly talk* is a reference to humor. There is no reference to humor in the Bible (in spite of what preachers like to tell you), or to my knowledge, in any ancient literature. There are many references to laughing, usually in the form of being silly (as a court jester) or mocking and

degrading others. But humor (although still a bit mysterious) is unique to humans, and consists of a story with a surprising punch line that tricks you and makes a clever point. Of course, humor that contains the language Paul refers to here should not even be named among us.

5:5

For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God,

Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city. Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying (Revelation 22:14-15).

5:6

Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience, Paul's warning to believers is to not be deceived as unbelievers are, with empty words [κενοῖς λόγοις (*kenois logois*) *empty, foolish, or worthless words*]. The world is deceived by conclusions based on insufficient data or irrational conclusions, or both. The Christianity of the apostles is based upon solid factual information about the way things actual are (truth) in the real world, discerned rationally (logically). When Christians follow false teachers, they join the world's *foolish* way of thinking.

5:7-10

Therefore do not be partakers with them, The word συμμέτοχος (*summetochos*) is translated *partaking with, a joint partaker or fellow partakers*. The prohibition is similar to 2 Corinthians 6:14, *Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?*

The application would include marriage, business relationships, and legal matters that would make us fellow partakers with unbelievers.

For you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), The reason for not being συμμέτοχος (*summetochos*), *joint partakers* with unbelievers, is because you are now children of light, goodness, and truth. Being joined together with unbelievers darkens the light, weakens the goodness, and compromises the truth.

Trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord, This is one of those priceless statements that summarizes the process toward spiritual maturity. δοκιμάζω (*dokimazo*) *trying to learn* (NASB), means to *examine, prove, or scrutinize* (Thayer). Mature godliness comes by continually searching the Scripture to see what pleases God.



5:11-12

Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them; for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret, Concerning the *unfruitful deeds of darkness... done in secret*, Paul gives three instructions:

1. *Do not participate,* The NASB is not correct here. The word is συγκοινωνέω (*sugkoinoneo*) is a combination of the words for *together* and *fellowship*. So *have not fellowship* (KJV) is better.

2. *Expose them*, This word, ἐλέγχω (*elegcho*), can mean *to expose, convict, or reprove*.
3. It is *disgraceful even to speak of* them. This has the idea of dwelling on these things in gory details. Obviously, they must be spoken of in general terms or we could not *expose them*.

5:13

But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light, We are reminded of 1 John 1:5-7,

God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin.

5:14

For this reason it says, “Awake, sleeper, And arise from the dead, And Christ will shine on you,” We are not sure where this was said, most likely it’s a portion of an early Christian hymn.

5:15-16

Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, Literally, *redeeming the time because the days are evil*, The days of this life are surrounded by evil, so the way we should live is to walk wisely in it and not waste time trying to fix it.

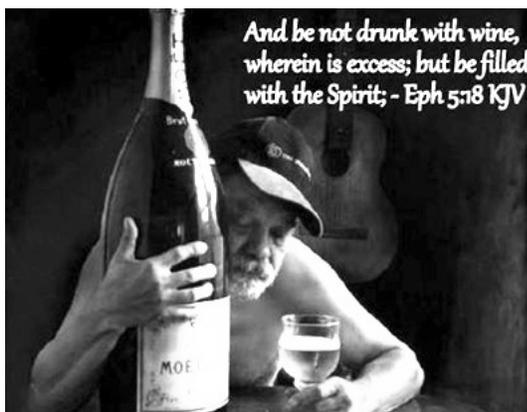


5:17

So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is, This seems to be the same point made in 5:7-10.

5:18-21

And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, There is a common incorrect view of this passage which says being filled with the Spirit is like being drunk.



Being drunk is being out of control, and we should lose control to the Spirit, not alcohol. But this passage actually **contrasts** the filling of the Spirit with the dissipation of drunkenness. So the filling of the Spirit is not losing control to the Spirit but choosing to be controlled by the Spirit. The command is to choose to be controlled by the Spirit, not to choose to be out of control (as in laughing meetings, barking like dogs, dancing around in a trance, etc.). Unlike regeneration, indwelling, baptizing, and sealing of the Spirit, the filling of the Spirit is an ongoing process, which can be lost with sin and regained with repentance.



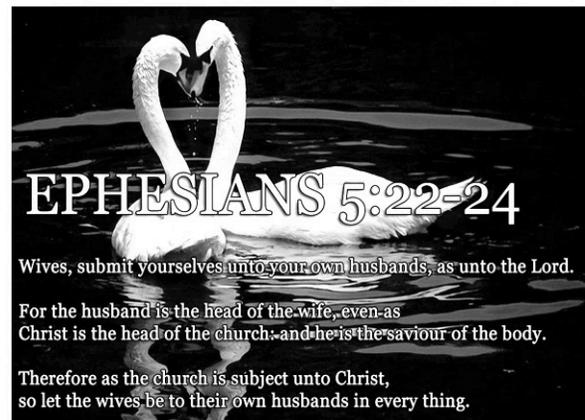
speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father, This seems to be a description of the proceedings of an early church meeting.

And be subject to one another in the fear of Christ, The word for *be subject* is ὑποτάσσομαι (*hypotassomai*), *to submit to the orders or directives of someone— ‘to obey, to submit to, obedience, submission’* (Louw and Nida). This is not the post-modern false idea of “mutual submission,” which is a contradiction in terms. If it is mutual, it is not submission, and if it is submission, it is not mutual, by definition. Paul defines what he means by *be subject to one another* in the following context (5:22–6:9). It means wives to husbands, children to parents, and slaves to masters. There is nothing mutual about it.

5:22

Wives, [be subject implied from the previous statement] to your own husbands, as to the Lord, Hoehner gives a good analysis here:

“*As to the Lord* does not mean that a wife is to submit to her husband in the same way she submits to the Lord, but rather that her submission to her husband *is* her service rendered “to the Lord” (cf. Col. 3:18). The reason for this submission is that ***the husband is the head of the wife*** (cf. 1 Cor. 11:3), and this is compared to Christ’s headship over the church (Eph. 5:23; cf. 4:15; Col. 1:18).”



5:23

For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, Headship is a unique form of leadership because the head is connected to the body. The happiness, health, and well-being of the head depends upon the body. If the body dies, then the head dies. The head can never be independent from the body. This is not true of kings, commanders, presidents, or dictators.

He Himself being the Savior of the body, This is one of Paul’s common side statements about Christ. He is not suggesting the husband is the savior of the wife.

5:24

But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything, This slams the door shut on any idea of “mutual submission.” It would be absurd to suggest the Christ should be subject (mutually submissive) to the church (although that seems to be the conclusion of many false teachers today). The difference between submission to Christ and submission to a husband, parent, or master, is the later are not perfect. So submission always carries the qualification, “except when he tells me to disobey God.” Or as Peter said, *We must obey God rather than men* (Acts 5:29).

5:25-27

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, A husband is to love his wife in the sense that Christ loved the church. This love is always the kind of

giving which involves doing the best good for the other person. The husband is to sacrificially give himself to bring about the best good for his wife. But there is nothing here, or anywhere else in Scripture, which says the husband is responsible for the character of his wife, or how she grows, develops, and matures as a wife. Christ is not responsible for the apostasy in the church.

We often hear something like, “It’s not the husband’s job to tell his wife to be in submission to him.” That’s true. It’s also not his responsibility to make sure she is. Therefore, **he is not accountable for her maturity**. If she leaves her parents and **cleaves** to (submits to) her husband, then his loving (giving) headship will guide her maturity. But there is no guarantee she will do that, and she, not he, is responsible for her **leaving, cleaving**, and submitting.

So that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He 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. This later part of the sentence is, once again, about Christ and the church. It is typical of Paul that when he is addressing something and mentions Christ, he goes off on something about Christ. These “rabbit trails” often give us some of our greatest theology (see Colossians 1:14-20). This one is about the experiential sanctification of the church. *The washing of water* is not baptism for salvation because it is not about salvation but experiential sanctification. This phrase is a metaphor of cleansing (as in Titus 3:5). This cleansing comes about by *the washing of water with the word*, not with water. The Word of God is the cleansing agent of spiritual growth (Ephesians 6:17; Romans 10:8, 17; 1 Peter 1:25).

5:28-30

So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, because we are members of His body, Most of this conclusion has already been discussed, but there is one additional interesting phrase here, *for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it*. Much of post-modern psychology is based in the notion that we should love ourselves, trust ourselves, and go to our own “heart” for our answers. This leads to the conclusion that many problems are connected to not loving ourselves (enough). But Paul says *no one ever hated his own flesh*. So who is correct?

What about people who are depressed or suicidal? The suicide rate has increased steadily (up about 15%) since the year 2000. But the only reason people are depressed or suicidal is because they love themselves. If they hated themselves, or did not care about themselves, then their suffering, rejection, and losses would not bother them. If they hated themselves or did not care about themselves, life’s tragedies and bad decisions would make them happy or apathetic, not depressed. Would you be depressed if something bad happened to, say, a political figure you hated? I don’t think so. How about a grandmother you loved? Of course! Depression comes from the loss of what you love, not what you hate.

5:31

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, This is a quote from Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:5; and Mark 10:7. The model for marriage, and all sexual (one flesh) relationships, is a man and a woman. Before this statement in Matthew 19, Jesus said, *Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE.*

5:32

This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church, Although there are parallels between a husband's love for his wife and Christ's love for the church, when Paul uses the word *mystery*, he is talking about this new dispensation of Christ and the church.



5:33

Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects [φοβέω (*phobeo*), fears] *her husband*, When it comes to marriage, the point is, every husband is to love his wife as himself. What is disturbing here is that every wife is to fear her husband. The word is φοβέω (*phobeo*), a very common Greek word, meaning *to put to flight, to terrify, frighten*, usually translated *fear* or *be afraid of*.

The NASB word *respects* is never a translation of this word anywhere else, even the KJV *reverence* is incorrect, since it assumes a form of worship, clearly inappropriate here. These translations, or mistranslations, exist because the translators realize that a marriage should not be based on fear. Why Paul used this word is not clear (to me), except that he wanted to express submission in a clear, non-mutual way.

Applications from Ephesians 5

1. Imitating God means we must love fellow believers sacrificially—love is giving without reciprocity (vv. 1-2).
2. Imitating God means we must live in such a way that we are not even accused of immorality (v. 3), *trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord* (5:10).
3. Imitating God means we edit our conversation. Don't use God's name or Jesus' name in "casual blasphemy" or filthy words in "trash talk" or tell filthy stories (v. 4).
4. We should be motivated to imitate God—
 - (a) Because of our inheritance in the kingdom of God
 - (b) Because of the judgment of God (vv. 5-6)
5. We must live as children of light. That means we let the light of the Word of God define what is fruitful and what is disgraceful (vv. 7-14).
6. We must approach the spiritual life not casually but as:
 - (a) Watching carefully
 - (b) Walking wisely
 - (c) Making the most of the time
 - (d) As living in evil days (vv. 15-17)
7. We must be continually filled with the Holy Spirit. That is done by (and evidenced by) 3 things:
 - (a) Singing spiritual songs
 - (b) Always giving thanks for all things
 - (c) Being in submission to one another according to the structure Paul gives here (vv. 18-21)
8. Submission assumes autonomy (that is, an independent individual with a profit motive). All virtue begins with a sense of autonomy. If we see ourselves as part of the god-force of the universe, where individual desires are bad—as in the pantheism of Hinduism and Buddhism, EST, yoga, etc., then all virtue is impossible. Submission, for example, is a virtue because I choose to take my independence and place it under another person's autonomy, according to the prescription of God (v. 21).
9. Submission is not agreement. To submit "sometimes" or to submit "most of the time" usually means we submit when we agree. But that's agreement, not submission. Submission to Christ, to husbands, to parents, and to masters according to the flesh, is virtuous when we disagree, if there is no moral or theological violation involved (vv. 22-24, and 33).
10. Husbands must love their wives apart from romantic sexual motivation. To say I love my wife sometimes or most of the time usually means when I feel like it or feel romantically/sexually motivated by her. Love has to do with you, not her (see 1 Corinthians 13). **It has to do with the sacrifices you are willing to make to help her mature** (vv. 25-33).

Questions about Chapter 5

1. The command *Therefore be imitators of God*, in verse 1, means
 - A. We should imitate God's attributes.
 - B. We should imitate God's works.
 - C. We should imitate God's attitudes.
2. The statement, *But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you*, in verse 3, means
 - A. Immorality should only be spoken of in general terms.
 - B. Immorality should be eliminated not talked about.
 - C. You should live such that you are not likely to be accused of immorality.
3. The statement *for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret*, in verse 12, means
 - A. Immorality should only be spoken of in general terms.
 - B. Immorality should be eliminated, not talked about.
 - C. You should live such that you are not likely to be accused of immorality.
4. Being drunk with wine, in 5:18,
 - A. Is compared to being filled with the Holy Spirit
 - B. Is compared to dissipation
 - C. Is contrasted with the filling of the Holy Spirit
 - D. All of the above
5. The exhortation in 5:19, *speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord*,
 - A. Is about a church gathering
 - B. Is an attitude we should have toward each other every day
 - C. Is something we should do every day
6. The statement in 5:21, *be subject to one another in the fear of Christ*, is
 - A. One-way
 - B. Two-way
 - C. Vertical
 - D. Horizontal
7. According to Ephesians 5, wives should
 - A. Love their husbands
 - B. Respect their husbands
 - C. Fear their husbands
 - D. A and B
 - E. A and C
 - F. All of the above
8. The word *water*, in Ephesians 5:26, is about
 - A. Baptism
 - B. Salvation
 - C. Sanctification
 - D. The Bible

Answers: 1. C. 2. C. 3. A. 4. C. 5. A. 6. A. 7. D. 8. D.

C. In Marriage and Family, 5:22–6:4

There are three paragraphs in chapter 6. The first (6:1-9) is a continuation of the submission discussion of chapter 5. The second (6:10–20) is the spiritual warfare. The third (6:21-24) contains some personal comments and a benediction.



6:1

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right, This is a command given throughout Scripture to children (not to parents). The phrase *in the Lord* does not mean obedience is only to believing parents but to whatever parents tell them to do that is not contrary to what is morally right in the Lord. Notice the example of Christ in Luke 2:51 and Hebrews 5:8.

6:2-3

Honor your father and mother, Honor is financial care (as in 1 Timothy 5:17). When we leave and cleave to a spouse (5:31), we are no longer obligated to obey our parents, but we are obligated for their care and well-being (1 Timothy 5:4).

(Which is the first commandment with a promise), Some have suggested that Paul meant that this is the first command that children need to learn. But the child and everyone else should learn the first commandment first, *You shall have no other gods before Me*. The above commandment is the fifth of the Ten Commandments, and it is the first one listed with a promise.

So that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth, This is a promise to Israelites living in the Land. Paul points this out to emphasize the importance of this command, not to say this promise carries over into the church. The rewards for the church are in heaven, not on earth (2 Corinthians 5:10). The Ten Commandments are, like all Scripture, applicable today, but they are not a directive for today. They are part of the 613 commandments, statutes, and ordinances of the Mosaic Law, which cannot be kept outside of the Land. The corollary to this is that all but the Sabbath commandment were repeated in one way or another by the apostles for the church.

6:4

Fathers, The very fact that Paul addresses fathers assumes they, not mothers, are the head and the chief disciplinarian of the family. Without the presence of a biological father, discipline is unlikely.

Do not provoke your children to anger, The word *provoke* [παροργίζετε (*parorgidzete*)] means to *exasperate* or *provoke to anger*. It is used only here and in Romans 10:19 (paralleled in Colossians 3:21). The provocation seems to come by adding things that are not included in the next phrase, **But bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.**

D. As Slaves and Masters, 6:5-9

6:5-6

Slaves, Slavery was a common form of labor all through history. American and European black slavery was illegitimate because it was kidnapping, and kidnapping is always immoral. Some sort of working class is needed for western civilization to progress. If everyone did manual labor, then no

one would be available to create new inventions, or organize efforts for progress. In the Bible, people became slaves because they were in debt or committed a crime, or were part of a conquered people. In many societies, people were also born into slavery. It is easy for masters to take advantage of slaves and treat them poorly, hence the warning of verse 9. The apostles never prohibited slavery, but they saw all classes of believers as brothers in Christ, and that was to dominate their social relationships (1 Corinthians 7:20-24).

This is followed by requirements for slaves:

1. *Be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh,*
2. *With fear and trembling,*
3. *In the sincerity of your heart,*
4. *As to Christ;*
5. *Not by way of eye service, as men-pleasers,*
6. *But as slaves of Christ,*
7. *Doing the will of God from the heart.*

6:7-8

With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men, That's the proper perspective for all labor, and it is what makes Christian ministry the same as any occupational labor. All work by believers, whether it is building an orphanage or building a profit corporation should be done *as to the Lord, and not to men.*

Knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free, These are eternal rewards in heaven, not a better life here on earth. It would seem that God is responsible for our position in this life, and we are responsible for our position in the next life.

If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth (1 Peter 1:17).

6:9

And masters, 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, Slave masters had the same responsibility as the slaves. They were simply assigned a different role in life. But they serve the same master in heaven and will be judged by Him who is not partial to masters or to slaves, but to those obedient to Him.

E. In Spiritual Warfare, 6:10-20

6:10

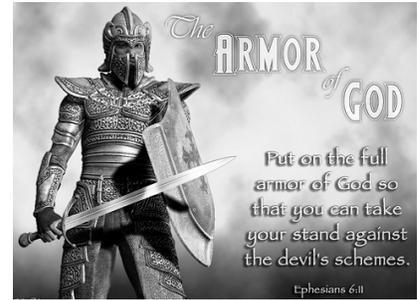
Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might, Paul used three words for *strength* here with similar meaning. He wanted the Christian to be strong, not weak. This strength is something the believer decides to have. Next, we are told how to get that strength.

6:11

Put on is the verb ἐνδύω (*enduo*), *to be clothed* or *to put on*, an aorist (timeless action), middle (something the person himself must do, imperative (a command)). The believer's armor, which Paul is about to describe, is commanded but not *put on* for him. So, unlike the works of salvation and

positional sanctification, this is something a believer must do, not something God does for him positionally. It is an act of the believer's free will choice.

The full armor of God, The word πανοπλία (*panoplia*) *full armor or whole armor* is all one word. It seems to imply that this armor is all the believer needs ... **so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.**



6:12

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, I know of no one else, or anywhere else that this statement is made. It is one thing to say our struggle is against Satan and demons, but to say our fight is **not** against flesh and blood people is a unique perspective. This tells me that whatever my struggle is, the basis of it is satanic. Of course, our physical fight is against physical people. But to conclude those people are the problem is the same as saying, "Guns kill people" or "Cars are dangerous." If you conclude that people are the problem, then you will not put on the armor and you will not stand firm. So the next time a Christian tells you about a struggle with another person (believer or not), remind them of this.



But against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness, The fact that our struggle is against evil spiritual forces has already been mentioned (1:21; 2:2; 3:10; 4:18; 5:8).

In the heavenly places, This is the fifth occurrence of this phrase, which only occurs in Ephesians (1:3, 20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12). It seems that Satan has access to the *heavenly places* (2:2) until he will be cast out in the middle of the Tribulation (Revelation 12:9-10). He and his demonic forces are trying to rob believers of their spiritual rewards (Luke 22:31; Ephesians 1:3).

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, Paul is about to describe *the full armor of God*, but first notice he gives his purpose for it with two infinitives: *to resist* and *to stand firm*.



6:14-17

Stand firm therefore, Paul repeats the last word of verse 13 but as an imperative verbal command rather than an infinitive. The six pieces of armor Paul commands are in two sentences:

1. **Having girded your loins with TRUTH** [the way things actually are], **and**
2. **Having put on the breastplate of RIGHTEOUSNESS** [God's absolute standard of rightness], **and**
3. **Having shod your feet with the preparation of the GOSPEL** [the good news message that Christ's death paid for the sin of the world] **of peace** [between Jews and Gentiles];
4. **In addition to all, taking up the shield of FAITH** [to trust the evidence God has provided] **with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.**

5. *And take the helmet of SALVATION* [the believer's position of deliverance from sin], *and*
6. *The sword of the Spirit, which is the WORD OF GOD* [proclaiming the words of the Old and New Testament].

6:18-20

With all prayer and petition [or request] *pray at all times*, The word *καιρός* (*kairos*) is the common word for *time*, but also translated *season, age, or opportunity*. Paul probably meant in every situation.

In the Spirit, This is also mentioned in Jude 20 and probably had in mind the idea of Romans 8:26, *In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.* Prayer in the Spirit seems to be prayer that is consistent with the predetermined will of God.

And with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, 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, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak, Hoehner's comment is helpful here.

"Here Paul probably did not refer to witnessing or preaching the gospel of Christ. Instead he may have referred to his need to be bold (twice he said **fearlessly**) and clear regarding the "mystery of the gospel" when he would be on trial before Caesar in Rome (when and if the Jewish accusers would make charges against him). The Romans looked on the Christians as a sect of the Jews, and the Jews considered them as a heretical group. In his trial, Paul needed to make clear that Christians are neither a Jewish sect nor a heretical group but a new entity, the church, the body of Christ, composed of Jewish and Gentile believers. This recalls Paul's lengthy discussion of this "mystery of the gospel" in 2:11–3:11."

Personal Comments and a Benediction, 6:21-24

6:21

But that you also may know about my circumstances, how I am doing, Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will make everything known to you. Most likely, Tychicus delivered this letter to Ephesus (Colossians 4:7; Acts 20:4; 2 Timothy 4:12; and Titus 3:12). He also informed them about Paul's personal condition during his imprisonment.

6:22

I have sent him to you for this very purpose, so that you may know about us, and that he may comfort your hearts, Word of mouth, when the message bearer can be questioned and his message examined, is still the best form of communication.

6:23

Peace [freedom from conflict] *be to the brethren* [fellow believers], *and love* [doing the best good for one another] *with faith* [as you trust the evidence], *from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

6:24

Grace [selective favor] *be with all those who love* [do the best good for] *our Lord Jesus Christ* [by keeping His commandments and not grieving Him with sin] *with incorruptible [love]*, The word “love” is not in the text here. ἀφθαρσία (*aphtharsia*) is *incorruptibility*.

Applications from Ephesians 6

Obedience is a form of submission which focuses on keeping specific instructions, especially those we do not agree with. So children are to keep all the specific instruction their parents give, which do not violate the commandments of God (vv. 1-3).

1. Although mothers are to be involved, it is fathers, not mothers, who have the responsibility to discipline their children and instruct their children, while not provoking them to anger (v. 4).
2. Employees, serve your employer:
 - a. With fear
 - b. With singleness of heart
 - c. Not just trying to make a surface, visual impression
 - d. While doing it according to the will of God
 - e. With a happy attitude—all of these as if you were working for the Lord (vv. 5-8).
3. Employers, treat your employees as you would if it were Jesus working for you (v. 9), because He will judge your actions.
4. Don't threaten people you are in charge of. Inform them of your expectations and take whatever action is just, but don't be hostile to them (v. 9).
5. The struggles in life that tempt us to sin are not coming from other (flesh and blood) people. They are coming from Satan's world system (vv. 10-13).
6. Do not think you will be able to resist Satan's evil system if you:
 - a. Tell lies
 - b. Compromise on righteousness
 - c. Are trying to fix the world or please the world instead of spreading the Gospel
 - d. Have only some faith, some of the time
 - e. Are not assured of your salvation
 - f. Do not use the Word of God (vv. 14-17)
7. Pray and ask others to pray that you might be able to use the strengths God has given you for the ministry to which God has called you (vv. 18-20).
8. As much as you possibly can, stay in touch with and continue to minister to, the people you began to minister to (vv. 21-24).

Questions about Chapter 6

- Verse 3 says children should obey their parents, *so that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth*. This means
 - Children who obey their parents will live longer.
 - Children who disobey their parents will tend to not live as long as those who do.
 - This is a promise for Israel, not for the church age.
- According to verse 4, fathers will be likely to *provoke your children to anger* when they
 - Make unreasonable demands
 - Use fear as a part of discipline
 - Nag them with rules
 - All of the above
 - None of the above
- George Washington, first president of the United States, owned slaves.
 - The Bible condemns that.
 - The Bible does not condemn that.
 - The Bible does not comment on that.
- The *full armor of God* in verse 11 is
 - Something God puts on us.
 - Something we put on ourselves.
 - Something we put on with God's help.
- Verse 12 tells me
 - My physical struggles are not against physical people.
 - My ultimate struggle is against Satan and demons.
 - The war with the world is against Satan, not people.
- According to verses 14-17, a believer should attack the world's evil with
 - The Bible
 - The Gospel
 - Truth in love
- In verse 18, *pray at all times in the spirit* means
 - Praying in tongues
 - Praying according to God's will
 - Praying under the control of the Holy Spirit
- In verse 19, Paul asked for prayer for boldness to
 - Present the Gospel
 - Present the idea that there was no difference between the Jews and Gentiles
 - Present the truth about the resurrection of Christ

Answers: 1. A. 2. E (It's when they don't bring them up in the discipline and fear of the Lord.) 3. A (because his slaves were kidnap victims). 4. B. 5. C (B is incorrect because my ultimate struggle may be with God's will.) 6. A. 7. B. 8. B (A is incorrect because Paul requested prayer for boldness to present the *mystery of the gospel* which is the new revelation described in B.).