

PAUL'S LETTER TO THE COMMUNITY IN EPHESUS

Greeting

1 From Paul, an apostle^a of Jesus Christ by God's will—to the holy ones who live in Ephesus,^b who're faithful in Christ Jesus. **2** Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Spiritual Blessings We Have in Christ

3 May God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, be blessed! Because in Christ, God^c has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in heaven.^d **4** After all,^e God chose us in Christ before the creation^f of the world. We were chosen to be holy and faultless^g in love in front of him. **5** He chose us ahead of time for adoption as children through Jesus Christ, according to his own good will.^h **6** The result will be praise for the glory of his grace, which he showered on us in the Beloved.ⁱ **7** In Christ^j we have our purchase out of captivity through his blood—in other words, the forgiveness of our offenses through^k the wealth of God's grace. **8** God has made grace overflow for us! With every kind of wisdom and insight, **9** he has let us know the secret of his will, in line with the kindness that he intended to show

^a Or "emissary"; see "Bible Words" under "apostle."

^b Some important ancient mss lack the words, "in Ephesus." It's very possible that this letter was sent to Laodicea, a city Paul never visited (see Col. 2:1). It appears that Paul wrote both this letter and the letter to the Colossians when he was in prison (see Eph. 3:1; 6:19-20; Col. 4:18).

^c Lit. "...blessed, who..."

^d Or "the heavenly realms."

^e Lit. "as"—which is capable in Greek as in English of conveying a sense of "because."

^f Lit. "foundation."

^g Lit. "spotless," or "blameless."

^h Lit. "according to the favor of his will."

ⁱ Lit. "the grace with which he graced us in the beloved" (i.e. Jesus Christ).

^j Lit. "in whom," i.e. in Christ, the Beloved.

^k Lit. "according to."

in Christ.^a ¹⁰The plan, as all history comes to a finish, is to draw everything together in Christ: things in heaven and things on earth.^b ¹¹It's in him that we've been chosen ahead of time according to the set plan of God, who^c works everything out in line with his own chosen plan. ¹²That way, we, the earliest ones to put our hope in Christ,^d will bring praise and glory to God.^e ¹³You've believed in him too: you've heard and believed the true message—the good news that has saved you.^f And you've been sealed by the promised Holy Spirit.^g ¹⁴The Holy Spirit is the down payment on our inheritance—toward the buying back of God's possession. And he is going to get the praise and glory!^h

Paul's Prayer

^{15, 16}And that's why I never stop thanking God for you. I've heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus, and your love for all the holy ones. And I remember you in my prayers.ⁱ ¹⁷I keep praying that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, will give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, to really know him. ¹⁸I keep praying that the eyes of your hearts will be filled with light, until you know these things: what hope there is in his calling, what wealth of glory there is in the inheritance that he has given you^j among the holy ones, ¹⁹and what unbelievably great power he has^k for us who believe. ²⁰It's the same power and strength that God used in Christ^l when he raised him from among the dead and sat him down at his right side in heaven. ²¹And that means above every ruler, authority, power, and dominating force. Christ is above every title you can name,^m not just in this age, but in the coming age too:

²²God has put everything under his feet,ⁿ

and has made him the head over the whole community. ²³The community is Christ's body, his fulfillment, as he fills every part of everyone.^o

^a Lit. "according to his goodwill that he set forth/determined to carry out in him."

^b Lit. (v. 10): "...for the arrangement of the fullness of the times, for the summing up of all things in Christ, the things in the heavens, and those on the earth." In Greek, vv. 3–14 are one huge sentence.

^c "God, who": lit. "the One who."

^d Or "we, who've hoped ahead of time in Christ."

^e Lit. "That way, we, who have been the first to hope in Christ, will be to the praise of his glory."

^f Lit. "the good news of your salvation."

^g See Joel 2:28.

^h Lit. "...possession, for the praise of his glory."

ⁱ Lit. "making remembrance in my prayers."

^j Lit. "in his inheritance."

^k Lit. "what is the surpassing greatness of his power."

^l Lit. "...believe, according to the working of the might of his strength, which he worked in Christ."

^m Lit. "...force, and above every name that is named."

ⁿ Ps. 8:6.

^o More literally, "his body, the fulfillment of him who fulfills everything in everyone."

From Death to Life

2 Now, once you were dead in your offenses and sins. 2 Those things used to be your way of life—when you followed the god of this world, the ruler of the realm of the air.^a He’s the spirit that’s working right now in those who are rebellious by nature.^b 3 We were all with them once. We lived by the desires^c of our flesh, and we did whatever our flesh and our thoughts wanted. And we were headed for God’s wrath by nature, just like everyone else.^d 4 But God is rich in mercy! 5 Because of the great love that he has for us, even though we were dead in our offenses, he brought us to life with Christ. You’ve been rescued by his grace. 6 And he has raised you up and enthroned you with Christ Jesus in heaven. 7 That way, during the coming ages God can show the unbelievable^e riches of his grace in the kindness shown to us in Christ Jesus. 8 Because you’ve been rescued by grace, through faith. And it doesn’t come from you: it’s God’s gift. 9 It doesn’t come from anything you do,^f so nobody can brag about it. 10 After all, we’re his creation. We’ve been created in Christ Jesus to do good things—things God has prepared ahead of time so that we can live them out.^g

Christ Has Brought You Believing Gentiles into God’s Family

11 So, remember back then? (I’m talking to you who are physically “Gentiles.”^h You’re called “the uncircumcision” by those who call themselves “the circumcision”—which is just a human procedure done on flesh.)ⁱ 12 Well, at that time, you were separated from Christ. You were shut out from the community of Israel, and you were foreigners to God’s promised covenants.^j You had no hope, and you were without God in the world. 13 But now, in Christ Jesus, you’re not far away anymore: you’ve been brought in close by the blood of Christ.^k 14 Because he himself is our peace! He’s the one who has made the two into one. And he’s broken down the dividing wall, the hostility, in his own flesh. 15 He has abolished the law of commands and rules, in order to create, from the two, one new human

^a Lit. “...sins, in which you once walked around, according to the god of this world, according to the ruler of the authority of the air.”

^b Lit. “in the children of disobedience.” This is a Hebrew expression—compare “children of this world” and “children of light” (Luke 16:8). See “Bible Words” under “Children of.”

^c Or “lusts.”

^d Lit. “We too were by nature children of wrath, like also the rest.” See “Bible Words” under “Children of.”

^e Lit. “surpassing.”

^f Lit. “Not from works.”

^g Lit. “walk around in them.”

^h “Physically ‘Gentiles’ ”: lit. “Gentiles in the flesh.”

ⁱ Lit. “by what is called ‘the circumcision’—performed by hands on flesh.” In Jewish thinking, things done “by hands” are by definition *not* things created/done by God (see e.g. Mk 14:58). See “Bible Words” under “circumcise.”

^j Lit. “foreigners to the covenants of the promise.”

^k Lit. “But now, in Christ Jesus, you who were once far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.”

being in himself. He made the peace! ¹⁶And he reconciled the two, in one body, to God through the cross. He had put their hostility to death on the cross!^a

¹⁷And he came and “preached peace to those who were far away” (in other words, you), and “peace to those who were near.”^b ¹⁸Because through him, we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹So you aren’t foreigners and resident aliens anymore. No, you’re fellow citizens with the holy ones, and members of God’s family.^c ²⁰You’ve been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, and the cornerstone^d is Christ Jesus. ²¹In him, the Lord, the whole building is harmonious, and grows into a holy temple. ²²In him, you too are being built together into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

Paul’s Ministry of Preaching the Good News to the Gentiles

3 That’s why I, Paul, am a prisoner for Christ Jesus.^e It’s for you, the Gentiles.^f ²You’ve probably heard about the responsibility God has graciously given to me for your sake—³how the secret of it was revealed to me in a vision.^g I’m talking about the same thing as I talked about in the short letter I wrote to you.^h ⁴As you read that one, you can understand my insight into the secret of Christ. ⁵It wasn’t revealed like this to previous generations of humanity. But now it’s been revealed to Christ’s holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.ⁱ ⁶The secret is that the Gentiles are co-heirs with the Jews. They’re one body. They share the promise in Christ Jesus together, through the good news. ⁷And I became a servant of this good news. The gift of God’s grace has been given to me for this, and his active power has worked through me.^j ⁸I’m the least of all the holy ones, yet this grace was given to me: to bring the Gentiles the good news of the immeasurable^k riches of Christ. ⁹I’m bringing God’s secret plan out into the open for everyone^l—the plan that has been hidden for all the ages in God, the creator of everything.

^a Or “in himself.”

^b Isa. 57:19; 52:7; Zech. 9:10.

^c Or “household.”

^d Or “capstone.”

^e Or “Christ Jesus’ prisoner.” Paul is literally in prison. His service to Christ has landed him there. See Eph. 6:20.

^f Paul never actually finishes this sentence, which keeps going and going through v. 7. I’m putting down what I think he is saying.

^g Lit. “made known to me according to a revelation.”

^h I think he’s talking about Colossians (see Col. 4:16).

ⁱ Lit. “...the secret of Christ, which was not made known to other generations of the sons of men as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit.”

^j Lit. “...news, of which I was made a servant, according to the gift of the grace of God given to me, according to the in-working of his power.”

^k Or “unsearchable.”

^l Lit. “...Christ, to enlighten everyone as to what the plan of the secret is.” Many mss. lack the word “everyone.”

¹⁰God’s plan is to use the community to reveal all the facets of his wisdom to the rulers and authorities in heaven.^a This is happening now, ¹¹in line with the set plan that God made ages ago, and carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord. ¹²In him we have total confidence and open access to God through our faith in him. ¹³So I’m asking you not to get discouraged over the troubles that I’ve faced for you. It’s something you can be proud of.^b

Paul’s Prayer for the Ephesians

¹⁴That’s why I’m getting down on my knees^c in front of the Father, ¹⁵the one who gives every family in heaven and on earth its name.^d ¹⁶I’m praying that, out of the riches of his glory, he’ll powerfully strengthen you through his Spirit in your deepest self.^e ¹⁷I’m praying that Christ will live in your hearts through faith, and that you’ll be rooted and founded in love. ¹⁸I’m praying that, with all the holy ones, you’ll be fully able to embrace the whole width, length, depth, and height of that love—¹⁹in other words, that you’ll know the love of Christ that is beyond knowledge. That way you’ll be filled up to the whole fullness of God.

²⁰So—glory to the One who can do far more than anything we can ask or think, through the power at work inside us! ²¹Glory to God in the community, and in Christ Jesus, for all generations, forever and ever!^f Amen.

Unity in the Body of Christ

4 I’m asking you, then, as a prisoner in the Lord: live worthy of your calling.^g ²Be full of humility and gentleness. Be patient and bear with each other in love.^h ³Do your best to keep the unity of the Spirit in the common bond of peace. ⁴There’s one Bodyⁱ and one Spirit, just as you’ve all been called in one hope. ⁵We have one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶and one God, who is everyone’s Father. He is over everyone, works through everyone, and lives in everyone.

^a Lit. “...everything, to make known now, to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, through the community, the manifold wisdom of God.” We’re in the middle of another very long sentence (vv. 8-12).

^b Lit. “It’s your glory.”

^c Lit. “bending my knees.”

^d Lit. “from whom every family in the heavens and on earth is named.”

^e Lit. “in the inner human being.”

^f Lit. “to all generations to the age of the ages.”

^g Lit. “Therefore I, the prisoner in the Lord, ask you: walk worthily of the calling with which you were called.”

^h Lit. “...your calling, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love.”

ⁱ I.e. the international community of Christians: see Eph. 1:23; 2:16; 3:6.

⁷And grace has been given to each of us, in line with the gift that Christ portions out to us.^a ⁸That's why it says,

When he went up on high, he took prisoners of war,
and he gave people gifts.^b

⁹Now, about this “going up”: how can that be, unless he also went down,^c right to the lowest parts of the earth? ¹⁰The one who went down is the same person who also went up, above all the heavens. That way, he could fill everything. ¹¹And he's the one who has given apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors and teachers. ¹²They're for training the holy ones for the work of serving. They're for building up the body of Christ, ¹³until we're all trained up:

into unity of faith,
into understanding of the Son of God,
into complete adulthood, and
into a maturity that fits with Christ's full presence.^d

¹⁴That way we won't be babies anymore. We won't be tossed around and carried back and forth on the breeze with every new teaching. We won't be taken in by people's tricks and by crafty deception schemes.^e ¹⁵No, let's speak the truth in love, and grow up completely into Christ, who is our head.^f ¹⁶Through him, the whole body is fitted and joined together, with all its connective tissues. Through him, each and every part actively works in its own way to make the body grow and build itself up in love.^g

A Challenge to Live the New Life

¹⁷So this is what I want to say to you very seriously in the Lord: from now on, don't live mindlessly, like the Gentiles do.^h ¹⁸They're mentally in the dark.

^a Lit. “And to each of us is given the grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ.” When a gift of some form of service is given, “grace” (God's provision, empowerment, protection, forgiveness) is given to enable the person to express the gift successfully (see Eph. 3:2, 7; Rom. 12:6-8).

^b Ps. 68:18. In the psalm, God “goes up” to Zion and receives gifts of tribute from captured rulers; in this passage, Paul turns it so that Jesus “goes up” to heaven, like a conquering general leading prisoners captured in the battle of love. Jesus presents them to God and then gives them as gifts to the community.

^c Or “What does that mean, if not that he also went down.”

^d Lit. “into the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”

^e Lit. “carried to and fro by every wind of teaching, by people's con games, by craftiness in the scheme of falsehood.”

^f Lit. “in all ways into the one who is our head, Christ.”

^g Lit. “...Christ, from whom the whole body, fitted and joined together through every connecting ligament, according to the active power in appropriate measure of each single part, creates the growth for its own building up in love.”

^h Lit. “So I say this and testify in the Lord: no longer live as the Gentiles live, in the emptiness/foolishness of their minds.”

They're far away from the life of God because of the ignorance that's in them—because of the stubbornness of their hearts. ¹⁹They've gotten numb. They've thrown themselves into promiscuity,^a going overboard into every kind of filthy practice. ²⁰But that's not the way you learned Christ—not ²¹if you've really heard him and been taught by him. Because^b the truth is in Jesus: ²²that you have to put away the old person, with its old^c way of life. That person is going rotten with its deluded cravings.^d ²³So^e you have to be completely renewed in the spirit of your minds, ²⁴and put on the new person. The new person is created to be like God in true integrity^f and holiness. ²⁵So get rid of dishonesty, and

Each of you tell the truth with your neighbor.^g

After all, we're all members of one body.^h

²⁶Go ahead and be furious, but don't sin.ⁱ

Don't let the sun go down on your anger— ²⁷don't give the devil a foothold. ²⁸People who've been stealing should quit stealing.^j Instead, they should do good hard work^k with their own hands. That way, they'll have something to share with somebody in need. ²⁹Don't let anything nasty^l come out of your mouths. Instead, say things that are good for building people up, whatever the need is. That way you'll give grace to whoever hears you. ³⁰And don't grieve God's Holy Spirit, by whom you've been sealed for the day when you'll be purchased out of captivity.^m ³¹Get rid ofⁿ all bitterness and rage and anger; get rid of shouting and cursing,^o together with all nastiness. ³²Learn to be kind and compassionate to each other; be forgiving to each other, just as God has forgiven you^p in Christ.

^a Or "lack of self-control," or "licentiousness."

^b "Because": lit. "just as."

^c Lit. "former."

^d Or "in line with its deceitful lusts."

^e Lit. "But."

^f Or "righteousness."

^g Zech. 8:16; see Col. 3:8-9.

^h Lit. "Because we're one another's members."

ⁱ Or "Be angry, and do not sin." See Ps. 4:4.

^j Lit. "Let the thief steal no more."

^k Or "work hard and make something good."

^l Or "rotten."

^m Traditionally: "...by whom you have been sealed for the day of redemption" (for the word "redemption," see "Bible Words").

ⁿ Lit. "Put away from yourselves."

^o Or "insults."

^p This "you" is plural; some mss. have "us."

5 In other words, learn to imitate God,^a just like dearly loved children. 2 Live in love, just as Christ loved us, and gave himself to God on our behalf, as a sweet-smelling offering and sacrifice.^b 3 Act as holy ones should act: don't let sexual immorality, or any filthiness or greed, even be mentioned in your conversations.^c 4 And the same goes for nasty behavior, stupid jokes, and sexual innuendos,^d which are inappropriate. Instead, you should be giving thanks. 5 After all, you should know this and know it well: no sexually immoral, promiscuous,^e or greedy person (who's an idol^f worshiper) has any inheritance in the reign of Christ and God. 6 Don't let anyone fool you with empty words, because these things are the reason God's wrath is coming on people who are disobedient by nature.^g 7 So don't join in with them—8 you used to be darkness, but now you're light in the Lord. Live as people who belong to^h the light. 9 The fruit of the light comes out in every act of goodness and integrity and truth. 10 So you should all be finding outⁱ what's pleasing to the Lord! 11 Don't join in the barren ways^j of darkness. Instead, expose them. 12 Because the secret things they get up to^k are even nasty to say. 13 But everything that's exposed by the light becomes visible. 14 And everything that's visible is light. That's why it says,

Get up, sleepy one,
And rise from among the dead!
Christ is going to shine on you!^l

15 So be very careful how you live: don't be unwise—be wise!^m 16 Take hold of this moment,ⁿ because these are evil times.^o 17 So don't get careless. Understand what the Lord's will is. 18 And don't get drunk on alcohol—that's self-destructive.^p

^a Traditionally: "Therefore, become imitators of God."

^b Traditionally: "...as Christ also loved us and gave himself up for us, as an offering and sacrifice to God, as a pleasing aroma."

^c Lit. "be named among you."

^d That is, clever hints and double meanings.

^e Lit. "unclean" (in their sexual practices).

^f See "Bible Words."

^g Lit. "on the children of disobedience." See "Bible Words" under "Children of."

^h Lit. "children of?"; see previous note.

ⁱ Lit. "assessing."

^j Lit. "fruitless works."

^k Lit. "the things gotten up to by them in secret."

^l See Isa. 26:19; 51:17; 52:1; 60:1.

^m Lit. "...not as unwise people, but as wise ones."

ⁿ Lit. "purchasing the moment."

^o Lit. "evil days."

^p Lit. "...on wine, in which is dissipation." Dissipation is wasting your life, "trashing" yourself. I think Paul is talking about excessive alcohol consumption in general, mentioning wine as a typical example.

Instead, be full of the Spirit! ¹⁹Share^a psalms, hymns, and spiritual^b songs with each other. Sing and make music in your hearts to the Lord. ²⁰Give thanks to God the Father for everything all the time, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Put One Another First

²¹Put one another first,^c out of reverence for Christ. ²²Wives, do this for your husbands as though you were doing it for the Lord. ²³Because a husband is the head of his wife, just as Christ is the head of the community:^d he's the Savior of the body. ²⁴However, as the community puts Christ first, so wives should put their husbands first in everything. ²⁵Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the community and gave himself up for her. ²⁶That way Christ could make her holy, cleansing her and washing her with the water of his word.^e ²⁷Then he could stand the community beside him in glory. She wouldn't have a single spot or wrinkle, or anything like that. She'd be holy and faultless. ²⁸That's the way husbands should love their wives—just as much as they love their own bodies. The man who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹After all, nobody ever hates his own flesh—no, he cares for it and is protective about it, just like Christ is about the community. ³⁰Because we're parts of his body.

³¹Because of this, a man will leave his father and mother behind and be joined to his wife. And the two will be one flesh.^f

³²This is a deep^g secret, but I'm talking about Christ and the community!
³³Nonetheless, each and every one of you should also love your wife as you love yourself. And the wife should respect her husband.

Children and Parents

6 Children, listen to your parents in the Lord:^h it's the right thing to do.
²Honor your father and your mother...ⁱ

That's the first commandment that has a promise:

³...so that good things will happen to you, and you'll be blessed in the land.^a

^a Lit. "...Spirit, speaking."

^b Some ancient mss. leave out the word "spiritual."

^c Lit. "Submit to one another." I think he's talking about subordinating your interests to theirs, not simply everyone doing what everyone else says, which wouldn't make sense.

^d Traditionally: "the church."

^e Lit. "make her holy, cleansing her in the washing of water by his word."

^f Gen. 1:27; 2:24; 5:2.

^g Lit. "great."

^h Many mss. leave out the words, "in the Lord."

ⁱ Exod. 20:12; Deut. 5:16.

⁴And parents,^b don't provoke your children's temper. No, bring them up in the Lord's training and instruction.

Slaves and Masters

⁵Slaves, obey your human masters.^c Serve with fear and trembling, and with your whole heart, as though you were giving your service to Christ. ⁶And not just when somebody's looking, or to gain somebody's favor.^d No, obey as slaves of Christ, who are doing God's will. ⁷Serve from your heart, with kindness,^e as though you're giving service to the Lord, not to human beings. ⁸After all, you know that each person who does something good is going to receive a reward from the Lord—whether they're a slave or free. ⁹And masters, do the same thing towards your slaves. Give up threatening them: remember^f that both your Lord and theirs is in heaven, and there's no such thing as special status with him.

Putting On God's Armor

¹⁰Finally, strengthen yourselves in the Lord, and in the strength of his power. ¹¹Put on the whole set of God's armor, so you'll be able to withstand the devil's tactics. ¹²Because for us, the struggle isn't with human beings^g—it's with the rulers, authorities, and cosmic powers of this dark world.^h It's with the evil spiritual beings in the heavens.ⁱ ¹³So strap on^j the whole set of God's armor. That way, you'll be able to resist in this evil time,^k to overcome them all, and to stand firm. ¹⁴So stand, with your waists belted with truth,^l and wearing the breastplate of integrity.^m ¹⁵Your shoes should be on and tied,ⁿ in readiness to proclaim the good news of peace.^o ¹⁶In every situation, strap on^p the shield of faith. With it, you can put out all the burning arrows of the evil one.^q ¹⁷And take the helmet of salvation^r

^a Exod. 20:12; Deut. 5:16.

^b Or "fathers."

^c Lit. "your masters according to the flesh."

^d Lit. "not according to eye-service, as people-pleasers."

^e Or "...God's will from your heart. Serve with kindness..."

^f Lit. "know," or "knowing."

^g Lit. "for us, the wrestling isn't with flesh and blood."

^h Lit. "the world powers of this darkness."

ⁱ Or "the heavenly realms."

^j Lit. "take up" (in order to put on).

^k Lit. "in the evil day."

^l See Isa. 11:5.

^m Traditionally: "righteousness." See Isa. 59:17.

ⁿ Lit. "Having your sandals tied on your feet."

^o See Isa. 52:7; Nah. 1:15.

^p Lit. "take up" (in order to strap on).

^q That is, the devil.

^r See Isa. 59:17

and the sword of the Spirit, which is God's word.^a ¹⁸Use all kinds of prayers and requests! Be praying in the Spirit in every situation. To do that, everyone be on watch: stay totally attentive and prayerful for all the holy ones.^b ¹⁹Be praying for me too. Pray that I'll be given the right message—that God will open my mouth,^c and I'll boldly proclaim^d the secret of the good news. ²⁰I'm an ambassador in chains for this good news, so pray that I'll speak as boldly as I should.

Final Greetings

²¹Now, I want you all to know how I'm doing and what I'm up to. My dear brother Tychicus,^e my faithful helper in the Lord, will tell you everything.^f ²²I'm sending him to you for that one purpose, so that you'll know our situation, and he can encourage your hearts.

²³Peace to the brothers and sisters! And love, with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴May grace be with everyone who has an undying love for our Lord Jesus Christ.

^a See Isa. 11:4; 49:2; Hos. 6:5.

^b Lit. "watch, with all attentiveness and prayerfulness for all the holy ones."

^c Lit. "Pray...that I'll be given a word, in/by the opening of my mouth."

^d Lit. "make known."

^e Prn. *tik-ik-us*.

^f Lit. "make everything known to you."