

OVERVIEW OF THE THEOLOGICAL CONTEXT OF EPHESIANS

The Epistle for the 19th Sunday after Trinity:

The Epistle. Ephes. iv. 17.

THIS I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: that ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another. Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: neither give place to the devil. Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

Ephesians 1 — Blessed in Christ

Main theme: God's eternal plan of salvation and our identity *in Christ*.

- **1:1–2 — Greeting**
 - Paul writes to the saints in Ephesus.
 - Grace and peace come from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
- **1:3–14 — Spiritual blessings in Christ**
 - God has **blessed believers with every spiritual blessing in Christ**.
 - **Chosen** in Christ before the foundation of the world.
 - **Predestined** for adoption as God's children.
 - **Redeemed** through Christ's blood.
 - Receive **forgiveness of sins**.
 - God reveals His plan to **unite all things in Christ**.
 - Believers receive the **Holy Spirit as a seal and guarantee** of their inheritance.
- **1:15–23 — Paul's prayer**
 - Paul prays that believers would know:
 - God more deeply.
 - The **hope of their calling**.
 - The **riches of their inheritance**.
 - The greatness of God's power toward believers.
 - Christ is exalted above every authority.
 - Christ is **Head of the Church**, which is His body.

Key idea: Salvation begins in God's gracious purpose and is centered completely **in Christ**.

Ephesians 2 — From Death to Life

Main theme: Grace brings sinners from spiritual death into new life and creates one people in Christ.

- **2:1–3 — Our former condition**
 - Humanity was **dead in trespasses and sins**.
 - People followed the ways of the world and the desires of the flesh.
 - Sin placed humanity under judgment.
- **2:4–10 — Saved by Grace**
 - **"But God..."**
 - God is rich in mercy and loved us.
 - He made believers **alive with Christ**.
 - Believers are **raised and seated with Christ**.
 - Salvation is **by grace through faith**, not human achievement.
 - We are God's workmanship, **created in Christ Jesus for good works**.
- **2:11–18 — Jews and Gentiles reconciled**
 - Gentiles were formerly separated from Israel and the covenant promises.

- Christ's blood brings those who were far away **near**.
- Christ sacrifice breaks down the **dividing wall of hostility**.
- Through Christ, Jew and Gentile become **one new humanity (The Church)**.
- Through Christ both have access to the Father through one Spirit.
- **2:19–22 — God's household**
 - Gentile believers are no longer strangers.
 - They are **fellow citizens with the saints**.
 - The Church is God's household.
 - Believers are being built together into a **holy temple** in which God dwells by His Spirit.

Key idea: God does not merely rescue individuals; He creates a **new covenant community in Christ**.

Ephesians 3 — The Mystery Revealed

Main theme: God's eternal **mystery** is **revealed**: Gentiles are fellow heirs with Israel in Christ.

- **3:1–6 — The mystery of Christ**
 - Paul identifies himself as a prisoner for Christ on behalf of the Gentiles.
 - The previously hidden **mystery** has now been revealed.
 - The mystery is that **Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ**.
 - This mystery was revealed especially through the apostles and prophets.
- **3:7–13 — Paul's ministry**
 - Paul was given grace to proclaim Christ to the Gentiles.
 - His mission is to make God's mystery known.
 - Through the Church, God's **manifold wisdom** is made known even to heavenly powers.
 - Paul encourages believers not to lose heart because of his sufferings.
- **3:14–19 — Paul's great prayer**
 - Paul bows before the Father.
 - He prays that believers would be:
 - **Strengthened by the Holy Spirit.**
 - Rooted and grounded in **love**.
 - Able to comprehend the breadth, length, height, and depth of Christ's love.
 - Filled with **all the fullness of God**.
- **3:20–21 — Doxology**
 - God is able to do **far more abundantly than all we ask or think**.
 - Glory belongs to God **in the Church and in Christ Jesus** throughout all generations.

Key idea: The Gospel reveals God's eternal purpose to unite Jews and Gentiles into **one people in Christ**, through whom God's glory is displayed.

Ephesians 4 — Walk Worthy of Your Calling

Main theme: Unity, spiritual maturity, and a transformed life.

- **4:1–6 — Unity in the Church**
 - Paul urges believers to “walk worthy” i.e., continually live lives worthy of their calling of God in Christ.
 - Humility, gentleness, patience, and love preserve Christian unity.
 - **One body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father.**
- **4:7–16 — Gifts and Maturity**
 - Christ gives gifts to His Church: *apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers.*
 - Their purpose is to **(provide all the necessary tools) equip the saints for ministry.**
 - The goal is **spiritual maturity**—growing into the **fullness of Christ.**
 - Christians should *no longer be spiritually immature* or easily deceived.
- **4:17–24 — Put Off the Old Self**
 - Christians **must no longer** live according to their former **sinful way of life.**
 - They are to be **renewed in the spirit of their minds through the Word of God.**
 - Put off the “**old self**” (*the nature which desires its own sin and will rather than God’s desires and will*) and **put on the new self,** created *according to God’s righteousness and holiness.*
- **4:25–32 — Practical Christian Living**
 - Speak truth rather than falsehood.
 - Deal with anger (*notice there are times anger is justified*) without allowing it to become sin.
 - Stop stealing and work honestly so that you can **give to others.**
 - Let speech **build others up** rather than corrupt them.
 - Remove bitterness, wrath, slander, and malice.
 - **“Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another.”**
 - *So as to not grieve the Holy Spirit by whom we are sealed, to the day of redemption.*

Note: *The Christian life is not merely believing differently—it is living differently because Christ has made us new.*

Ephesians 5 — Walk in Love, Light, and Wisdom

5:1–7 — Walk in Love

- Christians are called to **imitate God not the world.**
- **“Walk in love, as Christ loved us.” Sacrificially.**
- Christ’s self-giving love becomes the model for Christian conduct.
- Sexual immorality, impurity, greed, and corrupt speech have no place among God’s people.

5:8-14 — Walk as Children of Light

- Once believers were **darkness**; now they are **light in the Lord**.
- Their lives should produce the fruit of:
 - ✚ Goodness; righteousness; truth
- Christians should expose darkness rather than participate in it.

5:15-21 — Walk Wisely

- Live carefully rather than foolishly.
- ***“Make the best use of the time.”***
- Do not be controlled by drunkenness; instead, **“be filled with the Spirit.”**
- Spirit-filled worship includes:
 - ✚ Psalms; hymns; spiritual songs; thanksgiving; mutual; submission

5:22-33 — Marriage and Christ & the Church

- Paul uses marriage to illustrate the relationship between **Christ and the Church**.
- Wives are called to ***submit to their husbands*** as the head of the family, ***NOT AS SLAVES BUT AS EQUALS WITH A DIFFERENT ROLE***.
- Husbands are called to love their wives **sacrificially**, following Christ's love for the Church.
- Christ's relationship with the Church becomes the theological model for Christian marriage.

Note: *Walk in love, walk in light, and walk wisely—because your life should reflect Christ.*

Ephesians 6 — Stand Firm in Spiritual Warfare

6:1-4 — Family Relationships

- Children are commanded to **obey their parents in the Lord**.
- “Honor your father and mother” is connected with the promise of blessing.
- Fathers are warned not to provoke their children to anger.
- Instead, they should raise them in the **discipline and instruction of the Lord**.

6:5-9 — Servants and Masters

- Paul addresses relationships between servants and masters.
- Christians are to serve sincerely, as though serving **Christ Himself**.
- Masters are reminded that they and their servants have the **same Master in heaven**, who shows no partiality.

6:10-20 — The Armor of God

Central command:

“Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.”

The Christian's struggle is ultimately spiritual—not merely against human opponents.

The Armor of God:

Armor	Meaning
Helmet of Salvation	Confidence in God's saving work
Shield of Faith	Faith extinguishes the enemy's attacks
Sword of the Spirit	The Word of God
Breastplate of Righteousness	Righteousness protecting the believer
Shoes of the Gospel of Peace	Readiness grounded in the Gospel
Belt of Truth	Living and standing in God's truth
Prayer	Continual dependence upon God

- ☞ The command is not simply to **fight**, but repeatedly to **stand**;
- ☞ Christians stand firm by relying upon God's strength and putting on His armor.
- ☞ Paul concludes by asking believers to pray for him so that he can boldly proclaim the Gospel.

Ephesians in One Picture

Chapters 1–3 – What God has done.
Chapters 4-6 - How Christians should therefore live.

Chapter	Central Theme	Key Movement
Ephesians 1	God's Eternal Purpose	Chosen → Adopted → Redeemed → Sealed
Ephesians 2	Grace & Reconciliation	Dead → Alive → Reconciled → God's Household
Ephesians 3	The Mystery Revealed	Hidden → Revealed → Proclaimed → Experienced
Ephesians 4	Walk Worthy	Christ has made you new → live as a new person.
Ephesians 5	Walk in Love, Light and Wisdom	Your new life should visibly reflect Christ.
Ephesians 6	Stand Firm	Live faithfully in a spiritual conflict through God's strength.

The Theological Progression

Ephesians 1:

God planned salvation in Christ.

Ephesians 2:

God accomplishes salvation by grace and creates a new humanity in Christ.

Ephesians 3:

God reveals the mystery that this new humanity includes Jews and Gentiles together in Christ.

Ephesians 4–6:

Therefore, believers are called to live out this new identity.

Central message of Ephesians 1-3

God saves people by grace alone through faith alone, through Christ alone and brings them together—Jew and Gentile alike—as one family and one church.

This unity is part of God's plan, and believers are called to live from the new identity and hope they have in Christ.

Central message of Ephesians 4–6

Because believers have been **united** to Christ and made **new** in Christ, they are called to live a new kind of life in Christ—walking in **unity, holiness, love, wisdom**, and **Spirit-filled obedience**, while **standing** firm in God's strength.

NOTES