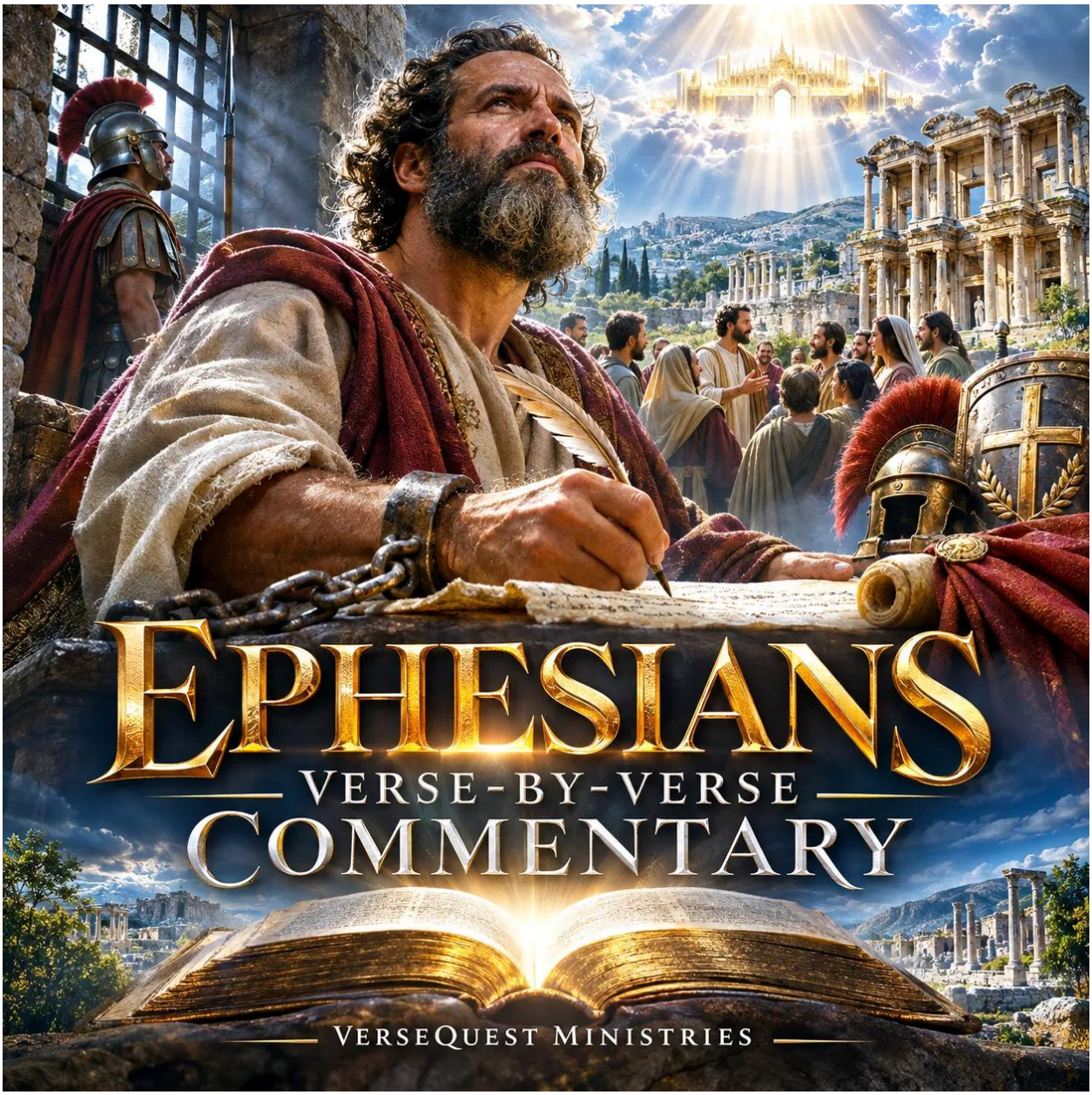
Commentary of the Book of Ephesians

Verse By Verse (Chapters 1-6)

By Paul Tackett

VerseQuest Ministries




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Ephesians — Verse-by-Verse Commentary

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EPHESIANS — VERSE-BY-VERSE COMMENTARY

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Introduction to Ephesians — Verse-by-Verse Commentary

There are books in the King James Bible that take a man into the wilderness, books that carry him through the judgments of God, books that reveal the history of Israel, and books that open the windows of prophecy upon events yet to come. Then there is Ephesians, a book that takes a redeemed sinner out of the spiritual graveyard, sets him before the throne of Almighty God, shows him what he possesses in Jesus Christ, and then commands him to come back down and live like somebody who has actually been saved. Six chapters, written by an imprisoned apostle, contain enough doctrine to dismantle a theological seminary full of religious confusion and enough practical instruction to straighten out a church, a marriage, a family, and a Christian who has spent years trying to live upon the strength of his own flesh. Ephesians does not flatter human nature, congratulate sinners upon their hidden potential, or suggest that Almighty God needed our assistance in accomplishing redemption. It begins with the riches of His grace, reveals the position of the believer in Jesus Christ, and exposes the responsibilities that accompany such a glorious calling. **The Book of Ephesians takes a man who was dead in sins, shows him that he is alive in Christ, and then asks why somebody with such a position insists upon living like the old corpse still owns him.** There is doctrine here that must be believed, truth that must be rightly divided, commandments that must be obeyed, and spiritual warfare that must never be underestimated.

The human writer is the apostle Paul, a man whose authority did not originate from a religious committee, a denominational headquarters, or the approval of the men who opposed his ministry. Ephesians 1:1 begins, **“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus:”** Notice that his apostleship is by the will of God. Paul was called by Jesus Christ and entrusted with revelations concerning the present dispensation and the spiritual body of Christ. He was not inventing a private religious system to compete with the Lord's earthly ministry, nor was he rewriting the gospel according to personal preference. He was declaring truth received from the risen Saviour. The connection with Ephesus is especially significant when the historical record in Acts 19 is considered. This was a city where pagan worship, magical practices, commercial interests, and opposition to the gospel were prominent realities. The preaching of the word of God confronted those practices so thoroughly that men who had practiced curious arts publicly burned their books, and the worship of Diana became the center of a tremendous disturbance. Ephesians was not addressed to Christians living in a religious vacuum where everything was orderly and everyone admired biblical conviction. These believers knew that the gospel could disturb an entire society when men began taking the truth seriously. **The same word that saved sinners in Ephesus threatened the business of men who profited from keeping those sinners in darkness.** Christianity was

never intended to become a harmless decoration upon a world determined to remain wicked.

One of the most remarkable features of Ephesians is the contrast between Paul's earthly circumstances and the heavenly truths he declares. The apostle identifies himself as a prisoner in Ephesians 3:1, speaks of his imprisonment again in Ephesians 4:1, and describes himself in Ephesians 6:20 as **“an ambassador in bonds.”** Yet the man wearing earthly restraints writes some of the most glorious declarations concerning spiritual liberty, heavenly blessings, and the believer's position in Jesus Christ. His circumstances have not canceled his commission. The authorities may restrain the messenger, but they cannot imprison the risen Saviour or place the word of God beyond His sovereign purposes. Ephesians 1:3 declares, **“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:”** There is the proper starting point for understanding the epistle. Paul does not begin by telling the believer how to become important in the eyes of the world. He begins by explaining what Almighty God has already provided in Jesus Christ. A prisoner on earth can possess riches in heaven that an emperor cannot purchase with everything in his treasury. **The world measures a man's circumstances by the walls surrounding him; Ephesians measures the believer's standing by the Saviour who redeemed him.** Before examining what the Christian must do, the apostle establishes what Christ has accomplished.

The first chapter opens the treasury of spiritual blessings possessed by those who belong to Jesus Christ. Redemption, forgiveness, adoption, the revelation of God's purposes, and the sealing of the Holy Spirit appear in a magnificent declaration of divine grace. Ephesians 1:7 announces, **“In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;”** Notice that redemption is through His blood, not through religious ceremonies, personal reform, denominational membership, or a lifetime of charitable accomplishments. The sinner's acceptance before God rests upon the finished work of Jesus Christ. Ephesians 1:13 further declares that those who heard the word of truth, believed the gospel of their salvation, and trusted Christ were **“sealed with that holy Spirit of promise.”** The sealing belongs to the believer's security in the Saviour, not a temporary religious privilege that disappears whenever the flesh fails. The chapter also identifies God's gracious purpose in Christ and the believer's blessings in Him. Such passages must be studied carefully rather than converted into a philosophical system that makes God the author of sin or turns the gospel invitation into an elaborate deception. The believer's election and acceptance must be examined according to the repeated emphasis upon being **in Christ**. **A man does not improve the doctrine of grace by turning Almighty God into the author of wickedness, any more than he improves salvation by demanding that the sinner finish what Jesus Christ accomplished.** The words of

Scripture must determine the doctrine, not the preferences of competing theological systems.

The second chapter delivers one of the most devastating descriptions of fallen humanity and one of the most glorious declarations of salvation found anywhere in the Bible. Ephesians 2:1 identifies the former condition of believers as **"dead in trespasses and sins;"** The problem was not merely inadequate education, insufficient confidence, poor surroundings, or the absence of religious opportunity. Fallen humanity was spiritually dead and incapable of purchasing its own redemption. Then comes the magnificent intervention announced in Ephesians 2:4: **"But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,"** Those two opening words change everything. The sinner could not raise himself from spiritual death, remove the guilt of his sins, or provide the righteousness necessary to stand accepted before God. The Lord acted according to His mercy and grace. Ephesians 2:8–9 settles the matter beyond reasonable dispute: **"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."** Those words should be allowed to stand exactly as written. Baptismal regeneration, religious merit, sacramental salvation, law keeping, and the notion that eternal life is maintained through sufficient personal performance all collide with the plain declaration of this passage. **If salvation could be purchased through human works, grace would become wages, the cross would become an unnecessary expense, and the sinner would have something to boast about. Paul removes all three possibilities.** Salvation is God's gift, received through faith in Jesus Christ.

Yet the same chapter that excludes works from the purchase of salvation includes good works within the responsibilities of those already redeemed. Ephesians 2:10 declares, **"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."** The order cannot be reversed without corrupting the gospel. The believer is not saved because he walks in good works; he is created in Christ Jesus unto good works because he has been saved. That distinction governs the entire practical portion of Ephesians. The Christian's standing in Christ must be distinguished from his daily state, just as justification must be distinguished from sanctification and eternal security from Christian accountability. The same Lord who secures His redeemed people commands them to reject sin, pursue holiness, and walk worthy of their calling. Grace is not permission to continue in deliberate rebellion, and obedience is not the purchase price of eternal life. The man who treats salvation as something he must continually earn has misunderstood the finished work of Christ. The man who treats eternal security as a divine license to practice wickedness has misunderstood the purpose for which he was redeemed. **Good works are not the foundation beneath salvation; they are among the responsibilities that belong to the**

life built upon that foundation. Ephesians demands that the reader keep those truths in their proper order.

The latter portion of chapter two and the revelations of chapter three bring the believer into one of the most significant doctrinal subjects in Paul's writings: the mystery of the spiritual body of Jesus Christ. Ephesians 2 explains the former distinction between Jews and Gentiles and the reconciliation accomplished through the cross. Ephesians 2:14 declares, **"For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us;"** The apostle goes on to describe the making of **"one new man"** and the reconciliation of both unto God in one body. Ephesians 3:3 declares, **"How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery;"** and Ephesians 3:6 explains that the Gentiles should be **"fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:"** This is not a minor subject or a theological curiosity to be hurried past. It concerns the present spiritual position of those redeemed through Jesus Christ and the revelation entrusted to the apostle Paul. But the mystery of the Church must not be used to erase God's distinct covenant promises concerning national Israel. The Church is not authorized to seize every earthly promise given to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their descendants and then declare that Israel has been permanently discarded. **God knows the difference between an earthly covenant and a heavenly calling, even when religious interpreters become determined to confuse them.** Rightly dividing the word of truth requires allowing Israel to remain Israel and the Church to remain the spiritual body revealed through the apostle Paul.

Chapter three continues by explaining the stewardship entrusted to Paul and the divine purpose associated with the revelation of the mystery. Ephesians 3:2 refers to **"the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward:"** That statement deserves careful attention because dispensational distinctions do not originate merely from a modern theological system imposed upon Scripture. The apostle himself uses the language of dispensation while explaining the particular revelation committed to him. This does not mean God changed His character, became less holy, or devised different competing methods through which sinners could save themselves. It means that God's revealed dealings, responsibilities, and purposes must be understood according to the distinctions He has established in His word. Paul was entrusted with the revelation concerning the present Church and the spiritual riches associated with being in Jesus Christ. The chapter also contains his remarkable prayer that believers might be strengthened with might by the Spirit in the inner man and comprehend the greatness of Christ's love. Ephesians 3:20 declares that God **"is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us."** Notice that divine power is not presented as an advertisement for the believer's independent

greatness. It belongs to the Lord. **The Christian who studies the mystery of Christ and emerges convinced that he himself has become spiritually indispensable has managed to turn one of the Bible's greatest revelations of divine grace into an occasion for human pride.** That is precisely the opposite of what the doctrine should accomplish.

A remarkable transition occurs when chapter four begins. Having explained the believer's position and spiritual blessings, Paul turns toward the responsibilities that should accompany them. Ephesians 4:1 declares, **"I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,"** Notice the word **"therefore."** Paul is connecting Christian conduct with the doctrine previously established. The believer is not commanded to walk worthy in order to purchase salvation, but because the salvation already received establishes a calling that should govern his life. The chapter immediately emphasizes lowliness, meekness, longsuffering, forbearance in love, and the unity of the Spirit. It then declares the great unities of the present spiritual body: one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father of all. These statements confront the divisions that develop when believers substitute religious personalities, denominational pride, and personal ambition for their common standing in Jesus Christ. Yet biblical unity must never be reduced to pretending every doctrine is equally true. Paul calls believers to unity while commanding them to grow in knowledge and resist doctrinal instability. **A church that preserves outward peace by surrendering the truth has not become spiritually mature, and a church that defends the truth while constantly devouring its own members has not understood the purpose of Christian unity.** The believer must pursue both doctrinal faithfulness and brotherly love.

The remainder of chapter four exposes the practical difference between a Christian who has learned Christ and a person still governed by the habits of the old man. Ephesians 4:22 commands believers to put off the former conversation concerning the old man, while verse 24 commands them to put on the new man, created in righteousness and true holiness. Paul then becomes remarkably specific. Lying must be replaced with truth. Sinful anger must not be allowed to provide an opening for the devil. Theft must give way to honest labor. Corrupt communication must be rejected, bitterness and malice must be put away, and believers must forgive one another. Ephesians 4:30 warns, **"And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."** Notice the doctrinal precision. The same Spirit who seals the believer can be grieved by the believer's conduct. Eternal security and personal accountability therefore belong together without contradiction. The Christian can be securely saved and practically disobedient, and Scripture does not excuse that disobedience simply because the Saviour's redemption

remains sufficient. **The man who believes the Holy Spirit's sealing permits him to lie, steal, harbor bitterness, and mistreat his brethren has not discovered a deeper understanding of grace. He has discovered how to misuse a glorious doctrine to defend the old man's favorite habits.** Ephesians demands a changed walk from those who possess a changed standing.

Chapter five carries that instruction into the believer's relationship with the surrounding world and the influences permitted into his life. Paul commands Christians to walk in love, reject fornication and uncleanness, avoid filthy communication, and refuse fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. Ephesians 5:11 declares, **"And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them."** This is not a command to abandon compassion for lost sinners or treat every unbeliever as a personal enemy. It is a command to recognize that the Christian's conduct should not become indistinguishable from the wickedness out of which he was redeemed. The chapter also warns against spiritual carelessness and commands believers to redeem the time. Ephesians 5:18 declares, **"And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;"** The contrast exposes the danger of allowing the flesh to seek control through intoxicating influences while neglecting the Spirit's direction. Being filled with the Spirit should not be confused with theatrical religious excitement, unintelligible performances, or emotional displays that permit a person to escape biblical correction. The Spirit of God does not lead Christians to contradict the word He inspired. **A man who announces that he is filled with the Spirit while refusing the commandments of Scripture has made a spiritual claim that his conduct is busily attempting to disprove.** The Christian walk must be governed by the Lord rather than the appetites of the flesh.

The closing portion of chapter five brings the doctrine of Christ and the Church into the Christian home, particularly the relationship between husbands and wives. These passages have been misused by men seeking personal domination and dismissed by others who refuse to accept the order God established. Both errors require correction. Ephesians 5:21 introduces the principle of submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God, and the following verses address the distinct responsibilities of wives and husbands. The husband is not given permission to become a domestic tyrant simply because he has discovered a verse concerning submission. Ephesians 5:25 commands, **"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;"** There is the standard of sacrificial love placed before the husband. Paul then reveals the extraordinary relationship between marriage and the mystery of Christ and the Church. Ephesians 5:32 declares, **"This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church."** The marriage instructions are therefore more than household regulations. They illustrate profound truths concerning the relationship of the Saviour to His spiritual body. **A**

man who quotes the verses about his wife's responsibilities while treating the verses about his own responsibilities as optional has not established biblical headship. He has demonstrated that selective reading can become a convenient servant of the flesh. The Christian home must be governed by the whole counsel of God.

Chapter six continues with children, fathers, servants, and masters, showing that the gospel's practical implications reach into the household and the ordinary responsibilities of life. Children are instructed concerning obedience and honor, while fathers are commanded not to provoke their children to wrath but to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. These instructions confront both the rebellious child and the parent who believes authority excuses harshness, neglect, or unreasonable conduct. The chapter then addresses servants and masters within the social arrangements of the ancient world. Those relationships must be understood in their historical setting rather than carelessly equated with every feature of modern employment. Yet the moral principles concerning sincerity, fairness, accountability, and good will remain significant. Ephesians 6:8 declares, **"Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free."** The following verse reminds masters that they also possess a Master in heaven and that He shows no respect of persons. **The Lord who sees the servant working faithfully also sees the master abusing his position. Neither poverty nor power provides an exemption from divine accountability.** Salvation does not remove ordinary responsibilities; it establishes why those responsibilities should be performed before the Lord.

Then comes one of the most recognizable passages in the entire epistle: the whole armour of God. Ephesians 6:10 commands, **"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might."** The next verses reveal that the believer's warfare is not against flesh and blood but against spiritual opposition. The Christian must recognize the reality of the devil and his wiles without inventing elaborate explanations for every difficulty or turning human opponents into objects of hatred. The armour includes truth, righteousness, the preparation of the gospel of peace, faith, salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Prayer accompanies the entire passage, demonstrating the necessity of continual dependence upon Almighty God. Each piece demands careful study because the believer must understand both his secure standing in Christ and his practical responsibility to resist temptation and deception. The breastplate of righteousness concerns practical holiness without turning holiness into the purchase price of salvation. The shield of faith directs confidence toward the Lord rather than personal greatness. The sword of the Spirit identifies the word of God as the believer's weapon rather than religious imagination, institutional authority, or uncontrolled anger. **The Christian soldier is not commanded to impress the devil with a dramatic performance. He is commanded to put on the**

armour God supplied and stand. Spiritual warfare requires biblical preparation, not theatrical confidence.

The final verses bring the reader back to the personal relationships that belong to the life of the Church. Paul requests prayer that he might open his mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, identifying himself as an ambassador in bonds. He then introduces Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister entrusted with communicating matters concerning Paul's circumstances and comforting the brethren. The significance of that testimony should not be overlooked. The apostle who received extraordinary revelations recognized the value of a dependable servant whose duties might never attract the public recognition associated with prominent preaching. Then come the closing blessings of peace, love, faith, and grace. Ephesians 6:23 declares, **"Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."** The final verse pronounces grace upon those who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Notice how the epistle concludes. After explaining the heights of heavenly blessings and the dangers of spiritual warfare, Paul leaves the reader with grace and sincere love for the Saviour. **The Church needs truth strong enough to expose the devil's lies and grace sufficient to keep believers from turning their knowledge into an excuse for despising one another.** Sound doctrine should produce humility, faithfulness, and genuine concern for the brethren.

This verse-by-verse commentary is intended to follow the argument of Ephesians carefully, giving attention to its words, phrases, immediate context, doctrinal distinctions, and practical consequences. The King James Bible remains the authority throughout the study. Scripture must be compared with Scripture, difficult passages examined in light of clearer revelation, and conclusions kept within the boundaries of what God has written. The purpose is not to manufacture mysteries where none exist, invent spiritual doctrines from isolated expressions, or force every verse to support a preferred theological system. Particular attention must be given to the distinctions between Israel and the Church, law and grace, justification and sanctification, the believer's standing and state, and salvation and Christian service. These matters are not insignificant technicalities reserved for people who enjoy theological arguments. They determine whether the reader understands God's promises correctly, recognizes the sufficiency of Christ's finished work, and obeys the commandments addressed to the Church. **A Bible that is wrongly divided can be used to place saved people under burdens God never assigned them, while a Bible that is carelessly interpreted can be twisted into an excuse for ignoring responsibilities God plainly commanded.** The object is not to make the text fit the reader's assumptions, but to bring the reader's understanding into submission to the text.

There is also a vital difference between studying Ephesians merely to acquire information and studying it with the intention of obeying Almighty God. A man can memorize the names of every piece of spiritual armour while leaving himself exposed through deliberate sin. He can explain the mystery of the Church while dividing his own congregation through pride. He can preach salvation by grace while treating other believers as though his personal accomplishments make him spiritually superior. He can defend the authority of the Bible publicly while refusing its correction privately. Such contradictions are precisely why this epistle deserves serious examination. The doctrine must not remain confined to the mind when God has commanded it to govern the walk. James 1:22 declares, **"But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves."** The purpose of faithful Bible study is not to make the reader more impressive in religious debate, but more firmly established in the truth and more obedient to Jesus Christ. **The Christian who studies the heavenly calling but refuses to walk worthy of it has learned the address of his spiritual blessings while ignoring the instructions for his earthly conduct.** Knowledge should become conviction, conviction should produce obedience, and obedience should honor the Saviour who supplied the grace.

As this commentary begins, the reader should approach Ephesians with an open King James Bible, a willingness to examine every verse in its proper setting, and an honest desire to receive whatever correction the Scriptures provide. The book will confront religious pride, expose the inadequacy of human righteousness, establish the security of the redeemed in Jesus Christ, and reveal the extraordinary spiritual blessings belonging to His body. It will clarify the mystery revealed through Paul, explain the believer's walk, address the responsibilities of the Christian home, and prepare the redeemed for spiritual warfare. There will be passages that comfort the discouraged, doctrines that silence the boasts of the flesh, commandments that expose neglected responsibilities, and warnings that demand serious examination. Through it all, the Lord Jesus Christ remains the center. He is the One in whom the believer possesses redemption, the One through whom Jew and Gentile are reconciled in one spiritual body, the Head of the Church, the pattern of sacrificial love, and the source of strength for the Christian soldier. **Ephesians begins by lifting the believer into the riches of God's grace and concludes by commanding him to stand faithfully in the power of the Lord. Between those two great truths lies a complete course of instruction concerning what the Christian possesses, what the Christian should believe, and how the Christian ought to live.** The purpose of this study is not merely to finish six chapters and congratulate ourselves upon having read another book of the Bible. It is to understand the word of God, believe what He has revealed, and live in a manner consistent with the salvation Jesus Christ purchased through His own blood. **The same grace that brought the sinner out of spiritual death should govern the**

believer's life until the day he stands before his Saviour. Open the Book, examine the words, rightly divide the truth, and let Ephesians speak with the authority Almighty God gave it.

Chapter 1

Ephesians 1:1 Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

"Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus:"
(Ephesians 1:1)

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ"

Ephesians opens with a man, an office, and the Person who gave the office: **"Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ."** Paul does not begin by advertising his education, Jewish pedigree, sufferings, travels, churches established, or religious reputation. He identifies himself by the commission Jesus Christ gave him. An apostle in this setting is not merely an energetic missionary, travelling preacher, or man with a large ministry. Paul occupied a distinct foundational office, having been personally apprehended and commissioned by the risen Christ. The Lord said concerning him, **"he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles"** (Acts 9:15). Paul later says plainly, **"I am the apostle of the Gentiles"** (Romans 11:13). Modern religious ambition can print "apostle" on a business card in thirty seconds; it cannot manufacture Damascus-road authority with printer ink.

That apostleship matters tremendously in Ephesians because this epistle will contain some of the fullest revelation concerning the believer's position in Christ, the body of Christ, heavenly places, Jew and Gentile made one, the mystery, the dispensation of grace, the new man, and the Church as Christ's body and bride. Paul is not giving religious speculation. Ephesians 3:3 says, **"by revelation he made known unto me the mystery."** The doctrine came from Christ through the apostle appointed to communicate it. Right

division therefore requires recognizing Paul's distinctive ministry without turning Paul into the Saviour. Paul did not invent grace, establish the cross, create the body of Christ, or write heaven's program out of his own imagination. Christ is the Head; Paul is the appointed messenger. **A mailman may carry a letter bearing the king's seal, but only a fool kneels before the mailman instead of reading what the King wrote.**

There is also practical instruction in Paul's identification. Genuine ministry is defined by relationship to Jesus Christ, not self-promotion. Paul calls himself an apostle **"of Jesus Christ."** The possessive relationship settles ownership. Paul belongs to Christ, serves Christ, speaks for Christ, suffers for Christ, and ultimately answers to Christ. That principle applies even where the apostolic office does not. Every preacher, teacher, evangelist, missionary, and Christian servant should remember whose name belongs on the deed. Ministry becomes diseased when a servant begins acting as though Christ exists to promote the servant's platform rather than the servant existing to proclaim Christ.

"by the will of God"

Paul's apostleship existed **"by the will of God."** That little phrase eliminates an impressive amount of religious machinery. Paul did not appoint himself. His mother did not nominate him. Jerusalem did not manufacture him. A council did not vote him into the office, and a seminary did not graduate him into divine authority. First Corinthians 1:1 uses the same wording: **"Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God."** Second Corinthians 1:1 likewise says, **"Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God."** The repetition is deliberate. Paul's authority rested upon God's appointment rather than human endorsement.

Acts 9:15 supplies the historical background when the Lord says, **"he is a chosen vessel unto me."** Acts 26:16 records Christ telling Paul, **"I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness."** There is the will of God taking hold of a man who had been travelling in exactly the opposite direction. Saul of Tarsus did not wake up one morning and decide apostleship would be an attractive career change. He was persecuting Christians. God interrupted the trip, changed the man, redirected the zeal, and assigned the ministry. **Grace has a remarkable habit of taking the fellow running confidently south and giving him orders that point north.**

The phrase should not be abused as though every private desire automatically becomes **"the will of God."** Paul possessed a revealed apostolic commission. Christians today possess the completed Scriptures by which doctrine, conduct, and ministry must be tested. God's will never requires disobedience to God's word. A man who announces, "God called me," while contradicting Scripture has not strengthened his case; he has merely

attached God's name to his own ambition. The safe order is Scripture first, personal claims second. God's will does not need to contradict God's Book in order to prove how spiritual somebody is.

"to the saints which are at Ephesus"

The recipients are called **"the saints which are at Ephesus."** In the New Testament, a saint is not an exceptionally holy Christian who accumulated enough religious points for an institution to award him a title centuries after death. Paul writes to living believers and calls them saints while they are still breathing. Romans 1:7 addresses believers as **"called to be saints."** First Corinthians 1:2 addresses notoriously troubled Christians as **"called to be saints."** Sainthood is fundamentally a matter of being set apart unto God through Christ before it becomes a description of exceptional practical maturity.

That distinction between standing and state will become essential throughout Ephesians. Positionally, these believers are saints. Practically, chapters 4–6 will tell them how saints ought to walk. Ephesians 4:1 says, **"walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called."** Ephesians 5:8 says, **"walk as children of light."** The order is everything. Paul does not say, "Walk perfectly enough and perhaps God will eventually make you saints." God establishes the standing, then commands conduct consistent with it. **Grace gives the uniform before ordering the soldier onto the field; religion keeps demanding battles from naked men hoping they can earn the uniform afterward.**

These saints were **"at Ephesus,"** meaning spiritual position did not erase physical location. Ephesus was a real city with real paganism, real idolatry, real spiritual opposition, and a real local church. Acts 19 records the enormous influence of Diana worship there, yet God planted saints in the middle of that environment. Christianity did not require believers to move to an imaginary holy zip code before they could live for Christ. They were saints in Ephesus. The lesson remains valuable: spiritual separation does not mean geographical disappearance. God places believers in dark surroundings precisely because light has little practical usefulness when hidden in a closet.

"and to the faithful in Christ Jesus"

Paul adds **"and to the faithful in Christ Jesus."** The wording gives the believers another designation. They are saints by divine setting apart, and they are identified as the faithful in Christ Jesus. Scripture regularly connects faithfulness with stewardship. First Corinthians 4:2 says, **"Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful."** Faithfulness is not flash, noise, celebrity, or religious excitement. It is dependable continuance in what God has entrusted. Heaven has always valued the man who can still be found at his post after novelty has packed its suitcase and gone somewhere else.

Yet the controlling phrase is **“in Christ Jesus.”** That expression opens one of the great doctrinal doors of Ephesians. The believer’s standing is not ultimately in denomination, ceremony, nationality, morality, family heritage, or personal achievement. He is **in Christ**. Ephesians 1:3 will say believers are blessed with all spiritual blessings **“in Christ.”** Verse 4 says they are chosen **“in him.”** Verse 6 says they are **“accepted in the beloved.”** Verse 7 says **“In whom we have redemption.”** Paul is about to build doctrine upon spiritual union with Jesus Christ, and verse 1 places the reader inside that truth before the chapter has even gathered speed.

This also protects the verse from teaching salvation by personal faithfulness. A believer is not placed in Christ because he finally became dependable enough to deserve admission. Salvation is by grace through faith, **“not of works”** (Ephesians 2:8–9). Once in Christ, however, the believer is called to live faithfully because his position should shape his practice. Standing is the root; faithfulness is proper fruit. Turn that order around and religion starts charging for what God gives freely. Keep the order straight and grace produces exactly the kind of life legalism keeps promising but cannot manufacture.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 1:1 establishes four foundational truths for the entire epistle: **Paul’s divinely appointed apostleship, the sovereign authority of God’s will, the believer’s identity as a saint, and the believer’s position in Christ Jesus.** Before Paul explains election, redemption, sealing, inheritance, the mystery, the one body, or heavenly places, he establishes who is speaking and to whom he is speaking. The apostle is commissioned by Christ according to God’s will, and the recipients are already identified by their relationship to Christ.

The verse also establishes the doctrinal order that Ephesians will maintain from beginning to end: **position first, practice afterward**. The recipients are saints before Paul tells them how saints should walk. They are in Christ before he commands them to put off the old man and put on the new. Christianity does not begin with Adam attempting to behave his way into Christ; it begins with God placing the believer in Christ and then teaching him to walk consistently with what grace has made him.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. Paul’s Apostolic Calling

Romans 1:1 — **“Called to be an apostle.”**
1 Corinthians 1:1 — **“Called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ.”**
2 Corinthians 1:1 — **“An apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God.”**

1 Timothy 1:1 — **“An apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God.”**
2 Timothy 1:1 — **“An apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God.”**

2. Paul’s Distinct Gentile Ministry

Acts 9:15 — **“A chosen vessel unto me.”**
Acts 22:21 — **“I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.”**
Acts 26:16 — **“To make thee a minister and a witness.”**
Romans 11:13 — **“I am the apostle of the Gentiles.”**
Ephesians 3:2 — **“The dispensation of the grace of God which is given me.”**

3. The Will Of God In Paul’s Calling

1 Corinthians 1:1 — **“Through the will of God.”**
2 Corinthians 1:1 — **“By the will of God.”**
Colossians 1:1 — **“An apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God.”**
2 Timothy 1:1 — **“By the will of God.”**
Acts 9:15 — **“He is a chosen vessel unto me.”**

4. Believers Called Saints

Romans 1:7 — **“Called to be saints.”**
1 Corinthians 1:2 — **“Called to be saints.”**
Philippians 1:1 — **“To all the saints in Christ Jesus.”**
Colossians 1:2 — **“To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ.”**
Ephesians 2:19 — **“Fellowcitizens with the saints.”**

5. The Church At Ephesus

Acts 18:19 — **“He came to Ephesus.”**
Acts 19:1 — **“Paul… came to Ephesus.”**
Acts 19:10 — **“All they which dwelt in Asia heard the word.”**
Acts 20:17 — **“He sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church.”**
Acts 20:28 — **“Feed the church of God.”**

6. The Believer’s Position In Christ

Romans 8:1 — **“Them which are in Christ Jesus.”**
1 Corinthians 1:30 — **“Of him are ye in Christ Jesus.”**
2 Corinthians 5:17 — **“If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.”**
Ephesians 1:3 — **“All spiritual blessings… in Christ.”**
Ephesians 2:10 — **“Created in Christ Jesus unto good works.”**

7. One Body In Christ

1 Corinthians 12:13 — **“By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body.”**
Ephesians 2:16 — **“Reconcile both unto God in one body.”**
Ephesians 3:6 — **“Fellowheirs, and of the same body.”**
Ephesians 4:4 — **“There is one body.”**
Romans 12:5 — **“We, being many, are one body in Christ.”**

8. Faithfulness In Christian Stewardship

1 Corinthians 4:2 — **“It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.”**
Ephesians 6:21 — **“Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister.”**
Colossians 1:2 — **“Saints and faithful brethren in Christ.”**
Colossians 4:7 — **“A faithful minister and fellowservant.”**
2 Timothy 2:2 — **“Faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 1:1 begins by putting authority where it belongs. Paul is an apostle, but he is an apostle **“of Jesus Christ”** and one made so **“by the will of God.”** The verse gives no room for self-appointed spiritual royalty, institutional infallibility, or religious personalities who expect their followers to treat every private opinion like an extra chapter of Scripture. Paul’s authority was enormous precisely because it was derived rather than invented. Christ called him, Christ commissioned him, and Christ revealed truth through him. That makes the modern teacher’s position considerably easier to understand: open the Book, teach what is there, rightly divide it, and stop pretending heaven needs unauthorized additions. A faithful servant does not improve revelation; he submits to it. The safest preacher is the man who knows he has authority when the Bible speaks and considerably less authority when he starts improvising.

The phrase **“to the saints which are at Ephesus”** also destroys a great deal of religious nonsense about sainthood. These saints were alive, living in a pagan city, surrounded by idolatry, temptation, commerce, spiritual opposition, and all the ordinary pressures of human life. They had not been canonized by men; they had been set apart by God in Christ. That standing did not mean their daily conduct had reached sinless perfection, because the rest of the epistle contains commands, warnings, corrections, and practical instruction. Position and practice must therefore be distinguished without being separated. The believer is not a saint because he performed well enough today, but because God has set him apart in Christ; nevertheless, because he is a saint, his walk ought increasingly to look like it. Grace does not lower the standard of holiness; it changes the foundation from which holiness grows. Religion says, “Behave like a saint and perhaps God will accept you.”

Ephesians says, in effect, “God has made you a saint in Christ; now quit living like you forgot whose family name you carry.”

The words **“in Christ Jesus”** are especially important because they establish the doctrinal atmosphere of the entire book. Ephesians will not be primarily about what the believer can accomplish for Christ but about what God has already accomplished for the believer in Christ. He is blessed in Christ, chosen in Him, accepted in the Beloved, redeemed in Him, sealed in Him, raised with Him, and seated in heavenly places in Him. The Christian life therefore begins from a position of divine accomplishment rather than human uncertainty. This does not produce passivity; it produces sane service. A man who knows where he stands can finally walk without checking every five minutes to see whether the ground disappeared beneath him. Legalism keeps the believer staring at his feet, wondering whether today’s performance canceled yesterday’s acceptance. Grace lifts his eyes to Christ and then tells him to walk worthy of the calling he has already received.

Finally, Ephesians 1:1 gives a proper beginning for the six chapters ahead because it joins doctrine and responsibility without confusing them. Paul is called according to God’s will, saints are set apart by grace, and the faithful are located **“in Christ Jesus.”** Nothing in the verse encourages spiritual laziness, yet nothing places salvation upon a treadmill powered by human merit. Faithfulness matters, but faithfulness follows life in Christ; it does not purchase entrance into Christ. That order will control the entire epistle. Chapters 1–3 will unfold what God has made the believer and what He has accomplished in Christ; chapters 4–6 will repeatedly command the believer to walk in a manner consistent with those truths. God establishes the position and then demands a worthy practice. **The gospel does not ask a corpse to walk until it earns life; it gives life to the dead and then tells the living man where to put his feet.** Ephesians begins with that settled ground, and anyone who keeps the order straight will be spared an enormous amount of religious confusion before reaching verse 2.

Ephesians 1:2 Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

“Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.” (Ephesians 1:2)

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

“Grace be to you, and peace,”

Paul begins the doctrinal mountain range of Ephesians with two words that fallen religion has never been able to manufacture: **"Grace… and peace."** The order matters. Grace comes first because peace with God cannot exist until grace has dealt with the sinner's guilt. Romans 5:1 says, **"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."** Paul does not write, "Peace be to you, provided you accumulate enough merit for grace to notice you." Grace is the divine provision for people who cannot pay; peace is one of the blessed results of what grace accomplishes. Religion usually reverses the order by telling the sinner to straighten himself out, perform enough, behave properly, submit to ceremonies, and perhaps God will eventually accept the account. Paul opens Ephesians by putting the cashier out of business. **Grace is not God lowering the price; grace is God providing in Christ what the bankrupt sinner could never purchase.**

The word **"grace"** will become one of the controlling doctrines of Ephesians. Ephesians 1:7 will speak of **"the riches of his grace."** Ephesians 2:5 says, **"by grace ye are saved,"** and Ephesians 2:8 declares, **"For by grace are ye saved through faith."** Grace is not merely kindness sprinkled over human effort. Romans 11:6 destroys that mixture: **"And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace."** Once religious merit is introduced as part of the ground of acceptance, grace has not been improved; it has been contradicted. A man may add milk to coffee and still have coffee, but add works as the basis of justification to grace and Scripture says the resulting mixture is no longer grace. God apparently understands definitions better than theologians who spend their careers trying to make opposites shake hands.

The word **"peace"** must likewise be understood biblically. Paul is not promising a life without trouble, persecution, spiritual warfare, grief, sickness, opposition, or difficult circumstances. Ephesians will eventually put the believer in **"the whole armour of God"** (Ephesians 6:11), which would be a peculiar wardrobe for somebody promised uninterrupted earthly tranquility. Peace first concerns reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ. After that, believers may experience the **"peace of God"** governing the inner life as they walk in faith. Standing and state must therefore remain distinct. The believer may possess permanent peace with God while temporarily failing to enjoy practical peace because anxiety, disobedience, fear, or flesh has disturbed the mind. Salvation is not measured with an emotional thermometer.

"from God our Father,"

Grace and peace have a source: **"from God our Father."** Christianity begins with what God gives, not with what man invents. The direction of grace is downward before worship ever rises upward. God purposes, God calls, God provides the Saviour, God redeems, God

forgives, God accepts, and God gives spiritual life. Man receives what God provides through faith. Ephesians will repeatedly emphasize this divine initiative. Verse 3 says God **"hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."** Verse 4 says He **"hath chosen us in him."** Verse 5 speaks of His purpose, verse 6 of His grace, verse 7 of redemption, and verse 9 of **"the mystery of his will."** Ephesians does not begin with Adam climbing toward heaven; it begins with heaven pouring blessings upon those who are in Christ.

Paul does not merely write **"God,"** however. He writes **"God our Father."** That relationship must be defined by Scripture rather than sentimental religion. The Bible does not teach the saving fatherhood of God over every human being simply because everyone descended physically from Adam. Ephesians 2 will describe unsaved men as **"children of wrath"** (Ephesians 2:3), which would be unnecessary language if every sinner already possessed redemptive sonship. John 1:12 says, **"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God."** Galatians 3:26 says, **"For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus."** God is Creator of all, but the family relationship Paul celebrates belongs to those who are in Christ. A birth certificate from Adam is not the same document as adoption in Christ.

Calling Him **"our Father"** gives the believer security without producing irreverence. The saved man approaches God as Father because Christ has brought him near, but Fatherhood does not turn the throne into a casual lounge chair. Hebrews 4:16 says, **"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace,"** yet it remains a throne. Boldness means confidence of access, not contempt for holiness. Ephesians will later say, **"For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father"** (Ephesians 2:18). That access is one of grace's great privileges. The believer does not need an earthly priesthood to create a family relationship Christ has already established. **When God calls you a son, religion has no authority to demote you into a spiritual customer waiting outside somebody else's office.**

"and from the Lord Jesus Christ."

Paul places **"the Lord Jesus Christ"** alongside **"God our Father"** as the source of grace and peace. That is not casual wording. Jesus Christ is not merely another recipient of grace passing some of it along to others. Grace and peace come **"from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ."** The Father and Son stand together as the divine source of spiritual blessing. John 1:17 says, **"grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."** Second Corinthians 13:14 speaks of **"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ."** Christ is therefore not presented as a religious adviser showing sinners how to locate God; He is the divine Lord through whom God's saving grace reaches them.

Every part of the title matters. He is **Lord**, possessing authority. He is **Jesus**, the incarnate Saviour. He is **Christ**, God's anointed One. Modern religion often likes "Jesus" as a sympathetic helper while becoming noticeably uncomfortable with **"Lord."** Paul offers no such edited Christ. The One who saves the believer also owns the believer. Romans 14:8 says, **"whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's."** Salvation is entirely free to the sinner because the Lord paid the price, but discipleship and Christian service still belong beneath His authority. Grace does not free a man from hell so he can crown himself king afterward. **A purchased man may be gloriously free from condemnation while remaining gloriously owned by the One who bought him.**

This also prepares the reader for the Christ-centered language saturating Ephesians. Believers will be blessed **"in Christ"** (Ephesians 1:3), chosen **"in him"** (1:4), accepted **"in the beloved"** (1:6), redeemed **"In whom"** (1:7), gathered together **"in Christ"** (1:10), and given inheritance **"in whom also"** (1:11). Ephesians is not a manual teaching flesh how to become impressive. It is a revelation of what God has done in and through Jesus Christ. The safest way to study the book is therefore to keep Christ at the center and religious flesh outside the control room. Whenever a system makes ceremonies, institutions, personal merit, or human mediators more necessary than Christ Himself, Ephesians has already exposed the machinery before verse 3.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 1:2 establishes **grace, peace, divine Fatherhood, and the lordship of Jesus Christ** before Paul unfolds the believer's spiritual blessings. Grace is the divine source principle, peace is the justified relationship flowing from that grace, and both originate with the Father and the Son rather than human religious performance. The verse therefore anticipates the great argument of Ephesians 2: salvation is God's gracious work, received through faith, and explicitly **"not of works."**

The verse also grounds Christian experience in objective relationship rather than unstable emotion. God is **"our Father"** because believers are in Christ, and Jesus is **"the Lord Jesus Christ."** The Christian therefore possesses both security and responsibility: security because acceptance rests upon divine grace, and responsibility because the One who saves is Lord. Grace without lordship becomes license; lordship turned into the purchase price of salvation becomes legalism. Paul begins by keeping both truths exactly where God put them.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. Grace From God

Romans 3:24 — **“Justified freely by his grace.”**
Ephesians 1:7 — **“According to the riches of his grace.”**
Ephesians 2:5 — **“By grace ye are saved.”**
Ephesians 2:8 — **“For by grace are ye saved through faith.”**
Titus 2:11 — **“The grace of God that bringeth salvation.”**

2. Grace Excludes Works

Romans 11:6 — **“If by grace, then is it no more of works.”**
Ephesians 2:9 — **“Not of works, lest any man should boast.”**
Romans 4:5 — **“To him that worketh not, but believeth.”**
Titus 3:5 — **“Not by works of righteousness which we have done.”**
2 Timothy 1:9 — **“Not according to our works.”**

3. Peace With God Through Christ

Romans 5:1 — **“We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”**
Colossians 1:20 — **“Having made peace through the blood of his cross.”**
Ephesians 2:14 — **“For he is our peace.”**
Ephesians 2:17 — **“Came and preached peace to you.”**
Romans 15:13 — **“Fill you with all joy and peace in believing.”**

4. The Peace Of God In Daily Life

Philippians 4:7 — **“The peace of God, which passeth all understanding.”**
Colossians 3:15 — **“Let the peace of God rule in your hearts.”**
Philippians 4:9 — **“The God of peace shall be with you.”**
Galatians 5:22 — **“The fruit of the Spirit is… peace.”**
2 Thessalonians 3:16 — **“The Lord of peace himself give you peace always.”**

5. God As Father Of Believers

John 1:12 — **“Power to become the sons of God.”**
Galatians 3:26 — **“Children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.”**
Galatians 4:6 — **“God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts.”**
Romans 8:15 — **“The Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.”**
Ephesians 4:6 — **“One God and Father of all.”**

6. Access To The Father

Ephesians 2:18 — **“Access by one Spirit unto the Father.”**
Ephesians 3:12 — **“Access with confidence by the faith of him.”**
Hebrews 4:16 — **“Come boldly unto the throne of grace.”**

Romans 5:2 — **“By whom also we have access by faith.”**
John 14:6 — **“No man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”**

7. Jesus Christ Is Lord

Philippians 2:11 — **“Jesus Christ is Lord.”**
Romans 10:9 — **“Confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus.”**
1 Corinthians 12:3 — **“Jesus is the Lord.”**
Acts 2:36 — **“Both Lord and Christ.”**
Colossians 2:6 — **“Christ Jesus the Lord.”**

8. Grace Through Jesus Christ

John 1:17 — **“Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.”**
2 Corinthians 8:9 — **“Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.”**
2 Corinthians 12:9 — **“My grace is sufficient for thee.”**
2 Corinthians 13:14 — **“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.”**
2 Timothy 2:1 — **“The grace that is in Christ Jesus.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 1:2 looks like a simple apostolic greeting until you notice that Paul has packed the foundation of Christian assurance into one sentence. **“Grace be to you, and peace.”** That order settles more confusion than many religious systems create in entire volumes. Grace is not God rewarding the respectable; it is God giving in Christ what sinners could never earn. Peace does not arise because the believer finally developed a spiritual record sturdy enough to impress heaven; it follows justification because Christ dealt with the hostility sin created. A Christian who reverses those doctrines will spend his life trying to manufacture peace through performance. One good week produces confidence, one bad week destroys it, and the conscience rides up and down like a wagon with square wheels. Scripture gives something better: grace rests upon God’s provision, peace rests upon Christ’s work, and the believer’s standing rests somewhere considerably safer than the emotional weather inside his own chest.

The phrase **“God our Father”** should likewise straighten the believer’s thinking about relationship. Religious bondage tends to make saved people behave like applicants continually waiting to discover whether God will renew their membership. Paul writes to people already identified as saints and says God is **“our Father.”** A father may correct a child, discipline a child, instruct a child, and be displeased with a child’s conduct without turning the child into a stranger every evening. That does not excuse sin; it gives chastening its proper meaning. Hebrews 12 connects chastening with sonship, not the absence of it. The believer therefore should neither treat God casually nor approach Him as though

Christ's blood must be renegotiated every time he stumbles. Grace gives access, sonship gives relationship, and holiness teaches the son how to behave in the Father's house.

The final phrase, **"from the Lord Jesus Christ,"** keeps that grace from becoming modern religious mush. Jesus is not merely a Saviour used to escape judgment; He is **Lord**. Christianity has always had two opposite ditches available to flesh. Legalism turns obedience into the price of acceptance, while carnality turns acceptance into an excuse to ignore obedience. Paul gives neither side the steering wheel. Grace saves completely apart from works, and the Lord who saves then commands the saved believer to walk worthy of his calling. Ephesians will spend three chapters establishing position and three chapters pressing that position into practice. God does not say, "Walk worthy so I will place you in Christ." He places the believer in Christ and then says, in effect, "Now walk like somebody who knows where he lives." That order preserves salvation by grace while giving Christian conduct every ounce of seriousness Scripture assigns it.

Ephesians 1:2 therefore prepares us for the whole epistle. The riches ahead do not come from human religion but **"from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ."** Redemption, forgiveness, acceptance, sealing, inheritance, reconciliation, access, the one body, the new man, and heavenly standing will all flow from what God has accomplished in Christ. The believer's task is not to improve that foundation but to believe it, understand it, and build faithfully upon it. When religion offers another invoice after Christ has paid the bill, send it back unopened. When flesh treats grace as permission to live carelessly, remind it that Jesus Christ is still Lord. And when circumstances disturb the heart, remember that the peace of God may fluctuate in experience while peace **with** God rests upon a finished work outside the believer altogether. Ephesians opens the treasury by telling us who owns it, where the riches came from, and why empty hands are exactly the right hands with which to receive grace.

Ephesians 1:3 Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:"
(Ephesians 1:3)

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,"

Paul has barely completed his greeting before he breaks into praise: **“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”** That order tells us something about sound doctrine. When biblical truth is understood correctly, it does not merely fill notebooks; it produces worship. Paul is about to unfold some of the deepest truths concerning the believer’s position in Christ, election, adoption, redemption, forgiveness, inheritance, sealing, and the body of Christ, but he begins by blessing God. Theology that makes the student impressed with himself rather than impressed with God has missed the point before the first chapter is finished. The proper response to grace is not strutting; it is gratitude.

The phrase **“the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ”** must be handled carefully. Scripture presents Jesus Christ as truly God and truly man. John 1:1 says, **“the Word was God,”** while John 1:14 says, **“the Word was made flesh.”** In His incarnate relationship and mediatorial work, the Son speaks of the Father as His God. After the resurrection He says, **“I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God”** (John 20:17). That does not reduce Christ to a created being. The same Scriptures that call the Father His God also call Christ **“God blessed for ever”** (Romans 9:5) and **“the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ”** (Titus 2:13). A Bible believer does not repair one verse by breaking another. He believes all the words and lets Scripture define the relationship.

Notice also that He is **“our Lord Jesus Christ.”** Paul does not separate the blessings of Ephesians from the lordship of the One through whom they come. The believer is blessed beyond measure, but he is not sovereign over himself. First Corinthians 6:20 says, **“For ye are bought with a price.”** Grace gives riches, but those riches come from the Lord who purchased the recipient. Religious flesh likes benefits without ownership, heaven without lordship, and blessing without obedience. Paul gives us no such bargain-bin Christianity. The One who blesses is the One before whom the believer bows.

“who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings”

The next phrase is astonishing in its completeness: **“who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings.”** Paul does not say God might bless us if we finally reach an advanced religious level. He says **“hath blessed us.”** The wording is settled and accomplished. The believer’s fundamental spiritual position is not waiting for human achievement to activate it. God has already acted in Christ. That truth will govern the entire chapter. Verse 6 says believers are **“accepted in the beloved.”** Verse 7 says **“we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins.”** Verse 13 says believers are **“sealed with that holy Spirit of promise.”** These are not prizes dangling at the end of a religious obstacle course. They are divine possessions connected with being in Christ.

Then comes the word **“all.”** God has blessed the believer with **“all spiritual blessings.”** Not some spiritual blessings with the remainder available through religious installments. Not enough grace to begin while law, ceremony, human merit, mystical experiences, or religious middlemen finish the package. Colossians 2:10 says, **“And ye are complete in him.”** Complete men do not need religious spare parts. This does not mean the Christian has already entered sinless perfection, received every possible earthly comfort, or experienced every aspect of future glory. It means that in Christ the believer lacks no spiritual blessing necessary to his standing before God. **Religion survives by convincing complete people that Christ forgot something in the box.**

These blessings are specifically **“spiritual.”** That distinction matters. Israel received real earthly, national, agricultural, and territorial promises connected with its covenantal program. Deuteronomy speaks of blessing in the land, crops, cattle, rain, national victory, and material abundance. The Church is not Israel wearing a Gentile nametag. Ephesians directs the believer upward toward spiritual blessings associated with heavenly places. That does not mean God never provides material needs for Christians. Philippians 4:19 plainly says, **“my God shall supply all your need.”** But Ephesians 1:3 is not promising every believer health, wealth, political power, acreage, and a large bank account. The prosperity salesman reads **“spiritual blessings”** and somehow finds a luxury catalogue hidden between the words.

“in heavenly places in Christ”

The location of these blessings is equally important: **“in heavenly places in Christ.”** Ephesians repeatedly uses the expression **“heavenly places.”** Ephesians 1:20 says Christ is seated at God’s right hand **“in the heavenly places.”** Ephesians 2:6 says God **“hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”** Ephesians 3:10 speaks of principalities and powers **“in heavenly places,”** and Ephesians 6:12 describes spiritual wickedness **“in high places.”** Ephesians therefore opens the believer’s eyes to a heavenly sphere largely absent from religious systems obsessed with earthly display.

This is one of the great distinctions between Israel’s national earthly promises and the Church’s spiritual heavenly position. God has not cancelled Israel in order to enrich the Church. Romans 11:1 asks, **“Hath God cast away his people? God forbid.”** The Church receives its own magnificent blessings without stealing another people’s identity. The body of Christ has a heavenly calling, a heavenly position, and a heavenly Head. Philippians 3:20 says, **“For our conversation is in heaven.”** Colossians 3:1 commands believers to **“seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.”** Right division does not impoverish the Christian; it shows him that God gave him blessings so

high above earthly covenantal promises that stealing Israel's inheritance would actually be a demotion.

Finally, every blessing is located **"in Christ."** Those two words are the vault door of Ephesians. The blessings are not in church membership, water, sacraments, law-keeping, religious pedigree, personality, emotional experience, or human goodness. They are **in Christ**. First Corinthians 1:30 says, **"But of him are ye in Christ Jesus."** Second Corinthians 5:17 says, **"if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature."** The sinner's great need is therefore not to decorate Adam but to be found in Christ. Once in Christ, he possesses a standing no earthly religion can improve and no human merit can purchase. **God did not bless Adam until Adam became respectable; He put the believer in Christ and blessed him where Christ is.**

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 1:3 introduces the controlling doctrinal atmosphere of the epistle: **God is the source, Christ is the sphere, the blessings are spiritual, and their location is heavenly.** The believer begins Ephesians not as a religious beggar trying to earn something from God, but as one already blessed **"with all spiritual blessings"** because of his position in Christ. This does not make Christian growth unnecessary; it gives Christian growth the proper foundation. The believer grows from acceptance rather than toward acceptance.

The verse also demands right division. Israel's earthly covenantal promises remain exactly where God placed them, while the body of Christ possesses spiritual blessings in heavenly places. There is no need to erase Israel, transfer its promises, or make the Church the new Israel in order to give Christians something glorious. God has already given the Church an exalted heavenly position in Christ. Confusion begins when men abandon what God gave them and start rummaging through somebody else's mail.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. Blessing God For His Grace

Psalm 103:1 — **"Bless the LORD, O my soul."**
2 Corinthians 1:3 — **"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."**
1 Peter 1:3 — **"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."**
Psalm 72:18 — **"Blessed be the LORD God."**
Revelation 5:13 — **"Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power."**

2. The Father Of The Lord Jesus Christ

John 20:17 — **"My Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God."**
2 Corinthians 1:3 — **"The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."**

Ephesians 3:14 — **“The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”**
Colossians 1:3 — **“God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”**
1 Peter 1:3 — **“The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”**

3. Christ’s Deity And Lordship

John 1:1 — **“The Word was God.”**
Romans 9:5 — **“Christ… God blessed for ever.”**
Titus 2:13 — **“The great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.”**
Philippians 2:11 — **“Jesus Christ is Lord.”**
Colossians 2:9 — **“In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.”**

4. The Believer Already Blessed In Christ

Ephesians 1:6 — **“Accepted in the beloved.”**
Ephesians 1:7 — **“In whom we have redemption.”**
Colossians 2:10 — **“Ye are complete in him.”**
1 Corinthians 1:30 — **“Of him are ye in Christ Jesus.”**
Romans 8:32 — **“Freely give us all things.”**

5. Spiritual Blessings Rather Than Earthly Promises

Romans 8:9 — **“The Spirit of God dwell in you.”**
1 Corinthians 12:13 — **“By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body.”**
Ephesians 1:13 — **“Sealed with that holy Spirit of promise.”**
Galatians 4:6 — **“God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts.”**
Romans 8:16 — **“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit.”**

6. Heavenly Position

Ephesians 1:20 — **“Set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places.”**
Ephesians 2:6 — **“Made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”**
Philippians 3:20 — **“Our conversation is in heaven.”**
Colossians 3:1 — **“Seek those things which are above.”**
2 Corinthians 5:1 — **“An house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”**

7. The Believer In Christ

Romans 8:1 — **“Them which are in Christ Jesus.”**
1 Corinthians 1:30 — **“Of him are ye in Christ Jesus.”**
2 Corinthians 5:17 — **“If any man be in Christ.”**
Galatians 3:28 — **“Ye are all one in Christ Jesus.”**
Ephesians 2:10 — **“Created in Christ Jesus unto good works.”**

8. Israel And The Church Remain Distinct

Romans 11:1 — **“Hath God cast away his people? God forbid.”**
Romans 11:25 — **“Blindness in part is happened to Israel.”**
Romans 11:26 — **“And so all Israel shall be saved.”**
1 Corinthians 10:32 — **“The Jews… the Gentiles… the church of God.”**
Ephesians 3:6 — **“The Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 1:3 should permanently alter the way a believer thinks about his standing before God. Paul does not begin by handing Christians a shovel and telling them to dig until they discover a blessing. He says God **“hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings.”** The foundation is accomplished grace, not religious suspense. That destroys the endless treadmill where Christians are taught to believe that acceptance rises and falls with daily performance, spiritual emotion, ceremonial observance, or somebody else’s approval. A believer can certainly walk poorly, grieve the Spirit, lose opportunities, damage testimony, require chastening, and suffer loss at the judgment seat; none of those truths changes the fact that spiritual position is grounded in Christ. Standing and state must remain distinct. When those categories are confused, assurance becomes dependent upon human performance, and flesh—never famous for consistency—becomes the accountant assigned to keep the eternal books.

The words **“all spiritual blessings”** also expose the poverty of religious systems that constantly sell believers something supposedly missing from Christ. One group promises a second spiritual class if you obtain its experience. Another offers greater acceptance through ceremony. Another places the believer beneath Mosaic requirements as though Calvary forgot to finish the paperwork. Another turns material prosperity into evidence of divine favour. Paul settles the issue before any salesman reaches the porch: God has already blessed the believer with **all spiritual blessings in Christ**. That does not mean every Christian is mature, knowledgeable, obedient, or practically enjoying everything belonging to his position. A millionaire can live foolishly without becoming penniless, and a believer can possess riches in Christ while thinking like a spiritual beggar. Ephesians is going to open the account book so Christians stop rattling cups at heaven’s door while enormous spiritual riches already stand in their name through Jesus Christ.

The phrase **“in heavenly places”** also forces the reader to think dispensationally rather than flattening the Bible into one undivided program. Israel received earthly promises connected with a nation, a land, a throne, and covenantal blessing. The Church receives a heavenly position in Christ. Both truths can stand without one devouring the other.

Replacement theology solves a problem Scripture never created by robbing Israel in order to enrich the Church, while Ephesians shows the Church already possesses blessings far beyond anything theft could supply. God has not run out of promises and therefore does not need to repossess Israel's property to furnish Christ's body. The believer's conversation is in heaven, his Head is in heaven, his spiritual position is heavenly, and his future is bound up with Christ. Right division does not shrink the Bible; it lets every promise remain large enough to mean what God actually said.

Above everything else, the verse places the blessings **"in Christ."** That is the safest location in the universe. Human reputation can collapse, churches can disappoint, governments can change, money can disappear, health can fail, feelings can swing, and religious systems can reinvent themselves every generation, but the believer's spiritual blessings are not stored in any of those places. They are in Christ. That is why sound Christian living begins by learning position before attempting practice. The believer does not obey in order to climb into Christ; because God has placed him in Christ, he learns to walk as someone who belongs there. Good works remain important, but Ephesians 2:10 will put them exactly where they belong: believers are **"created in Christ Jesus unto good works."** Works are the road the new creature walks, not the womb that gives the new creature life. Ephesians 1:3 therefore begins the great treasury of this epistle with the proper announcement: God has blessed, Christ is the sphere, heaven is the location, and flesh has absolutely nothing on the receipt worth boasting about.

Ephesians 1:5 Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

"Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,"
(Ephesians 1:5)

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"Having predestinated us"

Ephesians 1:5 begins with a word that has been dragged through enough theological machinery to make some Christians nervous merely seeing it printed: **"predestinated."** The answer is not to fear the word, redefine the word, or allow a theological system to swallow the verse whole. Read what God actually predestinated the believer **unto**. Verse 4 has already placed the choosing **"in him,"** and verse 5 now describes the destination God

appointed for those who are in Christ. Romans 8:29 uses the same word and immediately supplies the destination: **“For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son.”** Predestination in these passages is not God playing a cosmic lottery with helpless sinners; it is God determining beforehand what will ultimately happen to those who belong to Jesus Christ. **The train has a destination because God laid the track; that does not mean everybody standing outside the station was secretly chained away from the ticket counter.**

The wording also comes after **“chosen us in him before the foundation of the world”** (Ephesians 1:4). Paul is discussing believers and what God has purposed for them in Christ. Ephesians 2 will say those same people were once **“dead in trespasses and sins”** (Ephesians 2:1), **“children of wrath”** (Ephesians 2:3), and **“without Christ”** (Ephesians 2:12). Therefore, we should not imagine they were already experientially united to Christ before creation. God’s purpose was settled before creation; their salvation occurred in time when they believed the gospel. Ephesians 1:13 will later state the order plainly: **“after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise.”** God’s eternal purpose does not abolish the sinner’s responsibility to hear and believe.

Neither does predestination mean that faith becomes a meritorious work. Ephesians 2:8–9 will explicitly say salvation is **“by grace… through faith”** and **“Not of works.”** Believing God is not paying God. Romans 4:5 says, **“to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly.”** The Bible itself places believing in contrast with working. The Calvinistic machine often tries to protect grace by making faith impossible unless a man has already been secretly regenerated; the works system tries to protect responsibility by making faith another human achievement. Scripture avoids both ditches. Grace provides everything; faith receives what grace provides. **An empty hand receiving bread did not bake the loaf.**

“unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself”

Now the Holy Ghost tells us one destination of that predestination: **“unto the adoption of children.”** Adoption in Paul’s doctrine is a tremendous truth and must not be reduced to the modern legal picture of an unrelated child simply being brought into a household. Romans 8:15 says believers have received **“the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.”** Galatians 4:5 says Christ came **“To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.”** The believer presently possesses sonship, relationship, access, and the indwelling Spirit. He is not standing on God’s porch filling out adoption paperwork while hoping heaven approves the application next week.

Yet Romans 8:23 shows that adoption also has a future bodily completion: **"waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body."** That is vital. The believer is already a son spiritually, but he still inhabits an unredeemed mortal body. He has the Spirit of adoption now while waiting for the full manifestation connected with bodily redemption. Philippians 3:21 says Christ **"shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body."** First John 3:2 says, **"when he shall appear, we shall be like him."** Predestination therefore points toward the finished product. God does not merely save a sinner from hell and then leave him permanently half-finished. The believer's final destiny includes complete conformity to Jesus Christ. **Grace does not stop at getting you out of the courtroom; it intends to bring you all the way into the family likeness.**

The adoption is **"by Jesus Christ."** Once again Christ stands at the center. God does not adopt sinners because of circumcision, law-keeping, baptism, church membership, religious heritage, personal merit, or moral improvement. The adoption comes **"by Jesus Christ."** John 1:12 says, **"as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God."** Galatians 3:26 says, **"ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus."** The relationship is Christ-centered and grace-produced. A sinner does not clean himself until God finally agrees to call him family. Christ redeems, the sinner believes, the Spirit indwells, and God places the believer into a relationship flesh could never manufacture.

The phrase ends **"to himself."** God's purpose is personal. Salvation does not merely change legal paperwork; it brings the believer to God. First Peter 3:18 says Christ suffered **"that he might bring us to God."** Ephesians 2:18 will say, **"For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father."** The believer's destination is not merely escape from wrath but relationship with the Father. Religion often speaks as though salvation were chiefly admission into an institution. Paul says God predestinated believers unto adoption **"to himself." Heaven is not merely a location God allows the redeemed to visit; redemption brings the redeemed into the family of the God who owns heaven.**

"according to the good pleasure of his will"

Everything described in the verse is **"according to the good pleasure of his will."** God did not reluctantly accept Christ's redemptive plan after being persuaded by somebody more compassionate than Himself. The Father's will stands behind salvation. Ephesians 1:9 will speak of **"the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself."** Luke 12:32 says, **"it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."** Salvation reveals divine generosity rather than divine reluctance. The Father sent the Son, the Son gave Himself, and the Spirit seals the believer. Redemption is not a family disagreement inside the Godhead.

The word **“pleasure”** also exposes the notion that God saves people grudgingly. The gospel invitation is not heaven saying, “Come if you must, but God would really prefer you stayed outside.” First Timothy 2:4 says God **“will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.”** Second Peter 3:9 says He is **“not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”** Those verses should be allowed to stand at full strength. God’s sovereign will does not need to be defended by making Him secretly desire the damnation of people He publicly says He wants saved. Biblical sovereignty is strong enough to survive the Bible.

At the same time, **“his will”** reminds believers that salvation exists for God’s purpose rather than our self-glorification. God has determined what those in Christ will become. Ephesians 2:10 says, **“we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.”** The believer is not self-made, self-owned, or self-destined. God’s will supplies the purpose, Christ supplies the redemption, the Spirit supplies the seal, and glory ultimately returns to God. **Grace does not place man at the center of the universe; it rescues him from thinking he belonged there.**

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 1:5 teaches **predestination, adoption, Christ-centered sonship, and the gracious will of God**. Predestination here concerns the destiny God appointed for believers in Christ: adoption, conformity to Christ, and ultimately the redemption of the body. The verse does not say God predestinated certain unbelievers to believe while predestinating everyone else to unavoidable damnation. Paul is describing what God predetermined for the redeemed.

Adoption also has both present and future dimensions. Believers possess the Spirit of adoption and genuinely cry **“Abba, Father”** now, while Romans 8:23 identifies the future completion as **“the redemption of our body.”** All of it comes **“by Jesus Christ”** and according to the Father’s good pleasure. Salvation begins in divine grace, centers upon Christ, produces sonship, and ends in full conformity to the Son.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. Predestination Defined By Its Destination

Romans 8:29 — **“Predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son.”**
Romans 8:30 — **“Whom he did predestinate, them he also called.”**
Ephesians 1:5 — **“Predestinated us unto the adoption of children.”**
Ephesians 1:11 — **“Being predestinated according to the purpose of him.”**
Philippians 3:21 — **“Fashioned like unto his glorious body.”**

2. Foreknowledge And Divine Purpose

Romans 8:29 — **“Whom he did foreknow.”**
1 Peter 1:2 — **“Elect according to the foreknowledge of God.”**
2 Timothy 1:9 — **“His own purpose and grace.”**
Ephesians 3:11 — **“According to the eternal purpose.”**
Acts 2:23 — **“The determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.”**

3. The Adoption Of Sons

Galatians 4:5 — **“That we might receive the adoption of sons.”**
Romans 8:15 — **“Ye have received the Spirit of adoption.”**
Romans 8:23 — **“Waiting for the adoption.”**
Ephesians 1:5 — **“Unto the adoption of children.”**
Galatians 4:7 — **“Thou art no more a servant, but a son.”**

4. The Future Redemption Of The Body

Romans 8:23 — **“The redemption of our body.”**
Philippians 3:21 — **“Change our vile body.”**
1 Corinthians 15:52 — **“The dead shall be raised incorruptible.”**
1 Corinthians 15:53 — **“This mortal must put on immortality.”**
1 John 3:2 — **“We shall be like him.”**

5. Sonship Through Jesus Christ

John 1:12 — **“Power to become the sons of God.”**
Galatians 3:26 — **“Children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.”**
Galatians 4:6 — **“Because ye are sons.”**
Romans 8:16 — **“We are the children of God.”**
Hebrews 2:10 — **“Bringing many sons unto glory.”**

6. Christ Brings Believers To The Father

1 Peter 3:18 — **“That he might bring us to God.”**
Ephesians 2:18 — **“Access by one Spirit unto the Father.”**
John 14:6 — **“No man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”**
Romans 5:2 — **“By whom also we have access by faith.”**
Hebrews 10:19 — **“Boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.”**

7. God’s Good Pleasure

Ephesians 1:9 — **“According to his good pleasure.”**
Luke 12:32 — **“It is your Father's good pleasure.”**

Philippians 2:13 — **“To will and to do of his good pleasure.”**
2 Thessalonians 1:11 — **“Fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness.”**
Psalm 115:3 — **“He hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.”**

8. God’s Desire For Men To Be Saved

1 Timothy 2:4 — **“Who will have all men to be saved.”**
2 Peter 3:9 — **“Not willing that any should perish.”**
Ezekiel 33:11 — **“I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked.”**
John 3:16 — **“Whosoever believeth in him should not perish.”**
Revelation 22:17 — **“Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 1:5 should make a believer confident in God’s purpose without turning him into a theological fatalist. The word **“predestinated”** does not need to be erased, whispered, or surrendered to somebody’s system. Scripture itself tells us the destination: adoption, conformity to Christ, bodily redemption, and final likeness to the Son. God knew where He intended to bring those who are in Christ before any of us ever drew breath. That should produce assurance, because salvation is not wandering through history hoping heaven eventually invents an ending. God has an ending already written for the believer: **“we shall be like him”** (1 John 3:2). Predestination is therefore not a dark hallway where Christians should be frightened to turn on the light; properly understood, it is a window looking toward the believer’s guaranteed future in Christ.

The doctrine becomes distorted when men make God responsible for the unbelief He repeatedly condemns. Scripture says God **“will have all men to be saved”** (1 Timothy 2:4), is **“not willing that any should perish”** (2 Peter 3:9), and invites **“whosoever will”** to take the water of life freely (Revelation 22:17). Those statements do not threaten God’s sovereignty; they reveal something about it. God is sovereign enough to tell the truth about His own desire without theologians standing nearby explaining that He secretly meant the opposite. Men resist the Holy Ghost, reject the word, refuse to come to Christ, and remain responsible for unbelief. At the same time, no believer can boast that faith earned salvation, because Romans 4:5 explicitly contrasts believing with working. Grace supplied the whole rescue. Faith simply stopped arguing with God long enough to receive it.

The doctrine of adoption should also cure believers of servant-thinking. Romans 8:15 says, **“ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear.”** The Christian is not working in God’s house hoping one day to be promoted into the family. He has received **“the Spirit of adoption”** and cries, **“Abba, Father.”** That relationship does not remove discipline, because Hebrews 12 teaches that fathers chasten sons. It does remove the idea that every

failure produces spiritual eviction. A son may require correction without requiring rebirth. Legalism turns every stumble into a courtroom and every weakness into an argument over whether the blood still works; grace puts the believer in the family and then teaches him how sons ought to live. **Chastening is not God tearing up the birth certificate; it is one evidence that the birth certificate matters.**

Finally, the verse points forward. The Spirit of adoption is present, but Romans 8:23 says believers are still **"waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body."** That means salvation has a future glory flesh has never experienced. The believer may presently battle weakness, age, sickness, temptation, fatigue, and mortality, but none of those conditions gets the last word. Christ **"shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body"** (Philippians 3:21). God's good pleasure does not finish with a forgiven sinner crawling across the finish line in Adam's dying frame; it ends with that believer fully conformed to Jesus Christ. Ephesians 1:5 therefore gives one of the strongest assurances in the chapter: the God who planned sonship, provided it through Jesus Christ, and gave the Spirit of adoption has already determined the destination of everyone who is in His Son. **Grace did not merely save the believer from where he was going; God has already decided where, and like Whom, he will finally arrive.**

Ephesians 1:6 Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

"To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved."
(Ephesians 1:6)

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"To the praise of the glory of his grace,"

Ephesians 1:6 tells us where the whole plan of redemption is supposed to end: **"To the praise of the glory of his grace."** Paul has just spoken of being chosen in Christ, predestinated unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ, and brought into God's purpose according to **"the good pleasure of his will"** (Ephesians 1:5). Now the direction of the glory becomes explicit. God's grace comes down; praise goes back up. Man receives; God gets the glory. That arrangement is intolerable to religious flesh because flesh likes to make contributions large enough to earn a line in the credits. Grace shuts down that production company. Romans 3:27 asks, **"Where is boasting then? It is excluded."**

Ephesians does not merely reduce human boasting to a reasonable percentage; it removes the sinner from the glory department altogether.

Notice the expression **"the glory of his grace."** Grace is glorious because it reveals what God gives to people who could never earn it. Ephesians 2:4 will call God **"rich in mercy,"** and Ephesians 2:7 speaks of **"the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."** Grace is not divine tolerance of sin. It is God acting righteously through the finished work of Christ to bless guilty people without pretending guilt does not matter. The cross proves sin was too serious to be waved away and grace too great to leave the sinner under condemnation. Religious merit says, "Look what I did for God." Grace points to Calvary and says, "Look what God did for you." **One system builds a trophy case; the other builds an altar of praise.**

This phrase also protects salvation from becoming man-centered. God certainly loves the sinner, saves the sinner, adopts the believer, gives an inheritance, seals with the Spirit, and promises future glory. Yet the final purpose is greater than human comfort. It is **"To the praise of the glory of his grace."** Salvation demonstrates the character and grace of God throughout eternity. Revelation 5:9–12 shows redeemed worship centered upon the Lamb who was slain. Heaven will not spend eternity congratulating redeemed sinners on how wisely they contributed to their own rescue. The praise belongs to the One who provided the blood, the righteousness, the grace, and the eternal life.

"wherein he hath made us accepted"

The next words contain one of the greatest statements of Christian standing in the entire epistle: **"wherein he hath made us accepted."** First, notice who performed the action: **"he hath made us."** The believer did not make himself accepted. God did. Acceptance is not the reward given after a sinner remodels himself into respectable spiritual material. It is a divine act grounded in Christ. That destroys the endless religious treadmill where people attempt to obtain acceptance by law-keeping, ceremony, suffering, church membership, moral improvement, emotional experiences, or enough good behaviour to persuade God He made the right investment. Paul does not say God offered acceptance if we could finish the paperwork. He says He **"hath made us accepted."**

The tense matters as much as the source. **"Hath made"** describes something already accomplished for the believer. Paul writes to saints who are already in Christ Jesus. Their acceptance is not hanging over tomorrow's behaviour like a prize at the end of a carnival game. This does not mean their practical walk is automatically acceptable in every detail. Second Corinthians 5:9 says believers labour **"that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him."** That concerns pleasing service and practical approval, not whether

the believer possesses his standing in Christ. The distinction between standing and state keeps both passages upright. In Ephesians 1:6, God has made the believer accepted **in the Beloved**. In practical service, the believer should live acceptably before the Lord. **A son can be fully accepted in the family and still bring home a report card that needs serious attention.**

That distinction protects assurance without producing laziness. The believer's standing rests upon Christ; his conduct remains accountable to Christ. First Corinthians 3:15 describes a man whose work is burned and who **"shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved."** Salvation and reward are not identical categories. A Christian can be accepted in Christ while producing work that will not be accepted for reward. Grace does not abolish the judgment seat; it makes the judgment seat something other than another trial over whether Christ's blood worked. **The believer does not appear before Christ to discover whether Calvary succeeded; he appears as a saved servant whose stewardship will be examined.**

"in the beloved."

The final phrase tells us where acceptance is located: **"in the beloved."** God does not merely make the believer acceptable by improving Adam. He places the believer in the One He loves. Matthew 3:17 records the Father saying of Christ, **"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."** Matthew 17:5 repeats, **"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him."** Christ is the Beloved. The believer's acceptance is therefore not rooted in the believer's attractiveness to God but in the perfect worth of Jesus Christ.

This phrase is one of the great answers to religious insecurity. If acceptance depends on how impressive the believer is, then acceptance will rise and fall with the believer's performance. If acceptance is **"in the beloved,"** then the foundation rests in Someone who never changes, never sins, never fails, and never needs improvement. Hebrews 13:8 says, **"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever."** The believer's emotions may change before breakfast. Christ does not. The conscience may accuse, circumstances may shake, Satan may whisper, and religious teachers may invent another spiritual payment plan, but God's answer remains the same: acceptance is located **in the Beloved**.

That does not mean Christ's worth becomes an excuse for Christian carelessness. Quite the opposite. Because the believer is accepted in Christ, he should desire to walk in a way consistent with that position. Ephesians 4:1 will say, **"walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called."** Ephesians 5:2 commands, **"walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us."** Ephesians 5:8 says, **"walk as children of light."** Standing becomes the motive

for state. The legalist says, “Walk well enough and God might accept you.” Grace says, “God has accepted you in Christ; now stop living beneath the dignity of what He made you.” **Grace does not weaken holiness; it finally gives holiness something stronger than fear to stand on.**

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 1:6 establishes three central truths: **salvation magnifies God’s grace, acceptance is God’s accomplished work, and that acceptance exists entirely in Jesus Christ.** Human merit has no place in the foundation. The believer is not accepted because he became sufficiently religious; God has **“made us accepted in the beloved.”** That position produces praise because grace receives the glory that works-based religion would divide between Christ and man.

The verse also requires the distinction between **standing and state**. The believer’s standing is settled in the Beloved, yet his service and daily walk remain subject to divine evaluation. Secure acceptance does not make careless living harmless, and practical failure does not rewrite the believer’s position in Christ. Grace establishes relationship; discipleship governs conduct; reward evaluates service.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. Grace Deserves The Glory

Romans 3:24 — **“Justified freely by his grace.”**
Romans 3:27 — **“Where is boasting then? It is excluded.”**
Ephesians 2:7 — **“The exceeding riches of his grace.”**
Ephesians 2:8 — **“For by grace are ye saved through faith.”**
1 Corinthians 1:31 — **“He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.”**

2. Salvation Is God’s Work

John 1:13 — **“Born… of God.”**
1 Corinthians 1:30 — **“Of him are ye in Christ Jesus.”**
Ephesians 2:10 — **“We are his workmanship.”**
Colossians 1:13 — **“Hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.”**
Titus 3:5 — **“According to his mercy he saved us.”**

3. Accepted In Christ

Ephesians 1:6 — **“Accepted in the beloved.”**
Romans 5:1 — **“Being justified by faith, we have peace with God.”**
Romans 8:1 — **“No condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.”**

Colossians 2:10 — **“Ye are complete in him.”**
1 Corinthians 6:11 — **“Ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus.”**

4. Christ Is The Beloved Son

Matthew 3:17 — **“This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”**
Matthew 17:5 — **“This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”**
Mark 1:11 — **“Thou art my beloved Son.”**
Colossians 1:13 — **“The kingdom of his dear Son.”**
2 Peter 1:17 — **“This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”**

5. The Believer’s Position In Christ

1 Corinthians 1:30 — **“Of him are ye in Christ Jesus.”**
2 Corinthians 5:17 — **“If any man be in Christ.”**
Galatians 3:28 — **“Ye are all one in Christ Jesus.”**
Ephesians 2:6 — **“Made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”**
Colossians 3:3 — **“Your life is hid with Christ in God.”**

6. Standing And Practical Acceptance

Ephesians 1:6 — **“Hath made us accepted in the beloved.”**
2 Corinthians 5:9 — **“We labour… that… we may be accepted of him.”**
Romans 14:10 — **“We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.”**
1 Corinthians 3:14 — **“He shall receive a reward.”**
1 Corinthians 3:15 — **“He shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved.”**

7. Walking Worthy Of Our Standing

Ephesians 4:1 — **“Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.”**
Ephesians 5:2 — **“Walk in love.”**
Ephesians 5:8 — **“Walk as children of light.”**
Colossians 1:10 — **“Walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing.”**
1 Thessalonians 2:12 — **“Walk worthy of God.”**

8. Christ’s Unchanging Sufficiency

Hebrews 13:8 — **“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.”**
Hebrews 10:14 — **“By one offering he hath perfected for ever.”**
Colossians 2:10 — **“Ye are complete in him.”**
Romans 8:34 — **“Christ… who also maketh intercession for us.”**
Hebrews 7:25 — **“He ever liveth to make intercession for them.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 1:6 ought to cure a great deal of spiritual insecurity if believers would simply allow the words to mean what they say. God **“hath made us accepted in the beloved.”** The verse does not say He has made us eligible to compete for acceptance, placed us on probation for acceptance, or promised acceptance if our spiritual performance remains above the required average. God performs the action, and Christ supplies the location. This does not make Christian conduct irrelevant; it makes conduct the response to acceptance rather than the purchase price of it. Religion tells a sinner to build a ladder toward God and then keeps selling him additional rungs. Grace puts the believer in Christ and says the distance has already been crossed. **The man trying to earn what God says He has already given is not displaying humility; he is questioning the sufficiency of the gift.**

This verse also forces us to distinguish standing from state. A believer can be **“accepted in the beloved”** while still needing correction in his daily walk. Paul will spend the last three chapters of Ephesians commanding saints to change their conduct. They must put away lying, control anger, stop stealing, guard their speech, forgive one another, avoid uncleanness, walk in love, walk as children of light, redeem the time, submit properly in relationships, and put on the whole armour of God. None of those commands exists because acceptance in Christ is defective. They exist because believers should increasingly live like what God has already made them. A soldier may belong fully to the army while still requiring discipline for sleeping at his post. Relationship and conduct are connected without being identical.

The words **“in the beloved”** provide the deepest ground of assurance. The Christian’s standing is not measured by the changing condition of his own flesh but by the perfect standing of Jesus Christ. The Father said of Christ, **“This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”** God therefore does not accept the believer because He has become confused about the believer’s imperfections. He accepts him in the One who is perfectly pleasing. That should destroy both pride and despair. Pride dies because the believer cannot claim the credit; despair loses its foundation because acceptance does not rest upon the believer’s fluctuating performance. Christ is the reason. **When your acceptance is stored in Christ, the devil has to overthrow Christ before he can bankrupt the account.**

At the same time, secure acceptance should make the believer more serious about holiness, not less. Ephesians 4:1 says, **“walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.”** Grace gives the believer a position worth living up to. The child who knows he belongs to the family should care about the family name. The servant who knows his Master has accepted him should desire to please that Master. This is where legalism and carnality both fail. Legalism says obedience earns acceptance; carnality says acceptance

makes obedience unnecessary. Scripture says God has made the believer accepted in Christ and therefore commands him to walk worthy, live faithfully, serve sincerely, and prepare for the judgment seat where stewardship will be examined.

Finally, **"To the praise of the glory of his grace"** gives the verse its proper ending before the sentence ever reaches a period. The purpose of salvation is not to make man the hero of his own redemption story. God devised the plan, Christ supplied the blood, grace provides the acceptance, the Spirit seals the believer, and heaven receives the praise. The Christian certainly benefits beyond calculation, but the glory belongs upward. Every doctrine that leaves flesh something to boast about has drifted away from the direction Paul gives the praise. Every ministry that turns grace into a platform for human greatness has forgotten who paid the bill. Ephesians 1:6 leaves the believer with empty hands, a full Christ, settled acceptance, and exactly one appropriate response: **praise the glory of the grace that put you in the Beloved and left Adam nothing to autograph.**

Ephesians 1:7 Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

"In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;"
(Ephesians 1:7)

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"In whom we have redemption through his blood,"

Ephesians 1:7 begins where verse 6 ended: **in Christ.** Paul has just said that God **"hath made us accepted in the beloved"** (Ephesians 1:6), and now he explains something inseparable from that acceptance: **"In whom we have redemption."** The believer is not redeemed in himself, through a church, by a religious system, through personal reform, or by keeping enough commandments to balance the account. Redemption is located **"In whom."** Christ is not one contributor among several. He is the Redeemer, the sphere of redemption, and the reason the believer possesses it. The wording also says **"we have,"** not "we hope eventually to earn." Redemption is a present possession of those who are in Christ. Colossians 1:14 states the same truth: **"In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins."** Religion keeps handing saved people payment books; Paul keeps showing them a receipt stamped **PAID BY BLOOD**.

The word **“redemption”** carries the idea of deliverance by payment of a price. First Corinthians 6:20 says, **“For ye are bought with a price.”** First Peter 1:18–19 says believers were not redeemed **“with corruptible things, as silver and gold,”** but **“with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”** The sinner’s problem was not merely poor behaviour needing education. He stood guilty, under sin, unable to purchase his own release. Jesus Christ paid the price that flesh could never pay. That is why the verse does not say redemption came through religious sincerity, moral improvement, water, suffering, sacraments, human ancestry, or law-keeping. The Book says **“through his blood.”** A religion that gets nervous around the blood has become nervous around the very price Scripture says purchased redemption.

That blood is not a decorative symbol for something else; it is central to the finished work of Christ. Romans 5:9 says, **“being now justified by his blood.”** Colossians 1:20 speaks of **“having made peace through the blood of his cross.”** Hebrews 9:12 says Christ entered in **“by his own blood… having obtained eternal redemption for us.”** The cross was physical, substitutionary, sacrificial, and bloody. Leviticus 17:11 had already declared, **“it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.”** Those animal sacrifices could never finally remove sin, for Hebrews 10:4 says, **“it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.”** They pointed ahead to the Lamb whose blood actually accomplished what the shadows could only picture. **Calvary was not God staging a religious illustration; it was the place where the ransom price was paid.**

“the forgiveness of sins,”

Paul immediately connects redemption with **“the forgiveness of sins.”** Redemption deals with the sinner’s bondage and purchased release; forgiveness deals with the guilt of his offences. Both are found in Jesus Christ. Ephesians does not teach that God merely ignores sin because He is feeling generous. Forgiveness rests on blood redemption. Sin is forgiven because Christ bore the cost. Ephesians 4:32 will later say, **“God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.”** That little phrase **“for Christ's sake”** keeps forgiveness from becoming sentimental indulgence. God does not forgive by pretending righteousness no longer matters. He forgives on the basis of a righteous sacrifice.

The plural **“sins”** matters. Paul is dealing with actual offences, not merely an abstract human condition. Romans 3:23 says, **“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”** Colossians 2:13 says God has **“forgiven you all trespasses.”** The believer does not possess forgiveness because his sins were small enough for God to overlook. He possesses forgiveness because Christ’s sacrifice was sufficient enough to deal with them. That should destroy boasting and despair at the same time. Boasting dies because the guilty man contributed nothing toward the payment. Despair loses its argument because

the sufficiency of forgiveness rests upon Christ rather than the sinner's ability to make yesterday disappear.

Right division also helps us understand the finality of this redemption. Under the Old Testament sacrificial system there was real divine provision, real forgiveness spoken by God, and real faith among those who believed His revelation. Exodus 34:7 describes God as **"forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin."** Yet Hebrews 10:1 says the law had **"a shadow of good things to come,"** and Hebrews 10:4 declares that animal blood could not take away sins. Hebrews 9:15 says Christ's death was **"for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament."** Romans 3:25 speaks of **"the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God."** Calvary therefore supplied the final redemptive basis toward which earlier sacrifices pointed. The saints before the cross were not saved because goats were better saviours than Christ; they were saved according to God's revelation, while the blood of Christ supplied the ultimate satisfaction sin required.

Forgiveness should also be distinguished from the believer's daily fellowship. Positionally, Ephesians 1:7 says **"we have… the forgiveness of sins."** The believer is not repeatedly repurchasing redemption every time he confesses a failure. Yet First John 1:9 still tells believers, **"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins."** That concerns restored fellowship and cleansing in the walk, not another purchase of eternal redemption. Standing and state must remain distinct. **The blood establishes the family relationship; confession keeps the child from living comfortably with mud all over the family floor.**

"according to the riches of his grace;"

Paul does not say forgiveness is merely **from** grace but **"according to the riches of his grace."** That wording enlarges the measure. God forgives according to His riches, not according to the sinner's poverty. Ephesians 2:7 will speak of **"the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."** The standard is not how worthy the sinner feels, how impressive his repentance looks to men, or how much religious penance he performs. The supply comes from the riches of God's grace. A billionaire giving according to his riches gives differently from a man handing over spare change according to another person's poverty. Paul points the believer toward the size of God's grace rather than the size of human merit.

The phrase also destroys the notion that grace means God became careless about holiness. Grace is rich because the payment was costly. First Peter 1:19 calls it **"the precious blood of Christ."** Grace did not save God money by lowering the standard; grace

satisfied the standard through the sacrifice of His Son. Romans 3:24–26 places justification by grace alongside the redemption in Christ and God's righteousness, showing that God remains **"just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."** Forgiveness is not God sweeping sin underneath the rug of heaven while hoping nobody notices. The cross puts sin under judgment and the believing sinner under grace.

Those riches also provide security for the conscience. A believer who measures forgiveness by his own performance will never know whether the account is settled, because flesh changes by the hour. Ephesians measures it by God's grace in Christ. Ephesians 2:8 says, **"For by grace are ye saved through faith."** Romans 11:6 says, **"if by grace, then is it no more of works."** Grace and meritorious works cannot share the foundation. Good works have a proper place after salvation, but they do not increase the value of Christ's blood by one cent. **The man who thinks his religious performance improves redemption has confused fruit on the tree with the price paid for the orchard.**

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 1:7 joins three tremendous doctrines in one verse: **redemption, the blood of Christ, and forgiveness of sins**, all measured **"according to the riches of his grace."** The believer presently possesses redemption because he is in Christ. That redemption was purchased through Christ's blood, not through human merit, and it includes genuine forgiveness of sins. Grace does not bypass justice; through Calvary, God remains righteous while forgiving guilty sinners.

The verse also strengthens the distinction between **standing and state**. Redemption and forgiveness belong to the believer's settled position in Christ, while daily confession and practical cleansing belong to fellowship and walk. Likewise, the Old Testament sacrificial system pointed forward to a redemption those sacrifices could never finally accomplish themselves. Christ's blood is the substance toward which the shadows pointed and the price upon which the believer's present assurance rests.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. Redemption In Christ

Romans 3:24 — **"The redemption that is in Christ Jesus."**
1 Corinthians 1:30 — **"Who of God is made unto us… redemption."**
Colossians 1:14 — **"In whom we have redemption through his blood."**
Hebrews 9:12 — **"Having obtained eternal redemption for us."**
Galatians 3:13 — **"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law."**

2. Purchased By A Price

1 Corinthians 6:20 — **“Ye are bought with a price.”**
1 Corinthians 7:23 — **“Ye are bought with a price.”**
1 Peter 1:18 — **“Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things.”**
1 Peter 1:19 — **“But with the precious blood of Christ.”**
Revelation 5:9 — **“Thou… hast redeemed us to God by thy blood.”**

3. Redemption Through Christ’s Blood

Romans 5:9 — **“Justified by his blood.”**
Colossians 1:20 — **“Peace through the blood of his cross.”**
Hebrews 9:12 — **“By his own blood.”**
Hebrews 9:14 — **“The blood of Christ… purge your conscience.”**
1 John 1:7 — **“The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.”**

4. Forgiveness Of Sins

Colossians 1:14 — **“Even the forgiveness of sins.”**
Colossians 2:13 — **“Having forgiven you all trespasses.”**
Ephesians 4:32 — **“God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.”**
Acts 13:38 — **“Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins.”**
Acts 10:43 — **“Whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.”**

5. The Old Testament Sacrifices And Christ

Leviticus 17:11 — **“It is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.”**
Hebrews 10:1 — **“The law having a shadow of good things to come.”**
Hebrews 10:4 — **“Not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.”**
Hebrews 9:15 — **“The redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament.”**
Hebrews 10:12 — **“One sacrifice for sins for ever.”**

6. The Riches Of Grace

Ephesians 1:6 — **“The glory of his grace.”**
Ephesians 2:7 — **“The exceeding riches of his grace.”**
Ephesians 2:8 — **“By grace are ye saved through faith.”**
Romans 5:20 — **“Grace did much more abound.”**
2 Corinthians 8:9 — **“Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.”**

7. Grace And Righteousness Together

Romans 3:24 — **“Justified freely by his grace.”**
Romans 3:26 — **“Just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.”**
Romans 5:21 — **“Grace reign through righteousness.”**
Titus 3:7 — **“Being justified by his grace.”**
2 Corinthians 5:21 — **“Made him to be sin for us.”**

8. Standing And Daily Cleansing

Ephesians 1:7 — **“We have… the forgiveness of sins.”**
1 John 1:9 — **“If we confess our sins.”**
1 John 2:1 — **“We have an advocate with the Father.”**
Hebrews 10:14 — **“He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.”**
1 Corinthians 11:31 — **“If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 1:7 ought to settle the conscience concerning what purchased redemption. Paul does not leave the price open for religious bidding. **“In whom we have redemption through his blood.”** The believer does not possess redemption through membership, baptism, law-keeping, personal sacrifice, denominational pedigree, moral reform, or religious endurance. Those things can occupy proper places in discipleship, testimony, obedience, and service, but none of them belongs at Calvary’s cashier window. First Peter says the price was not silver or gold but **“the precious blood of Christ.”** If God says Christ’s blood purchased redemption, then adding human merit does not make the price more complete; it insults the sufficiency of what God already accepted. The cross is not a down payment waiting for religion to finance the remainder.

The doctrine of blood redemption also keeps Christianity from becoming a philosophy of self-improvement. Sin produced real guilt before a holy God, and real guilt required more than motivational advice. Christ did not come merely to show Adam how to think more positively about his condition. He came to give His life **“a ransom for many”** (Matthew 20:28). The blood reminds us that sin is serious enough to require death and grace is great enough to provide the Substitute. Modern man prefers a religion that diagnoses him with low spiritual self-esteem, because low self-esteem can be treated without a cross. Scripture diagnoses sin, condemnation, and death, and then presents a bleeding Saviour. **A gospel without the blood may sound cleaner to religious taste, but it cannot pay the ransom named in the Book.**

The words **“the forgiveness of sins”** should also give the believer settled assurance without encouraging careless living. God has not forgiven the Christian because the Christian became worthy of forgiveness. He forgave **“for Christ's sake”** (Ephesians 4:32).

That makes forgiveness as secure as the worth of the One on whom it rests. Yet a forgiven child can still grieve his Father, damage fellowship, reap consequences, require correction, and lose reward. That is why Scripture can say believers have forgiveness in Christ while also commanding confession and self-judgment in the daily walk. Standing is not state, and eternal redemption is not permission to live as though sin became harmless. **Grace removes condemnation; it does not remove God's ability to notice when His children track mud through the house.**

Finally, Paul measures all of this **"according to the riches of his grace."** That should move the believer's attention away from the poverty of self and toward the wealth of God. Flesh asks whether we have failed too much, sinned too badly, struggled too often, or performed too little to maintain what Christ purchased. Ephesians answers by pointing to riches we did not create. Grace is not abundant because we are impressive; grace is abundant because God is. Romans 5:20 says, **"where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."** That statement is not a license to make sin abound deliberately; Romans 6:1–2 immediately says, **"Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid."** It is assurance that sin never became larger than the remedy God provided in Jesus Christ. Ephesians 1:7 therefore leaves the beliver with no grounds for boasting and no grounds for despair: redemption is in Christ, the price is His blood, forgiveness is possessed, and the measure is the riches of God's grace.

Ephesians 1:8 Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

"Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence;"
(Ephesians 1:8)

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"Wherein he hath abounded toward us"

The opening word **"Wherein"** ties verse 8 directly to the closing words of verse 7: **"according to the riches of his grace."** Paul is not beginning an unrelated thought. The grace by which believers possess redemption through Christ's blood and the forgiveness of sins is the very grace **"Wherein he hath abounded toward us."** God does not distribute grace with an eyedropper. Paul has already called it **"the riches of his grace,"** and now says God **"hath abounded"** in it toward believers. Ephesians 2:7 will go even further and speak of **"the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ**

Jesus." Grace is not a meager divine allowance carefully rationed to sinners because heaven is worried the supply might run low. **The believer is not living on spiritual leftovers; he is standing beneath a fountain whose source is the riches of God Himself.**

The wording **"hath abounded"** also describes accomplished action. God has already acted toward believers in Christ. Romans 5:20 uses similar language: **"where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."** Sin is enormous, but grace is not barely larger. Paul says grace **"did much more abound."** That statement does not minimize sin; it magnifies the provision made through Jesus Christ. A man who thinks grace is great because sin is insignificant has misunderstood both. Sin required the blood of the Son of God. Grace is glorious because God provided a remedy sufficient for the disease. **Calvary does not tell us sin was small; it tells us the Saviour was sufficient.**

Then notice the direction: God has abounded **"toward us."** Grace moves from God toward the believer. Man is the recipient, not the manufacturer. That destroys the religious instinct to climb toward God by rituals, merit, suffering, law-keeping, emotional experiences, or institutional approval. Ephesians keeps the arrows pointing the other direction. God blesses. God chooses in Christ. God predestinates believers unto adoption. God makes them accepted in the Beloved. God provides redemption through Christ's blood. God forgives. God abounds toward them. The sinner contributes the need; God supplies the grace. **Religion builds staircases to heaven; grace keeps announcing that heaven already came down in Jesus Christ.**

This abundance should not be confused with indiscriminate indulgence. Grace is not God opening the treasury while closing His eyes to holiness. Ephesians 1:7 connected grace directly to redemption **"through his blood."** The abundance of grace therefore operates upon a righteous foundation. Romans 3:26 says God is **"just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."** Grace does not require God to stop being just. It demonstrates His wisdom in saving guilty sinners without compromising His righteousness. That fact leads naturally into the second half of the verse.

"in all wisdom and prudence"

God abounded toward believers **"in all wisdom and prudence."** Grace is therefore not divine sentimentality. God did not forgive sinners through a careless burst of emotion. His redemptive purpose displays **wisdom**. First Corinthians 1:24 calls Christ **"the power of God, and the wisdom of God."** First Corinthians 2:7 speaks of **"the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory."** Ephesians is about to move directly into **"the mystery of his will"** in verse 9, so the

language of wisdom belongs exactly where Paul puts it. The grace revealed through Christ is part of a purpose vastly greater than the sinner's immediate relief from guilt.

Biblical wisdom sees matters according to God's truth rather than fleshly appearance. Proverbs 9:10 says, **"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom."** James 3:17 describes **"the wisdom that is from above"** as pure, peaceable, gentle, and full of mercy and good fruits. God's wisdom in redemption accomplishes what human religion could never devise: guilty sinners can be justified without God becoming unjust, Jew and Gentile can be reconciled in one body without Gentiles becoming Israel, grace can save apart from works while still producing good works, and believers can possess secure standing while remaining accountable in their daily walk. Human religion usually solves one problem by creating three more. **God's wisdom ties together truths that flesh keeps trying to put into separate filing cabinets.**

The word **"prudence"** brings practical discernment into the picture. Wisdom understands according to God; prudence acts with sound judgment according to that understanding. Proverbs 8:12 says, **"I wisdom dwell with prudence, and find out knowledge of witty inventions."** Proverbs 14:8 says, **"The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way."** Prudence is not cowardice, hesitation, or worldly calculation. It is spiritually informed judgment that knows how truth applies. God's grace is neither reckless nor confused. The same God who planned redemption also arranged the times, means, revelation, administration, and eventual completion of His purpose with perfect prudence.

That has practical application for the believer. Grace should not produce a foolish Christian. Ephesians will later command believers to **"walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise"** (Ephesians 5:15). Verse 17 adds, **"Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is."** The grace that saves also teaches. Titus 2:11–12 says the grace of God teaches believers to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and to live soberly, righteously, and godly. If somebody's version of grace consistently produces spiritual stupidity, moral recklessness, doctrinal carelessness, and contempt for wisdom, he has confused grace with permission. **God's grace is abundant, but it did not arrive carrying a blindfold.**

The phrase **"all wisdom and prudence"** also prepares the reader for the doctrinal revelation that follows. Verse 9 says God has **"made known unto us the mystery of his will."** Verse 10 will speak of the **"dispensation of the fulness of times."** Ephesians 3 will reveal the mystery of Jew and Gentile in one body. God's wisdom is displayed not merely in forgiving individuals but in His larger purpose in Christ. Ephesians 3:10 says that through the Church might be known **"the manifold wisdom of God."** The body of Christ itself becomes a demonstration before heavenly principalities and powers of wisdom that

human religion could never have designed. No wonder Paul begins the thought by saying God has abounded toward us **“in all wisdom and prudence.”**

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 1:8 teaches that **God’s grace is abundant, purposeful, wise, and perfectly ordered**. The grace mentioned in verse 7 does not merely forgive sins; it flows from a divine plan governed by wisdom and prudence. God’s salvation is neither a careless suspension of righteousness nor an improvised response to human failure. Redemption through Christ’s blood demonstrates that God can be both just and gracious, forgiving sinners without compromising His holiness.

The verse also prepares the reader for the revelation of **“the mystery of his will”** in verse 9. God’s wisdom extends beyond personal forgiveness into His larger purpose in Christ, including the one body, Jew and Gentile reconciliation, heavenly blessing, and the future gathering together of all things in Christ. Grace therefore should produce believers who value wisdom, discernment, and careful walking rather than treating liberty as an excuse for spiritual foolishness.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. Grace Abounding Toward Sinners

Romans 5:20 — **“Grace did much more abound.”**
Ephesians 1:7 — **“According to the riches of his grace.”**
Ephesians 2:7 — **“The exceeding riches of his grace.”**
1 Timothy 1:14 — **“The grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant.”**
2 Corinthians 9:8 — **“God is able to make all grace abound toward you.”**

2. Grace Comes From God

John 1:17 — **“Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.”**
Ephesians 2:8 — **“For by grace are ye saved through faith.”**
Titus 2:11 — **“The grace of God that bringeth salvation.”**
Romans 3:24 — **“Justified freely by his grace.”**
2 Timothy 1:9 — **“According to his own purpose and grace.”**

3. Christ And The Wisdom Of God

1 Corinthians 1:24 — **“Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.”**
1 Corinthians 1:30 — **“Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom.”**
Colossians 2:3 — **“In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”**

1 Corinthians 2:7 — **“The wisdom of God in a mystery.”**
Colossians 1:27 — **“Christ in you, the hope of glory.”**

4. Wisdom From Above

Proverbs 9:10 — **“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.”**
James 3:17 — **“The wisdom that is from above is first pure.”**
Proverbs 2:6 — **“For the LORD giveth wisdom.”**
Ecclesiastes 2:26 — **“God giveth… wisdom, and knowledge, and joy.”**
Colossians 1:9 — **“Filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom.”**

5. Biblical Prudence

Proverbs 8:12 — **“I wisdom dwell with prudence.”**
Proverbs 14:8 — **“The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way.”**
Proverbs 16:21 — **“The wise in heart shall be called prudent.”**
Proverbs 22:3 — **“A prudent man foreseeth the evil.”**
Proverbs 27:12 — **“A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself.”**

6. God’s Wisdom In The Mystery

Ephesians 1:9 — **“Having made known unto us the mystery of his will.”**
Ephesians 3:3 — **“By revelation he made known unto me the mystery.”**
Ephesians 3:9 — **“The fellowship of the mystery.”**
Ephesians 3:10 — **“The manifold wisdom of God.”**
Colossians 1:26 — **“The mystery which hath been hid from ages.”**

7. Walking In Wisdom

Ephesians 5:15 — **“Walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise.”**
Ephesians 5:17 — **“Understanding what the will of the Lord is.”**
Colossians 4:5 — **“Walk in wisdom toward them that are without.”**
Proverbs 4:7 — **“Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom.”**
James 1:5 — **“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God.”**

8. Grace Producing Godly Living

Titus 2:11 — **“The grace of God that bringeth salvation.”**
Titus 2:12 — **“Teaching us that, denying ungodliness.”**
Romans 6:14 — **“Ye are not under the law, but under grace.”**
Romans 6:15 — **“Shall we sin… under grace? God forbid.”**
Ephesians 2:10 — **“Created in Christ Jesus unto good works.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 1:8 reminds us that grace is not God losing control of the courtroom. The grace of verse 7 is rich because redemption through Christ's blood has satisfied righteousness, and now that grace **"hath abounded toward us."** God does not forgive because sin ceased to matter; He forgives because Jesus Christ dealt with sin at Calvary. That distinction separates biblical grace from sentimental religion. Sentimental religion says, "Surely God is loving enough simply to overlook everything." The cross answers that God is loving enough to provide the sacrifice His holiness required. If sin could simply have been ignored, the blood of Christ becomes an unnecessary tragedy. Instead, grace and righteousness meet at Calvary, and the sinner discovers that the same God who refuses to call evil good has provided a righteous way to justify the ungodly who believes in Jesus.

The abundance of grace should also correct the believer's tendency to measure God's provision by personal weakness. Paul says God **"hath abounded toward us."** Flesh looks inward, counts failures, examines inadequacy, and concludes that divine supply must surely be running low. Scripture points in the opposite direction. First Timothy 1:14 says, **"the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant."** Paul could remember persecution, blasphemy, and injury without concluding his past was larger than Christ's grace. That does not make sin trivial. It makes Christ sufficient. The Christian who constantly measures grace by the size of his own worthiness is using the wrong measuring cup. God's grace is not rich because the recipient deserves much; it is rich because the Giver possesses inexhaustible riches in Christ.

Yet grace abounds **"in all wisdom and prudence,"** and that destroys the idea that grace produces careless Christianity. The man who says, "I am under grace, therefore it does not matter how I live," has managed to read the word while missing the sentence. Titus says grace teaches believers to deny ungodliness. Ephesians will say to walk circumspectly, redeem the time, understand the Lord's will, put away corrupt speech, forgive one another, walk in love, flee uncleanness, and withstand spiritual wickedness. Grace frees the believer from attempting to earn acceptance; it does not free him from wisdom, holiness, responsibility, or Christ's authority. **Grace takes the chains off the prisoner; it does not hand the former prisoner the keys to the liquor cabinet and call the wreckage liberty.**

The words **"wisdom and prudence"** should also govern how believers handle doctrine. Wisdom receives what God revealed; prudence knows where it belongs and how it applies. That is especially important in Ephesians, because Paul is about to reveal the mystery of God's will and later explain the one body of Jew and Gentile in Christ. A man can quote a true verse and still apply it foolishly if he ignores its audience, context, purpose, and dispensational setting. Israel's national promises are true without becoming the Church's covenant. The Church's heavenly position is true without cancelling Israel's future. Law is

holy without becoming the basis of Christian justification. Grace is free without becoming permission for sin. Right division is spiritual prudence applied to inspired truth. **The Bible does not become more biblical when every verse is dumped into one bucket; it becomes harder to understand because the labels God supplied were ignored.**

Finally, Ephesians 1:8 prepares us to see salvation as part of something larger than personal rescue. God certainly saves individuals, forgives sins, and gives eternal life, but His wisdom reaches into **"the mystery of his will"** and His purpose in Christ. The body of Christ itself displays **"the manifold wisdom of God"** before heavenly powers. The believer therefore belongs to a divine purpose that existed before he understood any of it and will continue into ages he has not yet seen. That should produce humility rather than swagger. We did not invent the plan, finance the redemption, reveal the mystery, or create the Church. We were recipients of grace abounding toward us in wisdom and prudence. The appropriate response is to study what God has revealed, walk wisely in light of it, and stop acting as though human religious ingenuity could improve a purpose designed by the God whose wisdom planned redemption before we ever knew we needed it.

Ephesians 1:9 Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

"Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself:"
(Ephesians 1:9)

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"Having made known unto us"

Ephesians 1:9 begins with revelation, not speculation: **"Having made known unto us."** Man did not discover this truth by climbing high enough on the ladder of philosophy, comparing enough religious traditions, or spending enough centuries polishing human wisdom. God **made it known**. That distinction lies at the heart of biblical Christianity. Deuteronomy 29:29 says, **"The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us."** Until God reveals something, man may guess, theorize, philosophize, and decorate his ignorance with impressive vocabulary, but he still does not know it. When God speaks, the mystery ceases to be hidden to those receiving the revelation. **Revelation is not man finally becoming clever enough to find God's secrets; it is God opening the door man could never pick.**

The immediate context ties this revelation to the grace, wisdom, and prudence of verse 8. God **“hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence,”** and part of that abundance is that He has now **“made known unto us”** something previously hidden within His purpose. Ephesians 3:3 says, **“by revelation he made known unto me the mystery.”** Verse 5 explains that in other ages it **“was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.”** Paul therefore did not invent a theological novelty and market it to Gentiles. He received revelation from God concerning truths that had not previously been disclosed in the same way. Human tradition may preserve information, but only God can reveal divine secrets.

That also establishes the proper attitude toward Scripture. The believer does not approach the Bible as though inspired words are raw material waiting for modern intelligence to improve them. First Corinthians 2:10 says, **“God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit.”** Verse 13 adds, **“Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth.”** God reveals, the Spirit teaches, and Scripture records the truth. The Christian’s task is to believe, compare, rightly divide, and obey what has been given. **When God has made something known, humility is not pretending it remains unknowable; humility is refusing to rewrite what He revealed.**

“the mystery of his will”

The thing made known is **“the mystery of his will.”** In Scripture, a mystery is not religious fog designed to keep ordinary believers permanently confused. It is truth once hidden and later revealed by God. Romans 16:25 speaks of **“the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began.”** Colossians 1:26 describes **“the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints.”** Once God reveals the mystery, continuing to call it unknowable misses the point. A locked room is mysterious while the door remains shut; once the owner opens it and turns on the light, standing outside praising the darkness is not spirituality.

The immediate context also tells us not to detach this mystery from what follows. Ephesians 1:10 explains that in **“the dispensation of the fulness of times”** God will **“gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth.”** Therefore, the mystery of His will here concerns God’s great purpose centered in Jesus Christ. Ephesians 3 will unveil a major present aspect of that revealed purpose: **“That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body”** (Ephesians 3:6). The Church, the body of Christ, is not Gentiles being squeezed into Israel’s national covenant as honorary Jews. God has revealed something concerning **one body** in Christ, while Israel’s national promises remain what God said they were. Romans 11:1 still asks, **“Hath**

God cast away his people? God forbid." Right division does not mutilate God's plan; it keeps men from stealing one group's mail and calling the confusion theology.

This is also why prophecy and mystery should not be carelessly treated as identical categories. Acts 3:21 speaks of things **"which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began."** Romans 16:25 speaks of a mystery **"kept secret since the world began."** Those are not the same statements. God's prophetic program concerning Israel, the kingdom, Messiah's reign, and the restoration promised by the prophets was spoken. The Pauline mystery involved truth kept secret until God chose to reveal it. That does not mean the Old Testament contained no types, shadows, patterns, or passages later illuminated by New Testament revelation, nor does it mean prophetic Scriptures become irrelevant. It means we should let the Bible preserve the distinction it deliberately makes. **If one passage says "spoken" and another says "kept secret," the safest theology is not to correct either adjective.**

"according to his good pleasure"

The revelation of God's will comes **"according to his good pleasure."** That phrase has already appeared in verse 5, where believers are predestinated unto adoption **"according to the good pleasure of his will."** God's saving purpose is not the result of external pressure upon Him. No council advised Him. No angel improved the plan. No human institution negotiated the terms. God acted according to His own holy pleasure. Philippians 2:13 says, **"it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."** His purpose arises from His own character, wisdom, righteousness, and grace.

Yet **"good pleasure"** should never be twisted into divine caprice, as though God operates by unexplained impulse and delights arbitrarily in human destruction. Scripture defines God's pleasure more carefully than theological caricatures sometimes do. Luke 12:32 says, **"it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."** First Timothy 2:4 says God **"will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."** Ezekiel 33:11 records, **"I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live."** Whatever men do with those verses, they ought not to be gagged so a system can speak more comfortably.

God's good pleasure therefore reveals generosity without surrendering sovereignty. He purposes according to Himself because there is no higher authority from whom He must receive permission. At the same time, His revealed character shows that His pleasure is holy, wise, righteous, gracious, and consistent with His word. God does not have one will printed in Scripture and another secret personality contradicting it behind the curtain. **The**

sovereign God of the Bible does not need theological public relations men explaining why His plain statements supposedly mean their opposites.

“which he hath purposed in himself”

The verse closes with the majestic statement that God’s good pleasure is something **“which he hath purposed in himself.”** The purpose began with God. It did not originate in Adam, Abraham, Moses, Israel, the apostles, the Church, or any human institution. Ephesians 3:11 calls it **“the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.”** Before men organized denominations, drafted creeds, built seminaries, or argued over systems, God already possessed a purpose centered in Christ. Human history did not force heaven to improvise.

The words **“in himself”** also destroy the idea that God’s ultimate purpose depends upon human institutions for completion. Churches have genuine authority in their proper sphere. Pastors, teachers, evangelists, and local assemblies matter. But none of them created the mystery, authored the gospel, designed the body of Christ, or owns God’s eternal purpose. First Corinthians 3:9 says, **“we are labourers together with God.”** Labourers do not become architects merely because the Architect allows them onto the construction site. When religious institutions begin acting as though God’s truth belongs to them, they have mistaken stewardship for ownership. **The Church belongs inside God’s purpose; God’s purpose does not belong inside the Church’s filing cabinet.**

Finally, the phrase points directly toward Christ as the center of history. Verse 10 will say God is gathering all things **“in Christ.”** Colossians 1:16 declares that all things were created **“by him, and for him.”** Verse 18 says, **“that in all things he might have the preeminence.”** The mystery of God’s will is therefore not designed to make man the center of the universe. Grace blesses man magnificently, but God’s purpose culminates in Christ’s preeminence. **The Bible is not the story of God trying desperately to make much of man; it is the revelation of God bringing redeemed men into a purpose that makes much of Jesus Christ.**

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 1:9 emphasizes **divine revelation, the mystery of God’s will, God’s good pleasure, and His eternal purpose centered in Christ**. The mystery was not discovered through human wisdom but made known by God. Scripture uses “mystery” for truth that had been hidden and later revealed, and the immediate context points toward God’s comprehensive purpose to gather all things in Christ. Ephesians 3 further reveals the Church as one body of Jew and Gentile, a truth that must not be confused with Israel’s national prophetic promises.

The verse also establishes that God's purpose originates **"in himself."** Salvation history is not divine improvisation. God acts according to His wisdom and good pleasure, while His revealed will remains consistent with His holiness and grace. The ultimate center is Christ, not man, religion, or institutional authority.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. God Makes Hidden Truth Known

Deuteronomy 29:29 — **"Those things which are revealed belong unto us."**
Daniel 2:22 — **"He revealeth the deep and secret things."**
1 Corinthians 2:10 — **"God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit."**
Ephesians 3:3 — **"By revelation he made known unto me the mystery."**
Colossians 1:26 — **"But now is made manifest to his saints."**

2. The Mystery Once Hidden

Romans 16:25 — **"The mystery, which was kept secret since the world began."**
Ephesians 3:5 — **"In other ages was not made known."**
Ephesians 3:9 — **"The mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God."**
Colossians 1:26 — **"Hid from ages and from generations."**
1 Corinthians 2:7 — **"The wisdom of God in a mystery."**

3. The Mystery Now Revealed

Romans 16:26 — **"But now is made manifest."**
Ephesians 3:5 — **"Now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets."**
Ephesians 3:6 — **"The Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body."**
Colossians 1:27 — **"To whom God would make known."**
Colossians 2:2 — **"To the acknowledgement of the mystery of God."**

4. Prophecy And Mystery Distinguished

Acts 3:21 — **"Spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began."**
Romans 16:25 — **"Kept secret since the world began."**
Luke 1:70 — **"As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets."**
Ephesians 3:9 — **"From the beginning of the world hath been hid in God."**
Colossians 1:26 — **"Hid from ages and from generations."**

5. God's Good Pleasure

Ephesians 1:5 — **"According to the good pleasure of his will."**
Ephesians 1:9 — **"According to his good pleasure."**

Luke 12:32 — **“It is your Father's good pleasure.”**
Philippians 2:13 — **“To will and to do of his good pleasure.”**
2 Thessalonians 1:11 — **“The good pleasure of his goodness.”**

6. God’s Eternal Purpose

Ephesians 3:11 — **“According to the eternal purpose.”**
2 Timothy 1:9 — **“According to his own purpose and grace.”**
Romans 8:28 — **“Called according to his purpose.”**
Ephesians 1:11 — **“According to the purpose of him.”**
Isaiah 46:10 — **“My counsel shall stand.”**

7. Christ At The Center Of God’s Purpose

Ephesians 1:10 — **“Gather together in one all things in Christ.”**
Colossians 1:16 — **“All things were created by him, and for him.”**
Colossians 1:18 — **“That in all things he might have the preeminence.”**
Philippians 2:10 — **“At the name of Jesus every knee should bow.”**
1 Corinthians 15:27 — **“He hath put all things under his feet.”**

8. Israel And The Church Remain Distinct

Romans 11:1 — **“Hath God cast away his people? God forbid.”**
Romans 11:25 — **“Blindness in part is happened to Israel.”**
Romans 11:26 — **“And so all Israel shall be saved.”**
Ephesians 2:15 — **“To make in himself of twain one new man.”**
Ephesians 3:6 — **“The Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 1:9 should cure Christians of the notion that the Bible is merely a religious puzzle waiting for human brilliance to solve it. God **“made known unto us the mystery of his will.”** The direction matters. Revelation comes from God to man, not from man climbing upward through intelligence, tradition, philosophy, or institutional authority. That ought to produce both confidence and humility: confidence because God actually intends His revelation to be understood, and humility because we did not invent it. There is no virtue in turning what God has revealed back into fog. A Bible teacher who makes revealed truth sound permanently unknowable may impress an audience with complexity, but he has not improved upon the Holy Ghost. **God did not open the curtain so religious professionals could charge admission for pretending it is still closed.**

The word **“mystery”** also forces us to respect dispensational distinctions. Scripture says some things were spoken by the prophets since the world began, while the mystery was

kept secret and later made known. Those statements deserve to remain distinct. The Church does not need to steal Israel's national promises in order to possess spiritual riches; Ephesians has already declared that believers have **"all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."** God's purpose for the body of Christ is magnificent without rewriting Abraham, David, the prophets, or Romans 11. Jew and Gentile are now made one new man in Christ, yet that present truth does not require God to forget what He promised Israel. Right division allows every promise to remain where God put it and every revelation to shine with its own glory.

The phrase **"according to his good pleasure"** should also correct ugly caricatures of God. God is sovereign, but sovereignty does not mean arbitrary cruelty. Scripture says it is His good pleasure to give, that He will have all men to be saved, and that He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. We do not defend God by rewriting those verses until they say something more convenient for a theological system. We defend nothing by contradicting the Book. God's will is holy, wise, righteous, and gracious because God Himself is holy, wise, righteous, and gracious. His eternal purpose did not need improvement from man, but neither does His revealed character need correction from theologians who are embarrassed by the plain wording. **A God powerful enough to govern history is powerful enough to mean what He says about His own heart.**

Finally, **"which he hath purposed in himself"** puts the entire matter where it belongs. God's plan did not begin with us, and it does not revolve around us. We are gloriously included in it through Christ, but Jesus Christ remains the center. Verse 10 will gather everything toward Him. That truth should strip vanity out of ministry, doctrine, and Christian service. No preacher owns the mystery. No denomination owns grace. No institution holds the copyright on God's eternal purpose. We are stewards of revelation already given and servants inside a plan we did not design. The wisest response is therefore not to make ourselves impressive but to make Christ clear, believe what God has revealed, preserve the distinctions He made, and walk like people privileged to know something that generations before us did not possess in the same revealed form. **The mystery was God's secret, the revelation was God's gift, the purpose is God's, and the glory belongs to Christ.**

Ephesians 1:10 Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

"That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him:" (Ephesians 1:10)

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"That in the dispensation of the fulness of times"

Ephesians 1:10 continues the thought of verse 9, where God has **"made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself."** Verse 10 tells us where that purpose is headed: **"That in the dispensation of the fulness of times."** The word **"dispensation"** is not theological decoration. Paul uses it again in Ephesians 3:2: **"If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward."** Colossians 1:25 similarly speaks of **"the dispensation of God which is given to me for you."** A dispensation involves an administration, stewardship, or ordered arrangement in which God conducts His purposes according to what He has revealed. Scripture does not present history as one gray theological fog in which Noah, Moses, David, Peter, and Paul are all standing under precisely the same revealed instructions. **God never changes in character, but His dealings with men are not therefore frozen in one administrative package from Genesis to Revelation.**

The phrase here is not **"the dispensation of the grace of God,"** but **"the dispensation of the fulness of times."** Those expressions should not be carelessly treated as identical. Paul is looking ahead to the culmination of God's purpose when the times have reached their appointed fullness. Galatians 4:4 speaks of another appointed moment: **"But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son."** Christ's first coming occurred according to God's appointed timing, and Ephesians 1:10 looks toward another great fullness when God's purpose in Christ reaches its comprehensive administration. Heaven does not run late. God does not glance at history with surprise and begin shuffling prophetic papers because events got away from Him.

This also corrects the habit of forcing every biblical promise into the present Church age. God has purposes that operate now, and He has purposes still awaiting fulfillment. The Church is presently blessed **"with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ"** (Ephesians 1:3), while Israel still has promises connected with restoration, kingdom, land, and national blessing that God has not cancelled. Romans 11:25 says **"blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in."** Verse 26 then says, **"And so all Israel shall be saved."** God's timetable has distinctions. **Right division does not chop up God's plan; it keeps the clock hands from being nailed together because somebody dislikes different hours.**

"he might gather together in one all things in Christ"

The great purpose of this coming fullness is stated plainly: **"he might gather together in one all things in Christ."** Christ is the center, the Head, and the focal point toward which

God's purpose moves. Colossians 1:16 says, **"all things were created by him, and for him."** Colossians 1:18 adds, **"that in all things he might have the preeminence."** Philippians 2:10–11 declares that **"at the name of Jesus every knee should bow"** and **"every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord."** Human history may presently appear fragmented, rebellious, divided, and disorderly, but Scripture does not end with Satan presiding over a permanent universe of competing authorities. The end belongs to Jesus Christ.

The expression **"gather together in one"** does not mean every distinction God established disappears into a doctrinal blender. Unity under Christ is not the same thing as identity of calling. Israel does not cease to be Israel merely because Christ reigns over all. The Church does not become national Israel because both belong beneath Christ's ultimate supremacy. Angels do not become redeemed men. Resurrected saints do not become identical with earthly kingdom subjects. God can bring all things beneath one Head without pretending every member of His ordered creation occupies the same place. First Corinthians 15:27 says, **"For he hath put all things under his feet."** Authority can be unified without every distinction being abolished.

This gathering therefore magnifies Christ rather than man. Modern religion frequently talks as though God's ultimate objective were to validate mankind's dreams, repair society according to human imagination, and finally congratulate creation for becoming enlightened enough to cooperate. Paul says the gathering is **"in Christ."** The universe does not converge upon democracy, philosophy, science, religious ecumenism, human potential, or a committee representing every spiritual opinion on earth. It converges upon Jesus Christ. **History is not wandering toward a roundtable where every throne gets an equal vote; it is moving toward the throne of the One before whom every knee bows.**

"both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him"

Paul then defines the breathtaking scope: **"both which are in heaven, and which are on earth."** God's purpose in Christ is larger than one nation, one generation, one continent, or one earthly institution. Ephesians has already introduced **"heavenly places"** in verse 3, and later the book will speak of Christ seated **"at his own right hand in the heavenly places"** (Ephesians 1:20), the Church seated **"together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus"** (Ephesians 2:6), and principalities and powers **"in heavenly places"** learning **"the manifold wisdom of God"** through the Church (Ephesians 3:10). Heaven itself is part of the grand scope of Christ's supremacy.

The earthly realm likewise comes under Him. Psalm 2:8 records the Father saying to the Son, **"Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the**

uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." Revelation 11:15 announces, **"The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ."** Zechariah 14:9 says, **"And the LORD shall be king over all the earth."** These earthly kingdom promises must not be dissolved into a purely spiritual Church interpretation. Christ's heavenly headship and His earthly rule belong to the same comprehensive supremacy without forcing the Church to become Israel or Israel to become the Church.

The verse finishes where its central thought has been pointing all along: **"even in him."** Christ appears twice in one sentence because God evidently did not consider the first mention sufficient for careless readers. Everything terminates in Him. The purpose was purposed in God, the mystery was revealed by God, the times are administered by God, and the gathering occurs in Christ. Ephesians 1:10 is therefore not merely prophetic information; it is a declaration of Christ's absolute centrality. **God's plan has one throne at the center, and no religious institution, political empire, angelic principality, or human ego has a reserved seat beside it.**

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 1:10 reveals the future culmination of God's purpose in **"the dispensation of the fulness of times."** God has appointed an administration in which all things in heaven and earth will be brought beneath the supremacy of Jesus Christ. This does not erase dispensational distinctions or cancel promises God made to Israel. Rather, it shows that distinct parts of God's plan ultimately find their proper order under one Head.

The verse also establishes the enormous scope of Christ's preeminence. Heaven and earth alike are included. The Church presently possesses a heavenly position in Christ, Israel retains its prophetic and national promises, and the created order itself moves toward universal acknowledgment of Christ's lordship. Unity under Christ is not doctrinal confusion; it is perfect order beneath the rightful King.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. Biblical Dispensations

Ephesians 3:2 — **"The dispensation of the grace of God."**
Colossians 1:25 — **"According to the dispensation of God."**
1 Corinthians 9:17 — **"A dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me."**
Ephesians 1:10 — **"The dispensation of the fulness of times."**
Luke 16:2 — **"Give an account of thy stewardship."**

2. God's Appointed Times

Galatians 4:4 — **“When the fulness of the time was come.”**
Acts 1:7 — **“The times or the seasons… the Father hath put in his own power.”**
Daniel 2:21 — **“He changeth the times and the seasons.”**
Ecclesiastes 3:1 — **“To every thing there is a season.”**
Acts 17:26 — **“Hath determined the times before appointed.”**

3. All Things Centered In Christ

Colossians 1:16 — **“All things were created by him, and for him.”**
Colossians 1:18 — **“That in all things he might have the preeminence.”**
John 1:3 — **“All things were made by him.”**
Hebrews 1:2 — **“Whom he hath appointed heir of all things.”**
1 Corinthians 8:6 — **“One Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things.”**

4. All Things Under Christ’s Feet

1 Corinthians 15:27 — **“He hath put all things under his feet.”**
Ephesians 1:22 — **“Hath put all things under his feet.”**
Hebrews 2:8 — **“Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet.”**
Psalm 8:6 — **“Thou hast put all things under his feet.”**
Philippians 3:21 — **“Able even to subdue all things unto himself.”**

5. Christ’s Universal Lordship

Philippians 2:10 — **“At the name of Jesus every knee should bow.”**
Philippians 2:11 — **“Every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.”**
Romans 14:11 — **“Every knee shall bow to me.”**
Revelation 19:16 — **“KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.”**
Psalm 2:6 — **“Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.”**

6. Christ’s Heavenly Supremacy

Ephesians 1:20 — **“Set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places.”**
Ephesians 1:21 — **“Far above all principality, and power.”**
Colossians 2:10 — **“The head of all principality and power.”**
1 Peter 3:22 — **“Angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.”**
Hebrews 1:6 — **“Let all the angels of God worship him.”**

7. Christ’s Earthly Kingdom

Psalm 2:8 — **“The uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.”**
Zechariah 14:9 — **“The LORD shall be king over all the earth.”**
Revelation 11:15 — **“The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord.”**

Isaiah 9:7 — **“Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.”**
Luke 1:33 — **“Of his kingdom there shall be no end.”**

8. Israel And The Church Within God’s Purpose

Romans 11:1 — **“Hath God cast away his people? God forbid.”**
Romans 11:25 — **“Blindness in part is happened to Israel.”**
Romans 11:26 — **“And so all Israel shall be saved.”**
Ephesians 2:15 — **“To make in himself of twain one new man.”**
Ephesians 3:6 — **“The Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 1:10 gives history a destination. The world may look fractured, governments may rise and collapse, religions may compete, nations may rage, and human pride may repeatedly announce that mankind has finally outgrown God, but none of that changes the destination God revealed. There is coming **“the dispensation of the fulness of times,”** and the central figure of that administration will not be Adam’s latest political experiment. God will gather all things in Christ. That should steady believers who become discouraged by the apparent disorder of the present world. Scripture never promised that this present age would gradually polish itself into Christ’s kingdom through better education, social planning, religious cooperation, or enough international conferences. Man has had thousands of years to demonstrate what fallen flesh does with power, and the exhibit is not particularly flattering. **History does not need a better committee; it needs its rightful King.**

The word **“dispensation”** should also remind us to respect the distinctions God placed in His Book. The Church presently lives under the dispensation of grace, possesses a heavenly calling, and forms one body in Christ. Israel still possesses promises God made nationally and prophetically, and Romans 11 explicitly denies that God has cast His people away. Those truths do not compete. They only become contradictory when theology insists that every group must become the same group and every promise must be pushed into the same envelope. In the fullness of times, Christ can rule over heaven and earth, fulfill Israel’s promises, display His Church, subordinate angelic powers, and bring creation into proper order without losing track of who is who. **God does not need confusion in order to produce unity. Men usually require confusion only after they have ignored the labels God already put on the boxes.**

The phrase **“gather together in one all things in Christ”** should also correct the modern obsession with unity at any price. Biblical unity is not everybody dropping doctrine until only religious sentiment remains. The center is Christ, and the Christ who gathers all things

is the same Lord whose words cannot be discarded. Genuine unity therefore moves toward truth, not away from it. The world imagines peace through compromise; God reveals order through rightful headship. Christ does not become one voice among many at the universe's final ecumenical gathering. He is the One beneath whom every principality, power, authority, kingdom, and creature finds its proper place. There is nothing narrow about Christ's supremacy; it reaches heaven and earth. But there is something wonderfully exclusive about the center: **"even in him."**

Finally, this verse should change how a Christian measures significance. If God's purpose is moving all things toward Christ, then a worthwhile life is one moving in the same direction. The great question is not whether a believer becomes impressive in the eyes of the age but whether Christ receives preeminence in his doctrine, conduct, family, ministry, work, and hope. Colossians 1:18 says, **"that in all things he might have the preeminence."** That leaves very little room for Christian celebrity, denominational vanity, personal kingdoms, or ministries built around making a man indispensable. We are temporary servants inside an eternal purpose whose center is Jesus Christ. The kingdoms of men will pass, the applause of crowds will die, the systems of this world will be shaken, but Christ will still be standing at the center when heaven and earth come beneath His appointed headship. **The safest place in all eternity is therefore the place Ephesians keeps bringing us back to: in Christ, under Christ, and for Christ.**

Ephesians 1:11 Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

"In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:"
(Ephesians 1:11)

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"In whom also we have obtained an inheritance"

Paul begins exactly where Ephesians keeps beginning: **"In whom."** The inheritance is not independent of Jesus Christ. It is not attached to natural birth, denominational membership, religious pedigree, law-keeping, circumcision, baptismal ceremony, or human merit. The believer possesses the inheritance because he is **in Christ**. Ephesians 1:3 has already said God has blessed believers **"with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."** Verse 6 says they are **"accepted in the beloved."** Verse 7 says, **"In**

whom we have redemption through his blood." Now verse 11 says, **"In whom also we have obtained an inheritance."** Paul keeps hammering the same nail until religious flesh ought to stop trying to hang salvation on another hook.

The words **"we have obtained"** also deserve attention. Paul does not write as though the believer were standing outside heaven purchasing raffle tickets for a chance at an inheritance. The inheritance belongs to those who are in Christ. Colossians 1:12 gives thanks to the Father **"which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."** Romans 8:17 says, **"And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ."** Galatians 4:7 adds, **"if a son, then an heir of God through Christ."** Sonship and inheritance belong together. The Christian does not become an heir because he finally accumulated enough religious points. He becomes an heir because he belongs to the Son.

This inheritance must also be understood according to the calling of the Church. Israel was given literal national and earthly promises involving a land, a kingdom, a throne, and restoration. Joshua 11:23 says, **"Joshua took the whole land… and Joshua gave it for an inheritance unto Israel according to their divisions by their tribes."** The Church is not Israel with the address scratched out and "Gentiles" written over it. First Peter 1:4 speaks of **"an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you."** Ephesians has already located the believer's blessings in **"heavenly places."** Right division does not rob the Christian; it stops him from rummaging through Israel's earthly inheritance because he failed to appreciate the heavenly riches already given him in Christ. **A man seated in heavenly places does not become richer by stealing somebody else's deed to a vineyard.**

"being predestinated according to the purpose of him"

Here Paul uses **"predestinated"** again, and the context remains just as important as it was in verse 5. In verse 5 believers were **"predestinated… unto the adoption of children."** Here they are predestinated **"according to the purpose of him."** Romans 8:29 says those God foreknew He **"also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son."** Predestination in these passages concerns God's predetermined purpose and destination for those who are in Christ. The verse does not say God predestinated certain unbelievers to unbelief and then condemned them for carrying out a program He forced upon them. Scripture is perfectly capable of teaching God's sovereign purpose without turning sinners into puppets and then punishing the puppets because somebody pulled the strings.

God's **"purpose"** is the controlling idea. Second Timothy 1:9 says He **"hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own**

purpose and grace." Ephesians 3:11 will speak of **"the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord."** God's purpose did not begin when Adam fell. Christ was not heaven's emergency repairman called after creation got out of hand. The plan was Christ-centered before history began and remains Christ-centered after history ends. The believer's inheritance, adoption, glorification, and conformity to Christ rest within a purpose older than the world itself.

That truth should produce assurance without producing arrogance. If salvation and inheritance exist according to God's purpose, nobody has room to swagger about personal superiority. First Corinthians 1:29 says, **"That no flesh should glory in his presence."** Yet the same truth ought to steady the believer when circumstances appear chaotic. God's purpose is not fragile. Men can oppose it, devils can rage against it, governments can ignore it, and believers themselves can fail miserably in practical service, but God is not wandering through eternity trying to recover the blueprint. **Man may lose the plot; God never misplaced the manuscript.**

"who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will"

This is one of the strongest statements of divine sovereignty in the Pauline epistles: God **"worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."** The words do not say God consults human opinion before deciding whether His eternal purpose is acceptable. Isaiah 46:10 records Him saying, **"My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure."** Psalm 33:11 says, **"The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations."** God's purpose rests upon His own wisdom, knowledge, holiness, and authority. There is no higher board of directors above Him, no celestial court of appeal, and no committee to which the Almighty submits His plans for revision.

Yet sovereignty must not be twisted into the blasphemous idea that God is the moral author of every wicked act. James 1:13 says, **"God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man."** Scripture can say God works all things after His counsel while simultaneously holding men responsible for sinful choices. Acts 2:23 says Christ was delivered **"by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God,"** yet Peter immediately charges the men involved: **"ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain."** God's purpose included the cross; wicked men remained wicked for committing the deed. Joseph told his brethren in Genesis 50:20, **"ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good."** Same event, different intention. **God is so sovereign He can use man's evil without needing to become evil Himself.**

The word **"counsel"** also guards against viewing God's will as arbitrary impulse. God does not act like a temperamental monarch waking up each morning and deciding reality

according to whatever mood happens to strike Him. His will operates according to counsel. Romans 11:33 exclaims, **"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!"** God's purposes emerge from perfect wisdom that sees the end from the beginning. Providence may therefore look confusing from ground level while remaining perfectly ordered from heaven's view. A single thread on the underside of a tapestry may look meaningless; the Designer sees the finished pattern.

That does not mean Christians should call every tragedy good or pretend every sinful event is righteous merely because God can overrule it. Romans 8:28 says, **"all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."** It does not say all things **are** good. Betrayal is still betrayal. Sin is still sin. Loss is still loss. Death is still called an enemy in First Corinthians 15:26. The glory lies in the fact that none of those things is powerful enough to derail God's final purpose for the believer in Christ. **Providence does not repaint evil white; it proves God can make even black threads serve the final picture.**

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 1:11 joins together **inheritance, predestination, divine purpose, and the sovereign counsel of God**. The believer's inheritance is possessed **"in whom,"** meaning in Jesus Christ. It flows from sonship and belongs to the heavenly calling of the Church rather than requiring believers to appropriate Israel's national earthly promises. Once again, Christ is the location, source, and security of the blessing.

Predestination here points to God's predetermined purpose for those in Christ, while **"the counsel of his own will"** affirms God's absolute sovereignty without making Him the author of sin. Scripture holds divine purpose and human responsibility together without embarrassment. God can overrule evil, use circumstances, accomplish His purpose, and still judge wicked men for wicked intentions and actions.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. The Believer's Inheritance In Christ

Colossians 1:12 — **"Partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."**
Romans 8:17 — **"Heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ."**
Galatians 4:7 — **"An heir of God through Christ."**
1 Peter 1:4 — **"An inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled."**
Ephesians 1:14 — **"The earnest of our inheritance."**

2. Sonship And Heirship

Romans 8:16 — **“We are the children of God.”**
Romans 8:17 — **“And if children, then heirs.”**
Galatians 3:26 — **“Children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.”**
Galatians 4:5 — **“That we might receive the adoption of sons.”**
Galatians 4:7 — **“If a son, then an heir of God.”**

3. The Church’s Heavenly Calling

Ephesians 1:3 — **“Spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.”**
Ephesians 2:6 — **“Made us sit together in heavenly places.”**
Philippians 3:20 — **“Our conversation is in heaven.”**
Colossians 3:1 — **“Seek those things which are above.”**
1 Peter 1:4 — **“Reserved in heaven for you.”**

4. Israel’s Earthly Inheritance

Joshua 11:23 — **“Gave it for an inheritance unto Israel.”**
Deuteronomy 4:21 — **“The good land, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance.”**
Psalm 105:11 — **“Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan.”**
Ezekiel 36:24 — **“I will… bring you into your own land.”**
Romans 11:29 — **“The gifts and calling of God are without repentance.”**

5. Predestination And God’s Purpose

Romans 8:29 — **“Predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son.”**
Romans 8:30 — **“Whom he did predestinate, them he also called.”**
Ephesians 1:5 — **“Predestinated us unto the adoption of children.”**
2 Timothy 1:9 — **“According to his own purpose and grace.”**
Ephesians 3:11 — **“According to the eternal purpose.”**

6. The Counsel Of God Stands

Isaiah 46:10 — **“My counsel shall stand.”**
Psalm 33:11 — **“The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever.”**
Proverbs 19:21 — **“The counsel of the LORD, that shall stand.”**
Acts 2:23 — **“The determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.”**
Ephesians 1:11 — **“The counsel of his own will.”**

7. God Working Through Circumstances

Romans 8:28 — **“All things work together for good.”**
Genesis 50:20 — **“Ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good.”**

Philippians 2:13 — **“God which worketh in you both to will and to do.”**
Ephesians 3:20 — **“According to the power that worketh in us.”**
1 Corinthians 12:6 — **“The same God which worketh all in all.”**

8. God Is Not The Author Of Evil

James 1:13 — **“God cannot be tempted with evil.”**
James 1:17 — **“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above.”**
Habakkuk 1:13 — **“Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil.”**
Psalm 5:4 — **“Neither shall evil dwell with thee.”**
1 John 1:5 — **“God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 1:11 gives the believer two enormous reasons for confidence: **an inheritance already tied to Christ and a divine purpose that cannot be pushed off course by history.** Paul says, **“In whom also we have obtained an inheritance.”** The Christian therefore does not spend his earthly life begging heaven to decide whether he qualifies to become an heir. His heirship comes through Christ. That ought to kill both religious pride and religious panic. Pride dies because the inheritance was not purchased by human merit, and panic dies because the inheritance is not maintained by human perfection. The believer’s security is not that he never fails; it is that the inheritance is tied to the Son who never does.

At the same time, the doctrine of inheritance must be rightly divided. The Church does not need to seize Israel’s land, throne, kingdom, and national promises to prove God has blessed it. Ephesians has already placed the Christian’s blessings **“in heavenly places in Christ.”** First Peter calls the believer’s inheritance incorruptible and **“reserved in heaven.”** Israel’s promises remain real because God does not need to rob one group in order to bless another. Replacement theology makes the strange assumption that heavenly riches are not quite rich enough unless the Church also cleans out Israel’s earthly account. Scripture does better. God can fulfill every word spoken to Israel and still give the body of Christ blessings so high that Paul repeatedly describes them as heavenly.

The words **“who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will”** should also steady believers when life looks badly out of order. God does not promise that every event will feel good, appear good, or even be morally good. Scripture records murder, betrayal, persecution, sickness, loss, injustice, and death without sprinkling religious sugar over them. Yet those things are not sovereign. Romans 8:28 says God can work all things together for good according to His purpose. Joseph’s brothers intended evil, while God overruled their evil toward preservation. Wicked hands crucified Christ, yet the cross stood

within God's determinate counsel. **The comfort is not that evil stopped being evil; the comfort is that evil never became God.**

This doctrine must therefore produce trust without fatalism. A believer cannot say, "God works all things, so my choices do not matter." Scripture never reasons that way. Paul commands obedience, warns against carnality, teaches stewardship, promises reward, threatens loss, and commands believers to walk worthy. Divine sovereignty does not erase human accountability any more than a ship's destination means the sailors may drill holes in the hull. God's purpose will stand, but the Christian will still answer for how he lived within that purpose. First Corinthians 3 makes room for both salvation and loss of reward. Grace guarantees relationship; stewardship still determines whether the servant served faithfully.

Finally, Ephesians 1:11 turns the believer away from the illusion that history is governed by chance. Nations rise, rulers boast, economies shake, cultures decay, and personal plans sometimes collapse overnight, but none of those realities forces God to rewrite His eternal purpose. Isaiah 46:10 still says, **"My counsel shall stand."** That does not mean Christians understand every providence while they are passing through it. Joseph certainly did not see Genesis 50:20 while sitting in the pit. But hindsight eventually revealed that God's hand had never left the page. The believer therefore walks by faith, obeys what is clear, refuses to call evil good, and trusts that the God who promised an inheritance in Christ is perfectly capable of carrying His heirs to the destination He already purposed. **Men may alter plans, circumstances may alter schedules, and life may alter expectations, but nothing alters the counsel of the God who wrote the ending before we entered the story.**

Ephesians 1:12 Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

"That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ."
(Ephesians 1:12)

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"That we should be to the praise of his glory"

Ephesians 1:12 continues directly from verse 11, where believers are said to have **"obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."** Verse 12 tells us one purpose

behind that inheritance: **“That we should be to the praise of his glory.”** Salvation does not end with the sinner escaping hell, possessing eternal life, receiving an inheritance, and enjoying heavenly blessings. Those benefits are glorious, but they are not the final center of the matter. God saves in such a way that His glory is displayed through those He saves. Ephesians 1:6 has already spoken of **“the praise of the glory of his grace,”** and verse 14 will again say **“unto the praise of his glory.”** The chapter is framed by praise because redemption is designed to make much of God rather than provide flesh another reason to admire itself. **Grace does not rescue Adam so Adam can autograph the rescue operation.**

The expression **“we should be”** is stronger than merely saying believers should occasionally offer praise with their lips. Their very existence as redeemed people becomes a testimony to God’s glory. Second Corinthians 5:17 says, **“if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.”** Ephesians 2:7 says that **“in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.”** The redeemed themselves become evidence of what divine grace can accomplish. God takes people who were dead in trespasses, children of wrath, without Christ, strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world, and makes them alive, reconciles them, seats them in heavenly places, and places them into one body. That is more than an improved moral record. It is an eternal exhibition of grace.

This glory belongs to God precisely because salvation is His work from beginning to end. First Corinthians 1:29 says, **“That no flesh should glory in his presence.”** Verse 31 adds, **“He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.”** A doctrine that leaves man boasting about superior intelligence, superior morality, superior religious heritage, or superior works has somehow missed the direction of Ephesians 1. The inheritance is in Christ. Acceptance is in the Beloved. Redemption is through His blood. Forgiveness is according to His grace. The mystery is according to His purpose. Everything points away from human self-congratulation. **The gospel is not God helping good men finish what they started; it is God doing for ruined men what ruined men could never do for themselves.**

“who first trusted in Christ”

The second half of the verse introduces a significant distinction: **“who first trusted in Christ.”** The words become clearer when verse 13 is read immediately afterward: **“In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation.”** Paul moves from **“we… who first trusted in Christ”** to **“ye also trusted.”** In the immediate flow, the most natural distinction is between those Jewish believers, including Paul and others, who trusted Christ earlier, and the Gentile believers at Ephesus who afterward heard and believed the gospel. That distinction fits the larger argument of

Ephesians. Chapter 2 repeatedly contrasts **“we”** and **“ye,”** and verse 11 specifically addresses Gentiles **“in the flesh.”** Yet those distinctions do not remain barriers inside the body of Christ, because Ephesians 2:14 says Christ **“hath made both one.”**

The phrase **“first trusted”** does not mean those earlier believers possessed a superior salvation. There is no first-class cabin for Jewish Christians and coach section for Gentile Christians in the body of Christ. Ephesians 3:6 says the Gentiles are **“fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel.”** The chronological distinction is real; the positional unity is equally real. Those who trusted first did not receive a better Christ than those who trusted later. Paul is tracing the historical movement of the gospel and the revealed mystery whereby Jew and Gentile are brought into one body. **Coming through the door five minutes earlier does not give a man ownership of the house when everybody inside belongs to the same Lord.**

This wording also preserves Israel’s historical place without confusing Israel with the Church. Romans 1:16 says the gospel is **“to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.”** Christ’s earthly ministry was directed first within Israel, and the earliest believers in the book of Acts were overwhelmingly Jewish. Yet God’s revealed purpose moved outward to Gentiles, and Paul’s distinctive ministry magnified that truth. Romans 11:13 says, **“I am the apostle of the Gentiles.”** The fact that Jewish believers **“first trusted in Christ”** does not mean the Church becomes Israel, nor does the Gentile inclusion mean Israel has been permanently discarded. Romans 11:1 answers that error directly: **“Hath God cast away his people? God forbid.”** Scripture can recognize chronological priority, present Church unity, and future dealings with Israel without requiring any of those truths to murder the others.

The word **“trusted”** also deserves full weight. Paul does not say they first performed, first endured, first kept ordinances, first submitted to a religious institution, or first accumulated sufficient righteousness. They **“trusted in Christ.”** That agrees perfectly with Ephesians 2:8: **“For by grace are ye saved through faith.”** Trust transfers confidence away from self and onto another. Philippians 3:9 speaks of being found in Christ, **“not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ.”** Salvation begins when a sinner stops presenting himself as an acceptable payment and rests upon Jesus Christ. **Faith is not a contribution added to Calvary; it is the abandonment of confidence in every contribution except Calvary.**

The object of that trust is crucial: **“in Christ.”** Religious faith by itself saves nobody. A man can sincerely trust water, sacraments, commandments, church membership, his upbringing, his sincerity, his feelings, or his ability to continue faithfully until death and remain sincerely wrong. Paul does not praise faith as an abstract virtue. The value of faith depends upon its object. Second Timothy 1:12 says, **“I know whom I have believed.”**

Salvation is not confidence in confidence; it is confidence in Christ. **A strong grip on a rotten rope will not save a falling man, but a trembling hand laid upon a sufficient Saviour still rests upon the right object.**

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 1:12 centers upon two major truths: **God's glory as the purpose of redemption and trust in Christ as the defining response of the believer.** Those who have obtained an inheritance are intended to exist **"to the praise of his glory."** Salvation therefore magnifies God rather than human merit. The redeemed become living and eternal evidence of the grace, wisdom, power, and faithfulness of the God who saved them.

The words **"who first trusted in Christ"** also introduce an important historical distinction that prepares for verse 13: **"ye also trusted."** Jewish believers trusted Christ first, and Gentiles afterward heard and believed the same gospel. Their historical order differs, but their standing in the body does not. Jew and Gentile are made one in Christ without erasing Israel's identity or national promises. The unifying center is not ethnicity, law, ceremony, or institution, but faith in Jesus Christ.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. Salvation To God's Glory

Ephesians 1:6 — **"To the praise of the glory of his grace."**
Ephesians 1:12 — **"To the praise of his glory."**
Ephesians 1:14 — **"Unto the praise of his glory."**
1 Corinthians 1:31 — **"He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."**
Revelation 5:13 — **"Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power."**

2. No Glory For The Flesh

1 Corinthians 1:29 — **"That no flesh should glory in his presence."**
Romans 3:27 — **"Where is boasting then? It is excluded."**
Ephesians 2:9 — **"Not of works, lest any man should boast."**
Galatians 6:14 — **"God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross."**
Philippians 3:3 — **"Have no confidence in the flesh."**

3. The Redeemed Display God's Grace

Ephesians 2:7 — **"The exceeding riches of his grace."**
2 Corinthians 5:17 — **"He is a new creature."**
1 Peter 2:9 — **"That ye should shew forth the praises of him."**

Titus 3:5 — **“According to his mercy he saved us.”**
1 Timothy 1:16 — **“For a pattern to them which should hereafter believe.”**

4. The Gospel Came To The Jew First

Romans 1:16 — **“To the Jew first, and also to the Greek.”**
Matthew 10:6 — **“Go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”**
Acts 2:5 — **“Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven.”**
Acts 3:26 — **“Unto you first God… sent him to bless you.”**
Acts 13:46 — **“It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you.”**

5. Gentiles Also Brought Into Christ

Ephesians 1:13 — **“In whom ye also trusted.”**
Ephesians 2:13 — **“Ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh.”**
Ephesians 3:6 — **“The Gentiles should be fellowheirs.”**
Romans 15:9 — **“That the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy.”**
Acts 28:28 — **“The salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles.”**

6. Jew And Gentile In One Body

Ephesians 2:14 — **“Who hath made both one.”**
Ephesians 2:15 — **“To make in himself of twain one new man.”**
Ephesians 2:16 — **“Reconcile both unto God in one body.”**
Ephesians 3:6 — **“Fellowheirs, and of the same body.”**
1 Corinthians 12:13 — **“By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body.”**

7. Salvation By Trusting Christ

Acts 16:31 — **“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”**
Ephesians 2:8 — **“By grace are ye saved through faith.”**
Romans 4:5 — **“Believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly.”**
2 Timothy 1:12 — **“I know whom I have believed.”**
John 3:16 — **“Whosoever believeth in him should not perish.”**

8. Israel Has Not Been Cast Away

Romans 11:1 — **“Hath God cast away his people? God forbid.”**
Romans 11:25 — **“Blindness in part is happened to Israel.”**
Romans 11:26 — **“And so all Israel shall be saved.”**
Romans 11:28 — **“As touching the election, they are beloved.”**
Romans 11:29 — **“The gifts and calling of God are without repentance.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 1:12 reminds us that salvation has a purpose higher than our comfort. God certainly rescues sinners from judgment, gives eternal life, provides an inheritance, and brings believers into blessings beyond calculation, but Paul says the redeemed should be **"to the praise of his glory."** That means Christianity is badly distorted whenever man becomes the central attraction. Ministry is not supposed to build monuments to the minister, and testimony is not supposed to become an autobiography about how impressive the convert became after God received the privilege of saving him. Grace leaves one Hero standing. The believer may serve faithfully, labour greatly, suffer much, and finish well, but even then First Corinthians 15:10 supplies the proper explanation: **"yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."** The more clearly grace is understood, the less oxygen remains for spiritual swagger.

The phrase **"who first trusted in Christ"** also helps us read Scripture historically without creating division where God created unity. The gospel went to the Jew first. Jewish believers trusted Christ before the great Gentile expansion of the gospel, and the very next verse speaks to those who **"also trusted."** That sequence matters, but chronology does not create spiritual superiority. Ephesians will soon explain that Jew and Gentile have been made one in the body of Christ. The Jewish believer does not stand closer to God because of Abrahamic blood, and the Gentile believer does not become Israel because he has been brought near by Christ's blood. God can preserve Israel's identity, fulfill Israel's future promises, and simultaneously place believing Jews and Gentiles into one spiritual body during this present dispensation. The Bible is capable of more than one distinction at a time even when theology prefers one large bucket with the labels rubbed off.

The word **"trusted"** should also strip away enormous amounts of religious clutter. A sinner is not saved by trusting Christ plus trusting his performance, Christ plus his church, Christ plus his baptism, Christ plus his law-keeping, Christ plus his endurance, or Christ plus his ability to remain spiritually impressive until death. Paul says **"trusted in Christ."** Faith does not mean that works disappear from the Christian life; Ephesians 2:10 will place good works exactly where they belong after salvation. But works make a disastrous foundation because flesh can never become righteous enough to supplement the righteousness of Jesus Christ. The man who trusts Christ has stopped trying to hand God a spiritual résumé as though heaven were conducting interviews. **Saving faith does not tell God what you brought to the transaction; it rests in what Christ already brought to the cross.**

Finally, those who have trusted Christ should live so that the praise reaches the right destination. A believer can preach sound doctrine and still crave personal praise, defend grace and still become proud of his understanding of grace, or teach right division while

using knowledge as a club for self-exaltation. The flesh can turn nearly any truth into a mirror if given enough time. Ephesians 1:12 points the mirror away from us. We were saved to display His glory, not ours. That should affect how we serve, speak, suffer, give, teach, correct error, and handle whatever influence God places into our hands. When Christ is truly central, the servant can be useful without needing to become famous, faithful without needing applause, and confident without becoming arrogant. **The believer who first trusted Christ began by abandoning confidence in himself; he should not spend the rest of the Christian life trying to recover it.**

Ephesians 1:13 Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

"In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,"
(Ephesians 1:13)

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"In whom ye also trusted"

The opening words **"In whom"** continue the great controlling theme of Ephesians 1. The blessings are **"in Christ"** (verse 3), the choosing is **"in him"** (verse 4), the believer is **"accepted in the beloved"** (verse 6), redemption is **"In whom"** (verse 7), and the inheritance is **"In whom"** (verse 11). Now Paul says, **"In whom ye also trusted."** Salvation is not faith in faith, confidence in sincerity, trust in religion, or dependence upon a ceremony. The object is Christ. A man can possess enough religious confidence to move a mountain of hymnbooks and still be lost if his confidence is resting on the wrong object. **A strong grip on a rotten rope is still a bad arrangement when you are hanging over eternity.**

The word **"also"** reaches back naturally to verse 12: **"we… who first trusted in Christ."** Paul then addresses **"ye also trusted."** Within the flow of Ephesians, the earlier Jewish believers and the Gentile believers who afterward heard the gospel are being brought into view. Romans 1:16 states the historical order: **"to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."** Yet chronological priority does not create two grades of salvation. Ephesians 2:14 says Christ **"hath made both one,"** and Ephesians 3:6 says Gentiles are **"fellowheirs, and of the same body."** One group heard earlier; the other heard afterward; both stand in Christ

by grace. The Jew does not receive a deluxe Saviour while the Gentile gets the economy model.

Trusting Christ also excludes confidence in flesh. Philippians 3:3 says believers **“have no confidence in the flesh.”** Romans 4:5 speaks of the man who **“worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly.”** Faith is not a disguised work because Scripture deliberately contrasts believing with working. Salvation begins when the sinner stops submitting his own righteousness as evidence and rests upon Christ. **Faith does not help Jesus save you; faith quits trying to help and trusts the One who already finished the work.**

“after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation”

The Holy Ghost now gives an order that religious confusion has spent centuries trying to scramble: **they heard before they believed.** Romans 10:17 agrees exactly: **“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”** Nobody believes a gospel he has never heard. Christianity is based upon revealed truth communicated in words. Paul does not say the Ephesians stared inward until they discovered a divine spark. They **“heard the word of truth.”** God saves through a message, and the message has content.

Paul calls that message **“the word of truth.”** The gospel is not religious opinion, denominational folklore, human philosophy, or whatever happens to produce an emotional response. Christ prayed in John 17:17, **“thy word is truth.”** Colossians 1:5 likewise speaks of **“the word of the truth of the gospel.”** Truth is objective before it becomes experiential. A man may feel wonderfully sincere while believing a lie; sincerity cannot convert falsehood into truth. A compass pointing south does not become reliable because the traveler believes in it passionately. **The gospel does not become true when a sinner believes it; the sinner ought to believe it because it was true before he heard it.**

Then Paul identifies the message specifically as **“the gospel of your salvation.”** First Corinthians 15:1 says, **“I declare unto you the gospel,”** and verses 3–4 give its heart: **“Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.”** That is the historical foundation of the saving message. Christ died **for our sins**, was buried, and rose again. The gospel is not “improve yourself,” “join something,” “get religious,” “keep the commandments until you qualify,” or “try to live like Jesus.” Those things either confuse discipleship with salvation or replace the gospel entirely. The gospel announces what Christ accomplished for sinners.

Notice also the personal wording: **“your salvation.”** The death, burial, and resurrection of Christ are historical facts, but hearing facts alone does not equal salvation. The message

must be believed. A man may know the correct answer to every question on a gospel examination and still be resting upon his baptism, his goodness, his church, or his endurance. Salvation becomes personally his when the message heard is believed and the confidence rests upon Christ. **Knowing that a lifeboat exists is not the same thing as getting off the sinking ship.**

Right division is especially important here. The doctrinal order given to these Ephesian believers is clear: hear **"the gospel of your salvation,"** believe it, and receive the Spirit's sealing. This is not Israel under Sinai, nor an earthly kingdom program requiring men to appropriate national promises. This is Pauline Church doctrine concerning believers in Christ. First Corinthians 15 defines the gospel Paul preached, and Ephesians 1 explains what happens to the believer when that gospel is received.

"in whom also after that ye believed"

Paul repeats **"in whom"** because the object of saving faith remains Christ. Then he states the decisive moment: **"after that ye believed."** Not after they improved sufficiently. Not after they survived a probationary period. Not after they proved they would never backslide. Not after they spoke in tongues, joined a local assembly, received water baptism, or completed a list of religious requirements. The text says **"after that ye believed."** Ephesians 2:8 will say, **"For by grace are ye saved through faith."**

Galatians 3:26 says, **"For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus."** Acts 16:31 says, **"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."** Romans 4:5 says faith is counted for righteousness to the one believing on Him **"that justifieth the ungodly."** The Bible keeps making the entrance simple enough for a sinner to understand and religion keeps arriving with a toolbox to install additional locks on the door. The simplicity does not mean salvation was cheap. It means Christ paid the cost instead of requiring the sinner to finance Calvary afterward.

This phrase also settles the question of whether regeneration must secretly occur before faith in order to enable a sinner to believe. Ephesians gives the revealed order to these believers: they **heard**, then **believed**, then were **sealed**. The verse does not say they were secretly made alive, then enabled to believe, then later informed what had already happened. God initiates salvation through His word, the gospel is proclaimed, the sinner believes, and God performs His saving work. Divine grace gets every ounce of glory without turning faith into an enemy of sovereignty.

Acts 10 supplies a powerful historical picture of Gentiles receiving the Spirit through faith. Peter declared that **"whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins"** (Acts 10:43), and while the message was still being preached, the Holy Ghost fell upon those

who heard. Their water baptism came afterward. Whatever transitional features belong to Acts, that order makes one thing gloriously obvious: water did not cause the Spirit to enter them. **The Holy Ghost did not wait beside the baptistry wondering whether enough water had been applied.**

“ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise”

Now comes one of the strongest eternal-security statements in the New Testament: **“ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise.”** The believer receives more than forgiveness. God places His own Spirit within him and seals him. Second Corinthians 1:22 says God **“hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.”** Ephesians 4:30 states the duration: **“whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.”** God does not seal the believer until his next failure, next bad week, next doubt, or next stumble. The seal reaches **“unto the day of redemption.”**

A seal marks ownership, security, and divine authentication. Romans 8:9 says, **“if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.”** Conversely, the believer possesses the Spirit because he belongs to Christ. First Corinthians 6:19 says, **“your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you.”** The Spirit is not an optional spiritual accessory issued later to advanced Christians. There is no first-class Christianity in which special believers eventually receive the Holy Ghost after having already been saved without Him. **If a man belongs to Christ, he has the Spirit; if he does not have the Spirit, Paul says he is none of His.**

The Spirit is called **“that holy Spirit of promise.”** Galatians 3:14 says believers **“receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.”** Christ had promised the Comforter, and God fulfills His promise by indwelling and sealing the believer. The next verse will call the Spirit **“the earnest of our inheritance.”** An earnest is a guarantee, a pledge that the full possession is coming. God does not merely give His word; He places His Spirit within the believer as heaven’s guarantee of what remains.

This sealing must also be distinguished from Christian filling and daily walk. Ephesians 5:18 commands believers, **“be filled with the Spirit,”** proving that a sealed believer may not be practically controlled by the Spirit at every moment. Ephesians 4:30 warns sealed Christians, **“grieve not the holy Spirit of God.”** A believer may grieve the Spirit without evicting the Spirit. Standing and state must stay distinct. **The seal guarantees ownership; the walk determines whether the owned man behaves like he remembers whose property he is.**

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 1:13 provides one of the clearest salvation sequences in the Pauline epistles: **the sinner hears the word of truth, believes the gospel of salvation, and is sealed with the Holy Spirit.** Christ remains the object at every stage. Salvation does not rest upon works, ritual, water baptism, tongues, religious pedigree, or endurance. The gospel concerns Christ's finished work, and faith receives what grace provides.

The sealing of the Holy Spirit establishes both possession and security. Every genuine believer possesses the Spirit; the Spirit is not a second-stage blessing reserved for an elite class of Christians. Yet sealing must be distinguished from filling and practical fellowship. A believer can grieve the Spirit and still be **"sealed unto the day of redemption."** Security rests in God's work; spirituality concerns the believer's daily response to that secured position.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. Hearing The Word Before Believing

Romans 10:17 — **"Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."**
Acts 15:7 — **"The Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe."**
Acts 10:44 — **"The Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word."**
John 5:24 — **"He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me."**
1 Thessalonians 2:13 — **"When ye received the word of God which ye heard of us."**

2. The Word Of Truth

John 17:17 — **"Thy word is truth."**
Colossians 1:5 — **"The word of the truth of the gospel."**
2 Timothy 2:15 — **"Rightly dividing the word of truth."**
James 1:18 — **"Begat he us with the word of truth."**
Psalm 119:160 — **"Thy word is true from the beginning."**

3. The Gospel Of Salvation

Romans 1:16 — **"The gospel of Christ… the power of God unto salvation."**
1 Corinthians 15:1 — **"I declare unto you the gospel."**
1 Corinthians 15:3 — **"Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures."**
1 Corinthians 15:4 — **"He was buried, and… he rose again the third day."**
Acts 13:38 — **"Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins."**

4. Salvation Through Believing

Acts 16:31 — **“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”**
Romans 4:5 — **“Believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly.”**
Galatians 3:26 — **“Children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.”**
Ephesians 2:8 — **“By grace are ye saved through faith.”**
John 3:16 — **“Whosoever believeth in him should not perish.”**

5. The Spirit Received Through Faith

Galatians 3:2 — **“Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?”**
Galatians 3:14 — **“Receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.”**
Acts 10:43 — **“Whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.”**
Acts 10:44 — **“The Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.”**
Romans 8:9 — **“If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.”**

6. Sealed By God

Ephesians 1:13 — **“Ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise.”**
Ephesians 4:30 — **“Sealed unto the day of redemption.”**
2 Corinthians 1:22 — **“Who hath also sealed us.”**
2 Corinthians 5:5 — **“Given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.”**
2 Timothy 2:19 — **“The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal.”**

7. The Spirit Indwelling The Believer

1 Corinthians 6:19 — **“Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost.”**
Romans 8:9 — **“The Spirit of God dwell in you.”**
1 Corinthians 3:16 — **“The Spirit of God dwelleth in you.”**
2 Timothy 1:14 — **“The Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us.”**
Galatians 4:6 — **“God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts.”**

8. Sealing And Daily Walk Distinguished

Ephesians 4:30 — **“Grieve not the holy Spirit of God.”**
Ephesians 5:18 — **“Be filled with the Spirit.”**
Galatians 5:16 — **“Walk in the Spirit.”**
Galatians 5:25 — **“If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.”**
1 Thessalonians 5:19 — **“Quench not the Spirit.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 1:13 is one of those verses that becomes wonderfully simple when religion is prevented from rearranging the furniture. Paul gives the order: **heard, believed, sealed.**

The sinner hears **“the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation.”** He believes in Christ. God seals him with the Holy Spirit. There is no intervening religious obstacle course in the verse. No priest must approve the transaction, no ordinance finishes what faith supposedly began, and no second spiritual experience upgrades the believer from ordinary salvation to genuine possession of the Spirit. The gospel is proclaimed because salvation rests on revealed truth, and faith receives Christ because salvation cannot be earned by the flesh. **When God draws the road this plainly, religion needs considerable determination to install a tollbooth in the middle of it.**

The words **“the gospel of your salvation”** should also keep Christian preaching centered where God centered it. The gospel is not simply becoming nicer, finding purpose, improving society, healing emotional wounds, joining a church, or developing a spiritual lifestyle. Those subjects may have their proper places, but they are not substitutes for the saving message. Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again according to the Scriptures. Sin created the problem, Christ supplied the sacrifice, resurrection demonstrated His victory, and the sinner is commanded to believe. A ministry can discuss family, culture, politics, morality, prophecy, and every social problem under the sun and still fail its hearers if it never plainly gives them the gospel by which sinners are saved. **A hospital may have beautiful landscaping, comfortable chairs, and impressive architecture, but if nobody inside knows how to treat the disease, the decorations become a cruel joke.**

The sealing of the Spirit should then settle the believer’s assurance. God does not say the Christian is sealed until his next mistake. Ephesians 4:30 says **“unto the day of redemption.”** That means the Christian life is not spent repeatedly getting saved, repeatedly receiving the Spirit, or repeatedly persuading God not to abandon what He purchased. The same believer can grieve the Spirit, which proves sin remains serious, yet the warning itself says he remains sealed. That distinction destroys both legalism and license. Legalism says failure breaks the seal; carnality says the seal makes failure irrelevant. Scripture says the seal is secure and therefore the believer should deeply care about grieving the One who permanently indwells him. **Security is not permission to mistreat the Holy Ghost; it is the reason His grief ought to matter more, not less.**

Finally, this verse should make the Christian confident in the sufficiency of God’s word and suspicious of every system that adds requirements God did not place here. The Ephesians heard truth, believed Christ, and were sealed. The believer does not need to hunt for a sensation to prove the Spirit arrived, because God gave something better than a sensation: a written promise. Feelings rise and fall, experiences can be misunderstood, memories fade, and flesh can manufacture religious excitement almost on command. Scripture remains. The Christian therefore builds assurance upon what God said rather than upon

whether he felt unusually spiritual during last Tuesday's prayer meeting. He heard the gospel, believed on Christ, and God says the Spirit sealed him. That is enough ground for assurance and more than enough reason for holiness. **The Holy Spirit is not heaven's temporary guest in the believer; He is God's seal upon purchased property until the day redemption finishes what grace began.**

Ephesians 1:14 Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

"Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory."
(Ephesians 1:14)

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"Which is the earnest of our inheritance"

The word **"Which"** reaches straight back into verse 13 to **"that holy Spirit of promise."** The Holy Spirit Himself is **"the earnest of our inheritance."** God does not merely tell the believer that an inheritance is coming and then leave him standing outside heaven wondering whether the paperwork will clear. He gives the Holy Spirit as the present pledge of what is still future. Second Corinthians 1:22 says God **"hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts."** Second Corinthians 5:5 says He **"also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit."** The same doctrine appears repeatedly: the Spirit is not an optional religious sensation for advanced Christians but God's present guarantee attached to the believer's future possession.

An **earnest** is something presently given that guarantees more is coming. The believer already has eternal life, forgiveness, acceptance in Christ, adoption, spiritual blessing, and the indwelling Spirit, yet he has not experimentally entered everything contained in his inheritance. Romans 8:23 says believers possess **"the firstfruits of the Spirit"** while still **"waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body."** Something is already possessed, and something is still awaited. That is the balance. Christianity is not merely looking backward to Calvary; it is also looking forward to the completion of what Calvary purchased. **Grace has already put treasure in the believer's hand, and the treasure itself guarantees that God has not forgotten the rest of the estate.**

The expression **“our inheritance”** also joins verse 14 directly to verse 11: **“In whom also we have obtained an inheritance.”** The inheritance belongs to those who are in Christ. Romans 8:17 says, **“if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.”** Galatians 4:7 says, **“if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.”** Again, relationship precedes inheritance. The believer is not attempting to earn family status through faithful labour. He serves because he has been made a son and heir. Rewards for service must be distinguished from the believer’s basic inheritance in Christ, just as salvation must be distinguished from discipleship. **A servant may earn wages; a son receives the family inheritance because he belongs to the family.**

That does not make faithfulness unimportant. Scripture plainly teaches reward, loss, stewardship, and future reigning. But Ephesians 1 is dealing first with what God has made the believer **in Christ**, not what the believer has achieved through service. The Holy Spirit as earnest therefore anchors assurance in God’s action rather than human performance. The Spirit’s presence says, in effect, that heaven has already begun the transaction and heaven intends to finish it. Religion keeps asking the believer to provide additional collateral; God has already provided His own Spirit.

“until the redemption of the purchased possession”

The word **“until”** gives the earnest a duration. The Holy Spirit remains the earnest **“until the redemption of the purchased possession.”** Ephesians 4:30 explains the same truth with striking clarity: **“grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.”** Notice that Paul warns believers they can grieve the Spirit while simultaneously telling them they are sealed **unto** a particular day. Their practical state can be poor while their position remains secured by God. The seal does not expire every time the believer stumbles. **God did not seal His property with a label reading, “Valid unless the flesh has a bad afternoon.”**

The word **“redemption”** must be handled according to context. Ephesians 1:7 has already said, **“In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins.”** That redemption is presently possessed. Yet Romans 8:23 says believers are still **“waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.”** There is therefore no contradiction in saying the Christian has redemption and is still awaiting redemption. The price has been paid, the soul belongs to Christ, forgiveness is possessed, but the mortal body has not yet received its final transformation. Philippians 3:21 says Christ **“shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body.”** First Corinthians 15:53 says, **“this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.”**

The **“purchased possession”** belongs to God because Christ paid for it. First Corinthians 6:19–20 tells believers, **“ye are not your own. For ye are bought with a price.”** First Corinthians 7:23 repeats, **“Ye are bought with a price.”** Acts 20:28 speaks of **“the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.”** First Peter 1:18–19 says believers were not redeemed with silver or gold, **“But with the precious blood of Christ.”** Redemption is therefore not God reclaiming something cheaply. The purchase cost blood.

That language gives the believer both security and responsibility. He is secure because the Owner paid the price and placed His seal upon the purchase. He is responsible because purchased property does not belong to itself. First Corinthians 6:20 continues, **“therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.”** The modern fleshly slogan says, “My body, my life, my decision.” Paul says to the Christian, in effect, “Not so fast—you were bought.” Salvation liberates the believer from condemnation while simultaneously placing him under the rightful ownership of Jesus Christ. **Grace frees the sinner from hell but never frees the redeemed man from the One who bought him.**

The future **“redemption of the purchased possession”** therefore points especially toward the completion of salvation at the resurrection and transformation of the believer’s body. The Christian presently groans in a mortal body subject to weakness, sickness, age, temptation, and death. Yet the grave does not obtain permanent ownership of anything Christ purchased. Romans 8:11 says that the Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead **“shall also quicken your mortal bodies.”** The body presently headed toward dust will one day be changed. **The undertaker may handle the package for a while, but he does not own the contents.**

“unto the praise of his glory”

The verse ends exactly where the entire opening section of Ephesians keeps ending: **with God’s glory.** Verse 6 says, **“To the praise of the glory of his grace.”** Verse 12 says believers should be **“to the praise of his glory.”** Verse 14 says the completed redemption is **“unto the praise of his glory.”** The repeated phrase is deliberate. Salvation begins in God’s purpose, proceeds through Christ’s blood, is secured by the Spirit, and ultimately results in God receiving the praise. Man gets saved; God gets the glory. That is the arrangement grace has established, and flesh never improves it by demanding a percentage.

The future redemption of the believer will glorify God because it will publicly demonstrate that He finished what He began. Philippians 1:6 says, **“he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”** Romans 8:30 carries the chain from predestination through calling and justification all the way to glorification. God does not

begin with grace and finish by depending upon flesh to rescue the project. The same God who called, justified, sealed, and indwelt the believer will complete the redemption.

This glory also strips resurrection of every possibility of human boasting. No corpse resurrects itself. No mortal body transforms itself into immortality. No sinner writes his own name into glory. First Corinthians 15:52 says, **"the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."** God performs the transformation. Christ receives the preeminence. The Spirit guarantees the result. **When the last believer stands glorified, nobody will be polishing a medal for Adam's contribution.**

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 1:14 teaches that **the Holy Spirit is the present earnest of the believer's future inheritance**. The Christian already possesses the Spirit and therefore possesses God's own pledge that the remaining inheritance will be completed. The believer has redemption now through Christ's blood, yet still awaits the future **"redemption of our body."** Present possession and future completion belong together.

The verse also emphasizes **ownership, security, bodily redemption, and God's glory**. Believers are a purchased possession because Christ bought them with His blood. The Spirit seals that possession until redemption is completed, while the believer remains responsible to glorify the One who bought him. Salvation begins, continues, and ends with God receiving the praise.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. The Holy Spirit As The Earnest

2 Corinthians 1:22 — **"Given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts."**
2 Corinthians 5:5 — **"Given unto us the earnest of the Spirit."**
Ephesians 1:14 — **"The earnest of our inheritance."**
Romans 8:23 — **"The firstfruits of the Spirit."**
Galatians 4:6 — **"God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts."**

2. The Believer's Inheritance

Ephesians 1:11 — **"We have obtained an inheritance."**
Romans 8:17 — **"Heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ."**
Galatians 4:7 — **"An heir of God through Christ."**
Colossians 1:12 — **"Partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."**
1 Peter 1:4 — **"An inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled."**

3. Sealed Until Redemption

Ephesians 1:13 — **“Sealed with that holy Spirit of promise.”**
Ephesians 4:30 — **“Sealed unto the day of redemption.”**
2 Corinthians 1:22 — **“Who hath also sealed us.”**
2 Timothy 2:19 — **“The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal.”**
Romans 8:9 — **“The Spirit of God dwell in you.”**

4. Purchased By Christ

1 Corinthians 6:20 — **“Ye are bought with a price.”**
1 Corinthians 7:23 — **“Ye are bought with a price.”**
Acts 20:28 — **“Purchased with his own blood.”**
1 Peter 1:19 — **“The precious blood of Christ.”**
Revelation 5:9 — **“Hast redeemed us to God by thy blood.”**

5. Redemption Already Possessed

Ephesians 1:7 — **“We have redemption through his blood.”**
Colossians 1:14 — **“In whom we have redemption through his blood.”**
Romans 3:24 — **“The redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”**
Hebrews 9:12 — **“Having obtained eternal redemption for us.”**
Galatians 3:13 — **“Christ hath redeemed us.”**

6. Future Redemption Of The Body

Romans 8:23 — **“The redemption of our body.”**
Philippians 3:21 — **“Shall change our vile body.”**
1 Corinthians 15:52 — **“The dead shall be raised incorruptible.”**
1 Corinthians 15:53 — **“This mortal must put on immortality.”**
1 John 3:2 — **“We shall be like him.”**

7. God Finishes What He Begins

Philippians 1:6 — **“Will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”**
Romans 8:30 — **“Whom he justified, them he also glorified.”**
1 Thessalonians 5:24 — **“Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.”**
Jude 24 — **“Able to keep you from falling.”**
2 Timothy 1:12 — **“Able to keep that which I have committed unto him.”**

8. Everything Unto God’s Glory

Ephesians 1:6 — **“To the praise of the glory of his grace.”**
Ephesians 1:12 — **“To the praise of his glory.”**
Ephesians 1:14 — **“Unto the praise of his glory.”**

1 Corinthians 1:31 — **“He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.”**
Revelation 5:13 — **“Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 1:14 gives the believer something stronger than a feeling, an experience, or a hopeful guess about the future. God gives **“the earnest of our inheritance.”** The Holy Spirit inside the believer is heaven’s present guarantee that the story is not finished. We have not yet received everything salvation includes because our bodies remain mortal, corruptible, weak, and subject to death. Yet the Spirit is already present, and that means the future redemption is not wishful thinking. The Christian does not merely possess a promise written on paper; he possesses the indwelling Spirit who is Himself called the earnest. **God placed part of the future inside the believer before bringing the believer into the future.**

This truth should settle enormous amounts of insecurity. Ephesians 4:30 says the believer is sealed **“unto the day of redemption.”** That wording leaves very little room for the theory that salvation is repeatedly lost and regained every time the Christian’s practical condition changes. The believer can grieve the Spirit, which proves sin is serious, but grieving the Spirit does not equal removing the seal. God warns the Christian precisely because the Spirit remains present. Carnality damages fellowship, testimony, usefulness, reward, joy, and practical communion, but the remedy is not another new birth. The believer needs correction and cleansing, not another purchase, because Christ does not buy the same possession every Thursday after the flesh gets into trouble.

The expression **“purchased possession”** should also change the way a Christian thinks about ownership. First Corinthians 6:20 says, **“ye are bought with a price.”** Christianity therefore does not teach the saved man that salvation makes him finally independent enough to live entirely for himself. It teaches the exact opposite. Christ purchased him. His body, time, abilities, opportunities, money, mind, speech, and service ought to be handled as property belonging to Another. This is why eternal security can never honestly be used as an argument for carnality. **The stronger the doctrine of purchase becomes, the weaker the argument for self-ownership becomes.**

Then comes the future redemption of the body. That truth matters because Christians still live in bodies that hurt, weaken, age, become sick, grow tired, experience temptation, and eventually die unless the Lord comes first. Salvation has not yet finished its work on the body. Romans 8:23 says believers are **“waiting for… the redemption of our body.”** Philippians 3:21 promises that Christ will **“change our vile body.”** First Corinthians 15 says mortality will put on immortality. That means the grave cannot be the Christian’s final

address, because Christ purchased more than a temporary spiritual escape from judgment. The same redemption that saved the sinner will eventually reach all the way down into the dust and bring the body into conformity with the risen Christ.

Finally, everything terminates **"unto the praise of his glory."** That is where Ephesians 1 keeps driving the reader. God chose in Christ, adopted through Christ, accepted in the Beloved, redeemed through the blood, revealed His mystery, supplied an inheritance, sealed with the Spirit, and will ultimately redeem the purchased possession. When the entire work is complete, the only intelligent response will be praise. Flesh will have nothing left to boast about because flesh did not design the plan, pay the price, apply the redemption, provide the Spirit, keep the seal, raise the dead, or glorify the body. God did the saving, Christ did the purchasing, the Spirit guarantees the inheritance, and heaven gets the glory. **The earnest says the inheritance is coming, the seal says the possession belongs to God, and the resurrection will prove that Christ never loses anything He bought.**

Ephesians 1:15 Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

"Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints,"
(Ephesians 1:15)

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus"

The word **"Wherefore"** reaches backward over the mountain range of doctrine Paul has just crossed. These believers have been blessed **"with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ"** (Ephesians 1:3), chosen in Him, predestinated unto adoption, accepted in the Beloved, redeemed through His blood, forgiven according to the riches of grace, brought into God's revealed purpose, given an inheritance, and sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. Paul does not treat those truths as museum pieces to be admired behind theological glass. Because God has done all of that, there should be recognizable spiritual fruit in the people who possess it. Verse 15 therefore begins the movement from what God has accomplished for the believer toward Paul's prayer concerning the believer's understanding and growth. **Doctrine is the root system; Christian character is supposed to be what eventually shows above ground.**

Paul says, **“after I heard of your faith.”** That should not be pressed into the notion that Paul had never known the Ephesian believers personally. Acts 19 records extensive ministry at Ephesus, and Acts 20:31 says, **“by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.”** Paul knew the work at Ephesus very well. The wording naturally allows for reports reaching him concerning their continuing faith after his departure. Churches change, people grow, new believers are added, old believers are tested, and news travels. Paul had left them, but he had not stopped caring what became of them. A man who plants a tree normally likes to hear whether it is still alive after the storms come through.

The thing he heard about first was **“your faith in the Lord Jesus.”** That is the foundation. Paul does not congratulate them merely for being religious, enthusiastic, charitable, traditional, sincere, or active. Their faith has an object: **“the Lord Jesus.”** Acts 16:31 says, **“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”** Second Timothy 1:12 says, **“I know whom I have believed.”** Saving faith is never merely confidence that everything will somehow work out; it is trust directed toward Jesus Christ. A man can have tremendous faith in a rotten bridge and still end up in the river. **The strength of faith does not rescue a man when the object of faith cannot hold him. Christ can hold him.**

Notice also the title **“Lord Jesus.”** Grace has not reduced Christ to a convenient religious assistant whose only function is keeping people out of hell. He is Lord. Romans 14:8 says, **“whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.”** First Corinthians 6:20 says, **“ye are bought with a price.”** Salvation is free to the sinner because Christ paid for it, but the redeemed man does not become his own master afterward. Faith rests upon Jesus as Saviour while acknowledging the rightful authority of Jesus as Lord. The Christian belongs to the One he trusted.

At the same time, this verse must not be twisted into the idea that perfect lordship in the believer’s practical life is a prerequisite for justification. Paul is writing to people already sealed with the Spirit in verse 13, and later he will command those same saved people to put away lying, stealing, bitterness, corrupt communication, fornication, and foolishness. Their standing was settled before their walk was perfected. Faith in Christ saves; discipleship concerns how the saved man lives under the Lordship of the One who saved him. **The Lord owns the Christian completely even while the Christian is still learning how completely he ought to obey his Owner.**

“and love unto all the saints”

The second report Paul heard concerned their **“love unto all the saints.”** Faith looks toward Christ; love reaches toward Christ’s people. That pairing appears elsewhere in

Paul's writings. Colossians 1:4 says, **"Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints."** Philemon 5 speaks of **"thy love and faith, which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints."** Biblical Christianity therefore refuses the artificial separation between professed devotion to Christ and practical treatment of His people. A man who boasts loudly about loving Jesus while despising every Christian around him has somehow developed a religion in which the Head is wonderful but His body is intolerable.

The word **"saints"** again refers to living believers, not a tiny religious aristocracy promoted to sainthood after death by ecclesiastical vote. Paul addressed the Ephesian Christians as **"saints"** in verse 1. First Corinthians 1:2 calls ordinary church members **"sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints,"** despite the fact that the rest of the epistle has to rebuke them for divisions, carnality, lawsuits, disorder, and other failures. Sainthood is first a position in Christ. The saint should then learn to live saintly, but the title is grounded in sanctification through Christ rather than posthumous institutional recognition. **Rome may require a committee, a calendar, and a ceremony to manufacture a saint; Paul required somebody to be in Christ.**

Their love extended **"unto all the saints."** That little word **"all"** exposes the tribal instincts of flesh. Natural man loves his circle, his crowd, his denomination, his background, his social level, his preferred personalities, and especially the people who agree with him about everything down to where to place the comma. Christian love reaches farther. Galatians 6:10 says, **"let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith."** First John 3:14 says, **"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."** A believer does not need every saint to possess the same temperament before treating him as family.

But **"love unto all the saints"** is not a command to abandon doctrine in the name of religious togetherness. Biblical love never requires calling falsehood truth. First Corinthians 13:6 says charity **"rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth."** Romans 16:17 commands believers to **"mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them."** Second Thessalonians 3:14 speaks of withdrawing practical fellowship from disobedient brethren while verse 15 immediately adds, **"Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother."** There is the balance. A brother can be wrong enough to require correction without becoming an enemy. **Biblical love has a heart, but unlike modern sentimentality, it also has a backbone and a Bible.**

Love among saints should therefore express itself practically. First John 3:18 says, **"let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth."** Romans 12:10 commands,

“Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love.” Galatians 5:13 says, **“by love serve one another.”** Christian love is not merely warm vocabulary exchanged before the church service. It bears burdens, forgives offences, gives help, prays, serves, encourages, corrects when necessary, and refuses to turn every disagreement into a private civil war. **A faith that never produces love is a tree claiming life while refusing to grow leaves.**

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 1:15 joins **faith in the Lord Jesus** with **love unto all the saints**. Faith is directed vertically toward Christ; love extends horizontally toward believers. Neither truth should be confused with the other. Love does not become the ground of justification, and faith does not give permission for a loveless Christian life. Salvation rests entirely upon Christ, while genuine spiritual life ought increasingly to produce visible affection and service toward those who belong to Him.

The verse also introduces Paul’s prayer section. Having heard evidence that these Ephesians possess genuine faith and Christian love, Paul does not decide they have spiritually arrived. He begins praying that they may know more. Conversion is not graduation from the school of Christ; it is enrollment. The believer can be saved, sealed, loving the saints, and still desperately need wisdom, revelation, enlightened understanding, knowledge of his calling, appreciation of his inheritance, and understanding of God’s power.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. Faith Directed Toward Jesus Christ

Acts 16:31 — **“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.”**
Romans 3:22 — **“The righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ.”**
Galatians 3:26 — **“Children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.”**
Philippians 3:9 — **“The righteousness which is of God by faith.”**
2 Timothy 1:12 — **“I know whom I have believed.”**

2. Faith Comes Through The Gospel

Romans 10:17 — **“Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”**
Ephesians 1:13 — **“After that ye heard the word of truth.”**
1 Corinthians 15:1 — **“I declare unto you the gospel.”**
Romans 1:16 — **“The gospel of Christ… the power of God unto salvation.”**
1 Thessalonians 2:13 — **“The word of God which ye heard of us.”**

3. Jesus Christ Is Lord

Romans 14:8 — **“Whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.”**
1 Corinthians 6:20 — **“Ye are bought with a price.”**
Philippians 2:11 — **“Jesus Christ is Lord.”**
Colossians 2:6 — **“As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord.”**
Acts 10:36 — **“Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:).”**

4. Believers Are Called Saints

Romans 1:7 — **“Called to be saints.”**
1 Corinthians 1:2 — **“Sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints.”**
Ephesians 1:1 — **“To the saints which are at Ephesus.”**
Philippians 1:1 — **“To all the saints in Christ Jesus.”**
Colossians 1:2 — **“To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ.”**

5. Love Toward The Saints

Colossians 1:4 — **“The love which ye have to all the saints.”**
Philemon 5 — **“Toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints.”**
Hebrews 6:10 — **“Ye have ministered to the saints.”**
1 John 3:14 — **“Because we love the brethren.”**
Romans 12:10 — **“Be kindly affectioned one to another.”**

6. Love Expressed Through Service

Galatians 5:13 — **“By love serve one another.”**
1 John 3:18 — **“Let us not love in word… but in deed and in truth.”**
Galatians 6:10 — **“Do good unto all men.”**
Hebrews 13:16 — **“To do good and to communicate forget not.”**
1 Peter 4:10 — **“Minister the same one to another.”**

7. Love Must Remain Joined To Truth

1 Corinthians 13:6 — **“Rejoiceth in the truth.”**
Ephesians 4:15 — **“Speaking the truth in love.”**
Romans 16:17 — **“Mark them which cause divisions… contrary to the doctrine.”**
2 Thessalonians 3:15 — **“Admonish him as a brother.”**
2 John 6 — **“This is love, that we walk after his commandments.”**

8. Faith Should Produce A Changed Walk

Galatians 5:6 — **“Faith which worketh by love.”**
Ephesians 2:10 — **“Created in Christ Jesus unto good works.”**
Titus 3:8 — **“Be careful to maintain good works.”**

James 2:18 — **“I will shew thee my faith by my works.”**
1 Thessalonians 1:3 — **“Your work of faith, and labour of love.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 1:15 gives us a simple test of spiritual balance: **faith in the Lord Jesus and love unto all the saints.** One without the other produces a distorted Christian life. Faith without practical love can become cold orthodoxy in which a man knows every doctrinal distinction but cannot tolerate another believer long enough to help him carry a burden. Love without doctrinal faith becomes sentimental religion, eager to embrace everybody while slowly forgetting what anybody is supposed to believe. Paul commends both. The foundation is Christ, and the fruit reaches the saints. The order matters because love never becomes the price of salvation; it becomes one of the fitting expressions of a life already rooted in Christ.

The phrase **“faith in the Lord Jesus”** also challenges the religious habit of trusting almost everything except Jesus Christ alone. Men trust churches, ordinances, upbringing, morality, feelings, ceremonies, endurance, sincerity, and their ability to improve. Paul points to a Person. Christianity is not confidence in a religious system but confidence in the Lord Jesus Christ. That faith does not make works irrelevant after salvation, but it puts works where they belong. Works become service instead of payment, discipleship instead of justification, fruit instead of root. **The moment works are dragged underneath salvation as the foundation, Christ is no longer being treated as sufficient; He has been reduced to a partner in a business flesh still hopes to manage.**

Then Paul commends their **“love unto all the saints,”** and that word **“all”** needs to stay where God put it. Christians can become astonishingly selective with affection. They can love believers who look like them, vote like them, worship like them, speak like them, and agree with them, while treating every doctrinal disagreement as though somebody had declared war. Biblical love is broader without becoming spineless. We may correct error, separate where Scripture requires separation, refuse false doctrine, and still remember that a mistaken brother is not automatically an enemy. Paul could withstand Peter **“to the face”** and still recognize Peter as an apostle. Truth without love turns correction into a club; love without truth turns fellowship into theological soup. God calls for something stronger than either counterfeit: **“speaking the truth in love.”**

Finally, this verse leads directly into Paul’s prayer, and that transition teaches something about Christian maturity. Paul had heard of their faith and love, but instead of saying, “Excellent, they have arrived,” he begins praying that God would give them wisdom, revelation, enlightened understanding, and deeper knowledge. A believer can be genuinely saved, spiritually affectionate, doctrinally sound in the essentials, and still have enormous

territory left to learn. That ought to cure spiritual arrogance. The Christian life does not become mature merely because a man has learned enough Bible to recognize everybody else's mistakes. Mature faith keeps growing, mature love keeps serving, and mature knowledge keeps producing greater awareness of how much remains to be learned. **The believer who truly knows Christ does not graduate into self-importance; the farther he travels into the riches of Christ, the more he realizes the country has no visible border.**

Ephesians 1:16 Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

"Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers;" (Ephesians 1:16)

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"Cease not to give thanks for you"

Ephesians 1:16 grows directly out of verse 15. Paul had heard of the Ephesians' **"faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints,"** and his response was not envy, suspicion, or the preacher's old fleshly itch to wonder whether somebody else might be getting more attention. He says, **"Cease not to give thanks for you."** Genuine spiritual fruit in another believer should produce thanksgiving in us because God is the One producing the fruit. First Thessalonians 1:2 gives the same pattern: **"We give thanks to God always for you all."** Paul knew how to rebuke churches hard when necessary, but he also knew how to thank God when grace was visible. Some men become so skilled at detecting error that they could walk through a field of wheat and write a twelve-page report on the weeds without ever mentioning there was wheat in the field. Paul could identify the weeds, but he could thank God for the crop.

The wording is not merely **"give thanks,"** but **"Cease not to give thanks."** This is continual gratitude rather than a passing compliment. Paul's thanksgiving was woven into his prayer life. He was not engaging in empty repetition, for Christ had warned in Matthew 6:7 against **"vain repetitions."** Repeated prayer and vain repetition are not the same thing. Paul repeatedly thanked God because the reason for thanksgiving remained real. First Thessalonians 5:17 says, **"Pray without ceasing."** Colossians 4:2 says, **"Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving."** A man can repeatedly say something meaningful to God without chanting phrases as though heaven were opened by verbal

machinery. **Prayer becomes vain when the mouth keeps moving after the heart has left the room.**

The object of Paul's thanksgiving is worth noticing: **"for you."** He thanks God for people. That is not the same thing as flattering people. Biblical thanksgiving recognizes the grace of God operating in another believer. Paul does not say, "You Ephesians are remarkable people, and I am fortunate to know you." He thanks **God** for them. That keeps appreciation from becoming idolatry. The believer can value faithful Christians deeply while remembering that whatever spiritual good appears in them ultimately came from God. First Corinthians 15:10 says, **"by the grace of God I am what I am."** The mature Christian can appreciate the vessel without forgetting who supplied the treasure.

This also gives us a practical antidote to a constantly critical spirit. There is a proper place for exposing error, rebuking sin, marking false doctrine, and correcting disorder. Paul did plenty of it. But the Christian who never thanks God for anybody has probably developed something other than discernment. Philippians 1:3 says, **"I thank my God upon every remembrance of you."** Romans 1:8 says, **"I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all."** Paul could carry doctrinal steel in one hand and gratitude in the other. **Biblical discernment has eyes sharp enough to see corruption and a heart humble enough to recognize grace.**

"making mention of you in my prayers"

Paul's thanksgiving did not end with a pleasant thought. He says he was **"making mention of you in my prayers."** The Ephesians became specific subjects of intercession. Prayer is not merely speaking generally about "everybody everywhere" until the words become fog. Paul mentioned people. Romans 1:9 says, **"without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers."** First Thessalonians 1:2 says, **"making mention of you in our prayers."** Second Timothy 1:3 says, **"without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day."** Specific people had specific places in Paul's prayer life.

The words **"my prayers"** are also important because the prayer beginning here is unmistakably Pauline prayer for Church-age believers. He is not praying that these saved people will become saved. They have already believed the gospel, been sealed with the Holy Spirit, and demonstrated faith and love. Beginning in verse 17, Paul will ask that God give them **"the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him,"** that **"the eyes of your understanding"** be enlightened, and that they know the hope of God's calling, the riches of His inheritance, and the greatness of His power. That is a magnificent model for praying for believers. The greatest need of a saved man is not always another earthly comfort; sometimes he desperately needs to understand what God has already given him.

That corrects much shallow Christian praying. Prayer requests can easily become a running bulletin of physical ailments, financial troubles, travel plans, jobs, examinations, and family circumstances. Those matters are legitimate. Philippians 4:6 says, **"in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."** But Paul's prayer life reaches farther than circumstances. He prays for understanding, wisdom, spiritual knowledge, growth, strength, love, discernment, and fruitful living. A church can spend forty-five minutes praying for everybody's body and five seconds praying for anybody's doctrine. Then it wonders why everybody is healthy enough to be confused.

Paul's example also destroys the idea that prayer is merely an attempt to force God into doing what we have already decided ought to happen. He is asking according to revealed spiritual priorities. First John 5:14 says, **"if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us."** Colossians 1:9 records another Pauline prayer that believers **"might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding."** Prayer should increasingly line up with God's revealed concerns. **The strongest prayer is not the one that twists God's arm hardest; it is the one that has learned what God already cares about.**

This prayer also demonstrates that spiritual maturity never makes intercession unnecessary. The Ephesians had faith in Christ and love for the saints, yet Paul still prayed for them. Strong believers need prayer. Faithful churches need prayer. Sound teachers need prayer. A man does not become too mature for intercession any more than a soldier becomes too experienced to need ammunition. Ephesians 6:18 will later command, **"praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit."** The Christian who has grown should require different prayers, not fewer prayers.

Finally, **"making mention of you"** shows something about spiritual affection. Paul had been separated geographically from these believers, but distance did not erase concern. A prayer list can become a kind of spiritual map joining people who may never stand in the same room. Philippians 1:4 says Paul made request **"for you all making request with joy."** Colossians 1:3 says, **"praying always for you."** A believer may be powerless to solve another Christian's circumstances directly, yet he is never powerless to bring that person before God. **Intercession is what love does when its hands cannot reach far enough but its prayers can.**

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 1:16 teaches the inseparable relationship between **thanksgiving and intercession**. Paul heard evidence of faith and love among the Ephesians and responded

by thanking God while continuing to pray for them. Thanksgiving recognizes what God has already done; intercession asks Him to continue His work. The believer should therefore learn to pray from gratitude rather than only from crisis.

The verse also prepares the way for one of the great Church-age prayers of the New Testament. Paul does not pray for already-sealed believers to receive salvation again. He prays that saved people will understand more deeply what they possess in Christ. This keeps salvation and spiritual growth properly distinguished. The new birth gives life; prayer seeks maturity in those who already have that life.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. Thanksgiving For Other Believers

Romans 1:8 — **"I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all."**
Philippians 1:3 — **"I thank my God upon every remembrance of you."**
Colossians 1:3 — **"We give thanks to God… praying always for you."**
1 Thessalonians 1:2 — **"We give thanks to God always for you all."**
2 Thessalonians 1:3 — **"We are bound to thank God always for you."**

2. Continual Prayer

1 Thessalonians 5:17 — **"Pray without ceasing."**
Romans 12:12 — **"Continuing instant in prayer."**
Colossians 4:2 — **"Continue in prayer."**
Luke 18:1 — **"Men ought always to pray, and not to faint."**
Ephesians 6:18 — **"Praying always with all prayer and supplication."**

3. Making Mention Of Others

Romans 1:9 — **"I make mention of you always in my prayers."**
1 Thessalonians 1:2 — **"Making mention of you in our prayers."**
2 Timothy 1:3 — **"I have remembrance of thee in my prayers."**
Philemon 4 — **"Making mention of thee always in my prayers."**
Philippians 1:4 — **"Always in every prayer of mine for you all."**

4. Prayer Joined With Thanksgiving

Philippians 4:6 — **"By prayer and supplication with thanksgiving."**
Colossians 4:2 — **"Watch in the same with thanksgiving."**
1 Timothy 2:1 — **"Prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks."**
Colossians 3:17 — **"Giving thanks to God and the Father by him."**
1 Thessalonians 5:18 — **"In every thing give thanks."**

5. Prayer For Spiritual Understanding

Ephesians 1:17 — **“The spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him.”**
Ephesians 1:18 — **“The eyes of your understanding being enlightened.”**
Colossians 1:9 — **“Filled with the knowledge of his will.”**
Philippians 1:9 — **“That your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge.”**
Psalm 119:18 — **“Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things.”**

6. Prayer For Saved Believers To Grow

Ephesians 3:16 — **“Strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man.”**
Ephesians 3:19 — **“Filled with all the fulness of God.”**
Colossians 1:10 — **“Increasing in the knowledge of God.”**
2 Thessalonians 1:11 — **“That our God would count you worthy of this calling.”**
1 Thessalonians 3:10 — **“Might perfect that which is lacking in your faith.”**

7. Prayer According To God’s Will

1 John 5:14 — **“If we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us.”**
John 15:7 — **“Ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.”**
Matthew 6:10 — **“Thy will be done.”**
Romans 8:27 — **“Maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.”**
James 4:15 — **“If the Lord will.”**

8. Love Expressed Through Intercession

Colossians 1:9 — **“We… do not cease to pray for you.”**
1 Samuel 12:23 — **“God forbid that I should sin… in ceasing to pray for you.”**
James 5:16 — **“Pray one for another.”**
Ephesians 6:18 — **“Supplication for all saints.”**
1 Timothy 2:1 — **“Intercessions… be made for all men.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 1:16 gives us a needed correction to the way many Christians think about prayer. Most prayer begins when something breaks. Somebody gets sick, money gets tight, a job disappears, a relationship collapses, or trouble arrives, and suddenly prayer becomes urgent. There is nothing wrong with crying to God from trouble; the Psalms are full of it. But Paul is praying here because something is going **right**. He heard of faith and love, and he thanked God. Mature prayer does not merely call the fire department when the house is burning; it thanks God when the house is standing, the family is growing, and grace is plainly at work. **A Christian who only prays when things are wrong will spend much of his life failing to thank God for what He already made right.**

Paul's words should also challenge us concerning how we think about other believers. It is remarkably easy to remember somebody's irritating habits and forget the evidence of grace in his life. We can remember the sentence he should not have said, the doctrine he has not yet understood, the personality trait that rubs us wrong, and the weakness that keeps showing up. Paul certainly did not ignore error, but when he saw faith and love he thanked God for them. That does not require pretending Christians are perfect. It requires recognizing that God deserves praise whenever His grace appears in imperfect people. Every believer is unfinished work. **If God waited until Christians were flawless before giving thanks for spiritual progress, nobody would ever make the prayer list.**

The verse also tells us what to do after thanking God: **"making mention of you in my prayers."** Appreciation should produce intercession. Paul did not think, "They have faith and love, so they no longer need prayer." Their progress became a reason to pray for more progress. The prayer that follows is not chiefly about easier circumstances but deeper understanding. Paul wants them to know God better, understand their hope, appreciate their inheritance, and comprehend divine power. That should reshape many prayer meetings. Bodies matter, jobs matter, families matter, finances matter, but doctrine, wisdom, holiness, understanding, spiritual strength, and usefulness matter too. A Christian can have a healthy body, steady employment, paid bills, and absolutely no idea what God has given him in Christ.

Finally, **"Cease not"** reminds us that prayer is a continuing ministry rather than an occasional emotional event. We cannot personally solve every problem faced by believers we love. Sometimes we cannot even reach them geographically. Sometimes our advice would not help, our presence is impossible, and our resources are limited. But we can mention them before God. That is not doing nothing; it is carrying them before the One who can do what we cannot. Prayer does not make us sovereign, but it keeps us connected to the One who is. And thanksgiving keeps that prayer from becoming nothing but anxiety dressed in religious language. **Paul looked at believers, saw reasons for gratitude, saw reasons for intercession, and did both continually—the healthy pattern of a man who knew that grace already had done much and still had much more work to do.**

Ephesians 1:17 Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

“That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him:”
(Ephesians 1:17)

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

“That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory”

Verse 17 continues the prayer Paul began in verse 16. He has already thanked God for the Ephesians and told them that he makes mention of them in his prayers. Now he tells us what he asks. The first words immediately put prayer in its proper direction: **“the God of our Lord Jesus Christ.”** That expression does not deny the deity of Jesus Christ. John 1:1 says, **“the Word was God,”** John 20:28 records Thomas saying to Christ, **“My Lord and my God,”** and 1 Timothy 3:16 declares, **“God was manifest in the flesh.”** Yet the Son of God truly became man, humbled Himself, took **“the form of a servant”** (Philippians 2:7), and in His incarnate and mediatorial relationship could speak of the Father as **“my God”** (John 20:17). The Bible is perfectly capable of distinguishing the persons of the Godhead without dismantling the deity of Christ.

That distinction is essential because sloppy theology usually falls into one ditch while trying to avoid another. Some read **“the God of our Lord Jesus Christ”** and imagine Christ must therefore be a lesser created being. Others become so nervous about defending His deity that they blur Father and Son into one Person and wreck the plain wording of Scripture. The King James Bible needs neither rescue operation. First Corinthians 11:3 says, **“the head of Christ is God,”** while Colossians 2:9 says of Christ, **“in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.”** Both statements are true. **The Father is not the Son, the Son is not the Father, and the Son is no less divine because Scripture knows the difference.**

Paul then calls God **“the Father of glory.”** Glory originates with Him, belongs to Him, and ultimately returns to Him. Acts 7:2 calls Him **“The God of glory.”** Romans 3:23 says mankind has **“come short of the glory of God,”** while Ephesians 1 has repeatedly shown God acting **“to the praise of his glory.”** The whole chapter moves from glory to grace and back to glory. God planned salvation according to His wisdom, accomplished redemption through Christ, sealed believers with the Spirit, and will complete the purchased possession unto His glory. The Christian does not approach a weak deity trying to scrape together enough power for the next emergency. He approaches **“the Father of glory.” Prayer begins to straighten out when the believer remembers who is sitting on the throne before he starts describing what is lying on the floor.**

“may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation”

Paul asks that God **“may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation.”** Notice who receives this request. These people have already trusted Christ, heard the gospel, believed, and been sealed with the Holy Spirit according to verse 13. Therefore Paul cannot be praying for them to receive the Holy Spirit as though they had somehow been saved without Him. Romans 8:9 says, **“if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.”** The Spirit already indwells them. This prayer concerns spiritual wisdom and understanding in believers who already possess the Spirit. It is growth, not another new birth; illumination, not another sealing.

Wisdom is more than accumulated information. A man can fill shelves with books, collect theological vocabulary by the truckload, and still possess enough spiritual judgment to walk into every ditch on the road. Proverbs 2:6 says, **“For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.”** James 1:5 tells the believer who lacks wisdom to **“ask of God.”** Colossians 1:9 records Paul praying that Christians might be **“filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.”** Biblical wisdom knows how truth fits together, how distinctions must be maintained, how Scripture governs conduct, and how doctrine should direct the walk. **Knowledge can tell you what the pieces are; wisdom keeps you from assembling them into a theological lawn mower and calling it an airplane.**

Paul joins wisdom with **“revelation.”** Revelation is truth made known by God that man could not manufacture by unaided human reasoning. Earlier in this chapter God **“made known unto us the mystery of his will”** (Ephesians 1:9), and Ephesians 3:3 says, **“by revelation he made known unto me the mystery.”** God must reveal what man cannot independently discover. Yet the context here is not permission for every excitable religious person to announce that God privately revealed a new doctrine at breakfast. Paul is praying for believers to comprehend divine truth, not to become competing apostles. Verse 18 immediately explains the direction: **“The eyes of your understanding being enlightened.”** Revelation produces understanding of what God has made known, not a license to outrank the Book.

For the believer, Scripture remains the controlling authority. Second Timothy 3:16 says, **“All scripture is given by inspiration of God,”** and verse 17 says it furnishes the man of God **“unto all good works.”** First Corinthians 2:12 says believers have received the Spirit **“that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.”** The Holy Spirit who inspired the words enables believers to understand spiritual truth, but He does not contradict Himself by whispering something into a man’s ear that overturns what He put in the Bible. **Any “revelation” that requires correcting the written word has already revealed one thing very clearly: somebody is listening to the wrong voice.**

“in the knowledge of him”

The goal of the prayer is stated plainly: **“in the knowledge of him.”** Paul is not praying merely that the Ephesians know more facts, memorize more terminology, or become impressive contestants in a Bible trivia tournament. He wants them to know God. Philippians 3:10 gives the cry, **“That I may know him.”** Colossians 1:10 speaks of **“increasing in the knowledge of God.”** Second Peter 3:18 commands, **“grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”** Biblical knowledge has an object greater than information. It brings the believer into deeper understanding of God’s character, purpose, grace, holiness, power, calling, and will as revealed in His word.

That matters because it is possible to know doctrines concerning God while remaining remarkably ignorant of the God those doctrines describe. Correct doctrine is indispensable; Paul never opposes knowledge of truth to knowledge of God. The two belong together. But information that never produces reverence, obedience, gratitude, stability, or holiness has stopped short of its proper destination. Titus 1:16 describes some who **“profess that they know God; but in works they deny him.”** Truth received in the head while rebellion controls the life is not maturity. **A man may know the dimensions of Noah’s ark and still be sinking spiritually in a puddle of his own stubbornness.**

The phrase also prepares for verses 18–19. Knowing God changes the way believers understand **“the hope of his calling,” “the riches of the glory of his inheritance,”** and **“the exceeding greatness of his power.”** Paul is not praying for vague mystical awareness. He is praying for understanding anchored in definite revealed truths. The more clearly the believer knows God through Scripture, the more accurately he sees salvation, inheritance, power, calling, and future glory. Spiritual maturity is therefore not climbing beyond Bible doctrine into something supposedly deeper. **The deepest Christian is not the one who has outgrown the Book; he is the one who keeps discovering how far down the Book goes.**

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 1:17 teaches that saved and sealed believers still need **spiritual wisdom, enlightened understanding, and increasing knowledge of God**. Salvation gives life immediately, but maturity develops as God teaches His people through His word. The verse therefore separates conversion from growth. A Christian does not need another Holy Spirit, another salvation, or a second sealing; he needs to understand more fully the truth the Spirit has already brought him into.

The verse also safeguards both the deity of Christ and the distinction between Father and Son, while placing Christian knowledge under divine revelation rather than human

speculation. God reveals truth; man receives it. Wisdom applies it. Scripture governs it. The ultimate objective is not intellectual display but **“the knowledge of him.”**

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. The Deity Of Jesus Christ

John 1:1 — **“The Word was God.”**
John 20:28 — **“My Lord and my God.”**
1 Timothy 3:16 — **“God was manifest in the flesh.”**
Colossians 2:9 — **“All the fulness of the Godhead bodily.”**
Titus 2:13 — **“The great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.”**

2. The Father And The Son Distinguished

John 20:17 — **“I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.”**
1 Corinthians 11:3 — **“The head of Christ is God.”**
John 17:1 — **“Father, the hour is come.”**
Philippians 2:6–7 — **“Being in the form of God… took upon him the form of a servant.”**
Hebrews 1:8 — **“But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God.”**

3. God As The Source Of Glory

Acts 7:2 — **“The God of glory appeared.”**
Romans 3:23 — **“Come short of the glory of God.”**
Ephesians 1:6 — **“The praise of the glory of his grace.”**
Ephesians 1:14 — **“Unto the praise of his glory.”**
Romans 11:36 — **“To whom be glory for ever.”**

4. Wisdom Comes From God

Proverbs 2:6 — **“The LORD giveth wisdom.”**
James 1:5 — **“Let him ask of God.”**
Colossians 1:9 — **“All wisdom and spiritual understanding.”**
1 Corinthians 1:30 — **“Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom.”**
Psalm 111:10 — **“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.”**

5. God Makes Truth Known

Ephesians 1:9 — **“Having made known unto us the mystery of his will.”**
Ephesians 3:3 — **“By revelation he made known unto me the mystery.”**
Romans 16:25 — **“According to the revelation of the mystery.”**
1 Corinthians 2:10 — **“God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit.”**
Daniel 2:22 — **“He revealeth the deep and secret things.”**

6. The Spirit Gives Understanding

1 Corinthians 2:12 — **“That we might know the things… given to us of God.”**
1 Corinthians 2:13 — **“Which the Holy Ghost teacheth.”**
John 16:13 — **“He will guide you into all truth.”**
Ephesians 1:18 — **“The eyes of your understanding being enlightened.”**
Nehemiah 9:20 — **“Thou gavest also thy good spirit to instruct them.”**

7. Scripture Remains The Authority

2 Timothy 3:16 — **“All scripture is given by inspiration of God.”**
2 Timothy 3:17 — **“Throughly furnished unto all good works.”**
Psalm 119:105 — **“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet.”**
Isaiah 8:20 — **“To the law and to the testimony.”**
John 17:17 — **“Thy word is truth.”**

8. Growing In The Knowledge Of God

Philippians 3:10 — **“That I may know him.”**
Colossians 1:10 — **“Increasing in the knowledge of God.”**
2 Peter 3:18 — **“Grow… in the knowledge of our Lord.”**
Jeremiah 9:24 — **“That he understandeth and knoweth me.”**
Hosea 6:3 — **“Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the LORD.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 1:17 exposes one of the great mistakes Christians make after salvation: assuming that because they possess eternal life, they automatically understand everything God has given them. The Ephesians were saved, sealed, accepted, redeemed, forgiven, and blessed in Christ, yet Paul still prayed that God would give them **“the spirit of wisdom and revelation.”** That means a saved man can possess enormous spiritual riches while understanding very little about them. He can own the inheritance and still live like a pauper because he has never opened the will. Salvation happens in a moment, but understanding requires growth, study, prayer, humility, correction, and time. **The new birth gives you life immediately; it does not download the whole Bible into your head before you get up from your knees.**

The verse also corrects the modern appetite for private revelation. Some people are never satisfied with what God wrote because written Scripture seems too ordinary for spiritual vanity. They want a special message, unusual impression, secret word, private sign, inner voice, or some revelation nobody else has discovered. Yet Paul connects revelation with **“the knowledge of him,”** and the next verse connects it with enlightened understanding.

God is not producing a congregation of independent prophets who each carry a customized edition of truth. The Spirit teaches the believer from the word He inspired, and genuine illumination makes Scripture clearer rather than less necessary. If a supposed revelation contradicts the Bible, corrects the Bible, or asks you to trust the revelation above the Bible, throw the revelation overboard and keep the Book. **God did not spend centuries preserving His words so that somebody could replace them with a feeling he had while brushing his teeth.**

Paul's prayer should also humble the educated Christian. Knowledge is valuable, but knowledge alone is not wisdom. A man can memorize systems, charts, terminology, arguments, dispensations, covenants, prophecies, and doctrinal categories and still lack judgment about how truth should operate in daily life. Wisdom knows how to apply what knowledge has learned. It knows when to speak, when to remain silent, where Scripture draws distinctions, where men have invented distinctions, what belongs doctrinally to Israel, what belongs to the Church, what concerns standing, what concerns state, and what belongs to salvation rather than discipleship. That kind of wisdom must come from God through Scripture. **A full notebook does not guarantee a full-grown Christian; sometimes it only proves the fellow owns a pen.**

Finally, the great goal is **"the knowledge of him."** That ought to straighten the priorities of Bible study. We do not study merely to win arguments, collect unusual facts, embarrass opponents, or demonstrate that we found something everybody else missed. We study because through the written word we learn the mind, character, purpose, grace, holiness, justice, wisdom, and glory of God. The better we know Him, the smaller human boasting becomes and the more stable Christian living becomes. Paul had already seen the risen Christ, received revelation, preached across the Roman world, suffered for the gospel, and written Scripture, yet his own desire remained, **"That I may know him."** There is no graduation ceremony from that school in this life. **The Christian who thinks he knows enough about God has not discovered how much God there is to know.**

Ephesians 1:18 Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

“The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,”
Ephesians 1:18

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

“The eyes of your understanding being enlightened”

Paul is still praying. Verse 17 asked that God would give these already-saved, already-sealed believers **“the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him.”** Verse 18 explains what that spiritual enlightenment accomplishes: **“The eyes of your understanding being enlightened.”** These are not physical eyes. A man can possess twenty-twenty vision and still be spiritually blind enough to walk straight past what God put plainly in front of him. Scripture repeatedly speaks of inward perception in visual terms. Psalm 119:18 says, **“Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.”** Luke 24:45 says of the disciples, **“Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures.”** God does not merely place truth on the page; the believer needs spiritual understanding to grasp, connect, appreciate, and properly apply it.

Notice carefully that Paul is praying this for Christians. The Ephesians had heard the gospel, believed it, and were sealed with the Spirit in verse 13. Therefore salvation does not automatically produce mature biblical understanding. New birth gives spiritual life; it does not make every newborn Christian a seasoned Bible student before breakfast. First Corinthians 3:1 speaks of believers who were **“babes in Christ.”** First Peter 2:2 tells newborn babes to **“desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.”** Growth requires Scripture, prayer, teaching, obedience, correction, and time. **A man can own a Bible, possess the Holy Spirit, and still have whole rooms in the house of Scripture where he has never turned on the light.**

The word **“enlightened”** is also worth guarding from counterfeit spirituality. Biblical enlightenment is not mystical self-discovery, religious imagination, private visions, secret knowledge, or intellectual superiority. It is God enabling the believer to understand revealed truth. Second Corinthians 4:6 says God **“hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”** Ephesians is not directing Christians inward to discover divinity hidden in themselves; it directs them toward Christ, God’s calling, God’s inheritance, and God’s power. Modern religion likes to talk about “finding the light within.” The Bible says fallen man needs light from above. **A dark room does not become illuminated by admiring the darkness more sincerely. Somebody has to turn on the light.**

Right division is essential to enlightened understanding. Second Timothy 2:15 commands the workman to be **“rightly dividing the word of truth.”** Every verse is Scripture, but every verse is not addressed doctrinally to the same people under the same administration. A believer can collect verses like a child collecting puzzle pieces from six different boxes and then wonder why the picture looks strange. Enlightened understanding recognizes Israel’s promises without stealing them, Church truth without mixing it with Mosaic law, salvation without confusing it with discipleship, standing without confusing it with state, and grace without turning it into license. **Light does not merely help you see the words; it helps you see where God put them.**

“that ye may know what is the hope of his calling”

God enlightens understanding so believers **“may know.”** Christianity contains certainty. Paul does not say, “that ye may speculate,” “that ye may wonder,” or “that ye may develop several interesting theological possibilities.” He wants believers to **know**. First John 5:13 says Scripture was written **“that ye may know that ye have eternal life.”** Second Timothy 1:12 says, **“I know whom I have believed.”** Biblical humility does not require pretending God has spoken unclearly where He has spoken plainly. There are mysteries beyond us, but what God has revealed is given to be believed and known.

The first thing Paul wants them to know is **“the hope of his calling.”** Biblical hope is not uncertain wishing. Romans 5:5 says, **“hope maketh not ashamed.”** Colossians 1:5 speaks of **“the hope which is laid up for you in heaven.”** Titus 2:13 calls believers to be **“Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.”** The Christian’s hope points forward to the completion of salvation, the coming of Christ, bodily redemption, resurrection glory, and everything connected with the believer’s heavenly destiny in Him. The hope is certain because the One who called us is faithful.

Ephesians 4:4 speaks of **“one hope of your calling.”** Philippians 3:14 speaks of **“the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”** The Church’s calling is heavenly in character. Ephesians 2:6 says God **“hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”** That does not cancel God’s earthly promises to Israel. Romans 11:29 says, **“the gifts and calling of God are without repentance,”** and the same chapter warns Gentile believers against boasting over Israel. Right division allows Israel to retain the national and earthly promises God swore to the fathers while recognizing the body of Christ as blessed with a heavenly position and calling. **The Church does not become rich by emptying Israel’s mailbox; God has already filled our own with blessings in heavenly places.**

Knowing this hope changes the Christian's present walk. Colossians 3:1 says, **"seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God."** Philippians 3:20 says, **"our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour."** A man who really understands his future will not evaluate everything by this present world's measurements. Money, reputation, comfort, possessions, political conditions, health, and earthly success all have their places, but none is the Christian's final hope. The believer is headed somewhere this world cannot provide. **When heaven becomes real, earth finally shrinks back to its proper dimensions.**

"and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints"

Paul now moves from **our hope** to **"his inheritance."** Earlier, verse 11 said, **"In whom also we have obtained an inheritance."** Here Paul speaks of **"his inheritance in the saints."** The two truths stand together. Believers have an inheritance in Christ, but God also regards His redeemed people as His purchased possession. Verse 14 has already spoken of **"the redemption of the purchased possession."** First Corinthians 6:20 says, **"ye are bought with a price."** Acts 20:28 says God purchased the Church **"with his own blood."** Salvation means the believer gains Christ, but it also means Christ gains the believer. **Grace does not merely give us something from God; grace gives God a people purchased for Himself.**

The wording is magnificent: **"the riches of the glory."** Paul does not merely speak of glory but of its riches. Ephesians repeatedly uses the language of divine abundance: **"the riches of his grace"** in verse 7, **"the unsearchable riches of Christ"** in Ephesians 3:8, and **"his riches in glory by Christ Jesus"** in Philippians 4:19. God does not save grudgingly, as though heaven were operating on a ration book. The glory attached to His inheritance exceeds earthly calculation because the value of the redeemed is measured ultimately by the price paid and the purpose for which God purchased them.

This also places the Church in proper perspective. The saints are not impressive because human beings are naturally valuable enough to deserve divine admiration. Ephesians 2 will describe their former condition as **"dead in trespasses and sins,"** walking according to this world and **"by nature the children of wrath."** Whatever glory exists in God's inheritance among the saints is the glory of redemption. Christ takes ruined sinners, washes them, justifies them, seals them, places them in His body, and ultimately presents the Church to Himself **"a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing"** (Ephesians 5:27). **God's masterpiece is impressive not because the raw material was magnificent, but because the Artist can make glory out of wreckage.**

The practical implication is tremendous. If believers are God's inheritance, they should not treat one another cheaply. Ephesians 4:32 commands, **"be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another."** First Corinthians 8:12 warns about sinning against brethren **"for whom Christ died."** A saint may be immature, irritating, confused, or difficult, but Christ purchased him. That does not forbid discipline, rebuke, separation from disorder, or correction of error. It means correction should never forget ownership. **Before treating a brother like disposable rubbish, remember whose blood marked the purchase price.**

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 1:18 centers upon **spiritual illumination, certain hope, and divine inheritance**. Saved believers need their understanding enlightened so they can comprehend what God has already revealed. Spiritual maturity does not consist of inventing new truth but of increasingly understanding God's truth concerning Christ, the believer's calling, future hope, and place in God's purpose.

The verse also balances what the believer receives with what God receives. We possess an inheritance in Christ, while God possesses a redeemed people as His purchased possession. The Church's hope is heavenly and must not be confused with Israel's national earthly promises. Both programs glorify God without requiring one to erase the other.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. Spiritual Eyes Opened

Psalm 119:18 — **"Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things."**
Luke 24:45 — **"Then opened he their understanding."**
2 Corinthians 4:6 — **"Hath shined in our hearts."**
Acts 26:18 — **"To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light."**
Ephesians 5:14 — **"Christ shall give thee light."**

2. Growing In Understanding

Proverbs 2:6 — **"The LORD giveth wisdom."**
Colossians 1:9 — **"Wisdom and spiritual understanding."**
2 Timothy 2:7 — **"The Lord give thee understanding in all things."**
Psalm 119:130 — **"The entrance of thy words giveth light."**
Proverbs 4:7 — **"With all thy getting get understanding."**

3. Rightly Dividing Scripture

2 Timothy 2:15 — **“Rightly dividing the word of truth.”**
1 Corinthians 10:32 — **“The Jews… the Gentiles… the church of God.”**
Romans 11:25 — **“Blindness in part is happened to Israel.”**
Romans 11:29 — **“The gifts and calling of God are without repentance.”**
Ephesians 3:6 — **“Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body.”**

4. Knowing With Certainty

1 John 5:13 — **“That ye may know that ye have eternal life.”**
2 Timothy 1:12 — **“I know whom I have believed.”**
Romans 8:28 — **“We know that all things work together for good.”**
1 John 3:2 — **“We know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him.”**
Romans 5:3 — **“Knowing that tribulation worketh patience.”**

5. The Hope Of Our Calling

Ephesians 4:4 — **“One hope of your calling.”**
Colossians 1:5 — **“The hope which is laid up for you in heaven.”**
Titus 2:13 — **“Looking for that blessed hope.”**
Philippians 3:14 — **“The high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”**
1 Peter 1:3 — **“Begotten us again unto a lively hope.”**

6. The Church’s Heavenly Position

Ephesians 1:3 — **“Spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.”**
Ephesians 2:6 — **“Sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”**
Philippians 3:20 — **“Our conversation is in heaven.”**
Colossians 3:1 — **“Seek those things which are above.”**
2 Corinthians 5:1 — **“An house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”**

7. God’s Purchased Possession

Ephesians 1:14 — **“The redemption of the purchased possession.”**
Acts 20:28 — **“Purchased with his own blood.”**
1 Corinthians 6:20 — **“Ye are bought with a price.”**
1 Corinthians 7:23 — **“Ye are bought with a price.”**
1 Peter 2:9 — **“A peculiar people.”**

8. The Riches Of Divine Glory

Ephesians 1:7 — **“According to the riches of his grace.”**
Ephesians 3:8 — **“The unsearchable riches of Christ.”**
Ephesians 3:16 — **“According to the riches of his glory.”**

Philippians 4:19 — **“According to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”**
Colossians 1:27 — **“The riches of the glory of this mystery.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 1:18 teaches that one of the believer’s greatest needs is not more possessions but more light. The Ephesians already had every spiritual blessing in Christ, yet Paul prayed that **“the eyes of your understanding”** would be enlightened. That ought to sober anyone who assumes having a Bible automatically means understanding it. Scripture can sit open on a desk while tradition, pride, carelessness, or a doctrinal system keeps the mind shuttered. The answer is not mystical imagination but humble submission to the words God actually gave. Read them, compare them, rightly divide them, believe them, and let them correct whatever system you carried into the room. **The Bible does not need more light shining on it nearly as badly as the reader needs light shining into him.**

Paul specifically wants believers to understand **“the hope of his calling.”** Christianity is therefore fundamentally forward-looking. We were saved at a historical cross, we live presently under grace, and we are headed toward a promised future with Christ. That hope is not the world finally becoming pleasant enough to call heaven. It is not human government manufacturing the kingdom of God. It is not the Church stealing Israel’s earthly promises and repainting them with Gentile colors. Our calling is heavenly, our conversation is in heaven, and our blessed hope centers upon Jesus Christ. When that truth controls the mind, present disappointments lose some of their power to dominate us because we stop expecting this present evil world to provide the inheritance God laid up elsewhere.

Then Paul speaks of **“his inheritance in the saints,”** and that turns the whole matter around. We usually think about what we receive from God, and rightly so, but Scripture also reminds us that God has purchased a people for Himself. That should destroy both pride and carelessness. Pride disappears because nothing naturally glorious in us forced God to purchase us. Carelessness disappears because purchased property belongs to its purchaser. Christ did not shed His blood merely to improve our religious vocabulary while we continue living as though we own ourselves. The believer is redeemed, sealed, and destined for glory precisely because he belongs to Another. **Grace gives more security than religion ever could, but it also destroys the fantasy that the Christian is his own property.**

Finally, enlightened understanding should change how we see other believers. Saints can be difficult people because God saves sinners, not polished museum exhibits. Some are immature, some wounded, some doctrinally confused, some stubborn, and some seem to require three extra helpings of grace before lunch. Yet the Church is Christ’s purchased

possession, and Ephesians says there are **“riches of the glory”** connected with His inheritance in the saints. That does not forbid correction; Paul spends entire epistles correcting saints. It forbids contempt. The believer standing beside you may presently look unfinished, but God is not finished. One day Christ will present to Himself a glorious Church without spot or wrinkle. **Do not mistake scaffolding for the finished building; God already knows what His purchased possession will look like when redemption has completed the work.**

Ephesians 1:19 Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

“And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,”
Ephesians 1:19

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

“And what is the exceeding greatness of his power”

Paul is still describing what he wants the **“eyes of your understanding”** to see. Verse 18 dealt with the hope of God’s calling and the riches of His inheritance in the saints; verse 19 now turns to **power**. Not merely power, but **“the exceeding greatness of his power.”** Paul piles the words high because ordinary language almost runs out of breath trying to describe what God has made available toward the believer. Scripture does not present the Christian life as natural human ability improved by religious discipline. The source is God. Ephesians 3:20 will speak of **“the power that worketh in us,”** and Ephesians 6:10 commands, **“be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.”** Christianity is supernatural from beginning to end.

The adjective **“exceeding”** matters. God’s power exceeds human strength, human planning, human intellect, human organization, and every opposing spiritual power. Jeremiah 32:17 says, **“there is nothing too hard for thee.”** Job 42:2 says, **“I know that thou canst do every thing.”** Yet Paul is not giving believers a blank check to imagine anything they want and then stamp “faith” across the bottom of it. God’s power is unlimited; the Christian’s authority to demand whatever he pleases is not. Omnipotence belongs to God, not to the believer’s imagination. **Faith does not turn the Christian into a little god; it teaches the Christian to trust the Almighty God.**

The immediate context also keeps this power anchored in resurrection. Verse 20 explains that this is the power **"which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead."** Therefore the supreme demonstration is not a bigger house, an easier life, or a spectacular religious performance. It is a dead Christ coming out of a sealed tomb and ascending to the right hand of God. That ought to reset the measuring stick. Modern religion sometimes calls something "powerful" because the music was loud, the crowd reacted emotionally, or somebody fell over backward. Paul points to an empty grave. **The New Testament's great exhibit of divine power is not a stage full of excitement; it is a tomb with nobody in it.**

"to us-ward who believe"

God's power is said to be **"to us-ward."** The expression means directed toward us, operating on behalf of and in relation to those who belong to Christ. Paul does not say merely that divine power exists somewhere in heaven as an impressive theological fact. It is **"to us-ward."** The same God who raised Christ is actively involved with the people who have trusted Him. Romans 8:11 says that if the Spirit who raised Jesus dwells in believers, **"he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you."** The resurrection of Christ is therefore both historical victory and the guarantee of future bodily redemption.

That power is already at work before the resurrection of the believer's body. Ephesians 2:1 will say, **"And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins."** It takes divine power to give spiritual life to a dead sinner. It takes divine power to preserve him, strengthen the inner man, produce spiritual fruit, enable service, resist the devil, endure affliction, and continue in faith. Second Corinthians 4:7 says, **"we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."** God deliberately places heavenly treasure in cracked clay pots so nobody gets confused about where the strength came from. **When God uses weak vessels, He is not embarrassed by the vessel; He is advertising the power.**

Paul adds **"who believe."** These are the people toward whom this power operates in the saving relationship described in the chapter. Verse 13 already gave the order: they heard the gospel, believed, and were sealed. Faith does not manufacture God's power; it receives what God provides in Christ. Romans 1:16 calls the gospel **"the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."** First Corinthians 1:18 says that unto those who are saved, the preaching of the cross **"is the power of God."** The sinner is not saved by generating spiritual electricity through intense believing. He believes the gospel, and God performs the work.

That protects salvation from both works religion and mystical nonsense. The verse does not say, “to us-ward who perform enough,” “who feel enough,” “who speak in tongues,” “who join the right denomination,” or “who keep themselves worthy.” It says **“who believe.”** Romans 4:5 deliberately contrasts the man who works with the man who **“believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly.”** Works have their place after salvation, but they are never allowed to crawl underneath the cross and pretend they helped hold it up. **Faith is the empty hand receiving what grace gives; the moment the hand starts sending God an invoice, it has misunderstood the arrangement.**

“according to the working of his mighty power”

The words **“according to”** establish the measure. God’s power toward believers operates **“according to the working of his mighty power.”** Paul does not say “according to our ability,” “according to our education,” “according to our emotional intensity,” or even “according to the size of our faith.” The standard is God’s own mighty power. Ephesians 3:16 uses similar language when Paul prays that believers be strengthened **“according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man.”** God works according to what He possesses, not according to the poverty of the vessel.

The word **“working”** shows active operation. Divine power is not merely stored potential. Philippians 2:13 says, **“For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”** Colossians 1:29 says Paul laboured **“according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.”** The Christian serves, struggles, prays, labours, resists sin, and obeys, but underneath legitimate Christian activity is divine operation. Grace does not produce laziness; it supplies strength for labour. Paul could say, **“I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me”** (1 Corinthians 15:10). **God’s power does not excuse the believer from working; it explains how his work can amount to anything eternal.**

The expression **“his mighty power”** must also be kept within biblical boundaries. It is not a promise that every Christian will duplicate every apostolic sign, heal every sickness, escape every prison, command every circumstance, or manipulate creation by spoken decrees. Paul left Trophimus **“at Miletum sick”** (2 Timothy 4:20), endured a thorn God refused to remove, and told Timothy to use **“a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities”** (1 Timothy 5:23). Divine power did not eliminate weakness; sometimes it was displayed through weakness. Second Corinthians 12:9 says, **“My strength is made perfect in weakness.”** The flesh wants power that makes it impressive. God often supplies power that keeps the believer faithful while the weakness remains.

Right division saves this verse from becoming a religious carnival. Apostolic signs had their purpose, Israel's prophetic kingdom program has its signs and wonders, and God remains able to perform miracles whenever He chooses. But Ephesians 1:19 is not handing every Church-age believer apostolic credentials. Its immediate explanation is Christ's resurrection, exaltation, and supremacy over every principality and power. The same divine might that raised and exalted Christ guarantees the believer's destiny in Him. **You do not need to pretend you can raise everybody from the hospital bed in order to believe God will raise every saved saint from the grave.**

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 1:19 teaches that believers need spiritual illumination to understand the **immense power of God operating toward them**. The measure is not human capability but **"his mighty power."** That power gives life, strengthens believers, sustains service, overcomes spiritual opposition, and ultimately guarantees bodily resurrection because the following verse identifies Christ's resurrection as its supreme demonstration.

The verse also keeps faith and power in their proper relationship. Believers do not create divine power by believing hard enough; they trust the God whose power already exists. Nor should the verse be turned into a promise of unlimited miraculous control over circumstances. God's power may remove weakness, but it may also sustain the believer through weakness. The greatest evidence of the power in this passage is resurrection and exaltation, not religious spectacle.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. The Greatness Of God's Power

Jeremiah 32:17 — **"There is nothing too hard for thee."**
Job 42:2 — **"I know that thou canst do every thing."**
Psalm 62:11 — **"Power belongeth unto God."**
Matthew 19:26 — **"With God all things are possible."**
Revelation 19:6 — **"The Lord God omnipotent reigneth."**

2. The Gospel As God's Power

Romans 1:16 — **"The gospel of Christ… the power of God unto salvation."**
1 Corinthians 1:18 — **"Unto us which are saved it is the power of God."**
1 Corinthians 1:24 — **"Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God."**
1 Corinthians 2:5 — **"Your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."**
2 Corinthians 4:7 — **"The excellency of the power may be of God."**

3. Divine Power Toward Believers

Ephesians 3:20 — **“The power that worketh in us.”**
Ephesians 6:10 — **“Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.”**
Colossians 1:11 — **“Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power.”**
2 Timothy 1:7 — **“God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power.”**
2 Peter 1:3 — **“His divine power hath given unto us all things.”**

4. God Working In The Believer

Philippians 2:13 — **“It is God which worketh in you.”**
Colossians 1:29 — **“His working, which worketh in me mightily.”**
1 Corinthians 15:10 — **“Yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.”**
Hebrews 13:21 — **“Working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight.”**
Ephesians 3:7 — **“According to the effectual working of his power.”**

5. Resurrection Power

Ephesians 1:20 — **“Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead.”**
Romans 8:11 — **“Shall also quicken your mortal bodies.”**
1 Corinthians 6:14 — **“God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us.”**
2 Corinthians 4:14 — **“He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also.”**
Philippians 3:21 — **“According to the working whereby he is able.”**

6. Power Displayed Through Weakness

2 Corinthians 12:9 — **“My strength is made perfect in weakness.”**
2 Corinthians 12:10 — **“When I am weak, then am I strong.”**
2 Corinthians 4:7 — **“We have this treasure in earthen vessels.”**
1 Corinthians 2:3 — **“I was with you in weakness.”**
2 Corinthians 13:4 — **“Though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God.”**

7. Salvation Through Believing

Ephesians 1:13 — **“After that ye believed, ye were sealed.”**
Romans 4:5 — **“Believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly.”**
Acts 16:31 — **“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”**
Galatians 3:26 — **“Children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.”**
Ephesians 2:8 — **“By grace are ye saved through faith.”**

8. Christ Above Spiritual Powers

Ephesians 1:21 — **“Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion.”**
Colossians 2:10 — **“The head of all principality and power.”**
Colossians 2:15 — **“Having spoiled principalities and powers.”**
1 Peter 3:22 — **“Angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.”**
Philippians 2:10 — **“At the name of Jesus every knee should bow.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 1:19 corrects two opposite mistakes Christians make concerning the power of God. One group lives as though Christianity were nothing more than human morality helped along by religious encouragement. Their God may theoretically be omnipotent, but practically He has been reduced to a framed doctrine hanging on the wall while human ability runs the household. The other group talks about divine power as though every believer has been handed the controls to omnipotence and can command circumstances, health, money, weather, enemies, and physical creation by saying the right words with enough confidence. Paul avoids both errors. God’s power is real, immeasurable, and actively directed toward believers, but it remains **His** power, operating according to **His** purpose. **The Christian does not carry omnipotence in his pocket; he belongs to the God who possesses it.**

The immediate context tells us where to look if we want to understand that power: look at Jesus Christ coming out of the grave. That is Paul’s great illustration. Death had done everything death knows how to do. The body had been crucified, pierced, wrapped, laid in a tomb, and guarded. Then God raised Him. That same resurrection becomes the guarantee that the believer’s mortal body will not remain in the ground forever. Romans 8:11 says the Spirit who raised Christ **“shall also quicken your mortal bodies.”** Christian hope therefore rests upon something vastly stronger than positive thinking or emotional optimism. The grave has already lost the decisive battle. **Calvary paid the purchase price, the empty tomb displayed the power, and the believer’s resurrection will finish the demonstration.**

That same power operates in Christian life now, though often in ways flesh does not consider impressive. Sometimes God’s power delivers; sometimes it enables endurance. Sometimes it removes an obstacle; sometimes it makes the believer strong enough to walk through it. Paul prayed for his thorn to leave, and God answered, **“My grace is sufficient for thee.”** That was not divine failure. It was divine strength revealed through human weakness. The world admires power that makes a man untouchable; Scripture often displays power that keeps a man faithful while he is being touched by everything. A believer who keeps serving Christ through disappointment, suffering, temptation, opposition, and weakness may demonstrate more genuine spiritual power than somebody making a great

religious show before a crowd. **God's strength is not measured merely by what He keeps you out of, but by what He can carry you through without letting it separate your heart from Him.**

Finally, Paul wants believers to **know** this power. That means ignorance of divine power produces unnecessary fear, defeat, and dependence upon flesh. The Christian should not look at sin, spiritual opposition, ministry, suffering, or the future as though everything depends upon his natural resources. Ephesians eventually tells him to be **"strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might."** That strength does not excuse laziness; Philippians says God works in us **"both to will and to do."** Divine power produces obedient activity rather than replacing it. The believer works because God works in him, serves because grace strengthens him, stands because the Lord supplies might, and looks toward resurrection because Christ has already conquered death. **The great question is not whether you are strong enough for everything ahead; the question is whether the God who raised Jesus Christ has somehow become weaker since Easter morning.**

Ephesians 1:20 Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

"Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places,"
Ephesians 1:20

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead"

The word **"Which"** reaches directly back to verse 19 and identifies the supreme historical demonstration of **"the exceeding greatness of his power"** and **"the working of his mighty power."** Paul does not leave divine power floating in theological abstraction. He points to an event: God **"raised him from the dead."** Christianity stands or falls on a bodily resurrection. First Corinthians 15:14 says, **"if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain."** The resurrection is not inspirational symbolism about hope surviving difficulty. A dead body came out of a grave. The Man who was crucified, buried, and certified dead rose bodily, visibly, and victoriously. **The gospel does not ask a sinner to admire a philosophy; it asks him to believe in a Saviour whose grave is empty.**

The wording **“he wrought in Christ”** connects resurrection directly with divine power. Death had done its worst. Christ had been crucified, pierced, wrapped, buried, and sealed in a tomb. Human authorities could post guards, roll stones, issue orders, and congratulate themselves on finally silencing Him, but none of that amounted to much when God decided Sunday morning had arrived. Acts 2:24 says God raised Him up, **“having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.”** That last phrase is tremendous. Death did not merely fail to keep Christ; it **could not** keep Him. The tomb was not a prison from which Christ barely escaped. It was a temporary room He occupied until the appointed morning.

The resurrection also validates everything the cross accomplished. Romans 4:25 says Christ **“was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.”** First Corinthians 15:17 warns, **“if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.”** The resurrection publicly demonstrates that Calvary was not the defeat of a helpless martyr but the finished sacrifice of the Son of God. Christ had said on the cross, **“It is finished”** (John 19:30), and the empty tomb is heaven’s answer that the payment was accepted. **Calvary wrote the check in blood; the resurrection proved heaven cleared it.**

This resurrection power has direct significance for believers. First Corinthians 6:14 says, **“God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power.”** Second Corinthians 4:14 says, **“he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus.”** Christianity therefore does not merely promise that the soul survives death. It promises bodily resurrection. The same God who raised Christ has already demonstrated exactly what kind of power will eventually reach into cemeteries and call His purchased people out. The undertaker may close the casket, but he does not get the final word.

“and set him at his own right hand”

Resurrection was not the end of Christ’s triumph. God **“set him at his own right hand.”** The One men placed between thieves has been seated beside the throne of God. The One mocked with a crown of thorns possesses universal authority. The One before whom soldiers wagged their heads now occupies the position from which every enemy will ultimately be subdued. Psalm 110:1 had prophesied, **“The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.”** Peter applies that passage directly to Christ in Acts 2. The resurrection raised Him from death; the ascension and session placed Him in the position of supreme heavenly honour.

The **“right hand”** is the place of authority, honour, and power. Hebrews 1:3 says Christ **“sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.”** Hebrews 10:12 says, **“this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God.”** Notice

the connection between the finished sacrifice and the sitting down. Under the law, the priestly work was repeatedly performed because the sacrifices could never finally remove sin. Christ offered **“one sacrifice for sins for ever”** and sat down. The seated Christ is not resting because He became weary of redemption; He is seated because the sacrifice is finished. **Religion keeps building altars because it cannot believe the cross finished the job; Christ sat down because He knows it did.**

That position also emphasizes Christ’s present ministry. Romans 8:34 says He **“is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.”** Hebrews 7:25 says **“he ever liveth to make intercession for them.”** The believer’s security does not depend upon Christ having saved him once and then disappearing from the case. The risen Lord lives, intercedes, represents His people, and remains their Advocate. First John 2:1 says, **“if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.”** Our Representative before God is not another sinner with religious credentials; He is **“Jesus Christ the righteous.”**

Yet Christ’s present session at the Father’s right hand must not be confused with the full manifestation of His future earthly kingdom. Psalm 110 says He sits **“until”** His enemies become His footstool. First Corinthians 15:25 says, **“For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.”** Christ presently possesses all authority, but Scripture still looks forward to His visible return and reign. His heavenly session does not cancel God’s promises concerning Israel, Jerusalem, or the future kingdom. The King is presently enthroned in heaven; the day is coming when the King will manifest His rule openly on earth. **Right division does not weaken Christ’s kingship; it keeps us from moving His throne wherever our system happens to need it.**

“in the heavenly places”

Christ is seated **“in the heavenly places.”** That expression is one of the great geographical markers in Ephesians. Verse 3 says believers are blessed **“with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.”** Ephesians 2:6 says God has **“made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”** Ephesians 3:10 mentions **“principalities and powers in heavenly places,”** and Ephesians 6:12 speaks of **“spiritual wickedness in high places.”** Ephesians repeatedly lifts the reader’s eyes above the merely earthly scene and shows that the Christian’s position, blessings, warfare, and Head are all connected with a heavenly sphere.

Christ’s position there is unique. Believers are said positionally to be seated **“in Christ Jesus,”** but nobody should confuse that union with equality of authority. Christ is the Head; the Church is His body. He is seated at God’s own right hand and, as the next verse says,

“far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion.” The believer’s exalted position exists only because he is in Christ. We do not become little Christs sitting beside the Father with independent authority. Every spiritual blessing comes through union with the One who alone occupies that place of supremacy.

This heavenly position also defines the Church’s calling. Philippians 3:20 says, **“our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour.”** Colossians 3:1 commands, **“seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.”** The Christian is still physically on earth and has earthly responsibilities, but his ultimate citizenship, treasure, Head, and hope are heavenly. That is radically different from trying to turn the Church into Israel and seize Israel’s national promises. God has not impoverished the Church by giving Israel earthly kingdom promises; He has blessed us **“in heavenly places in Christ.” The Christian does not need to steal Israel’s land when God has already given him a seat in Christ above the clouds.**

Practically, the heavenly position of Christ should change earthly priorities. If Christ is above, then the believer ought not live as though the temporary arrangements below are ultimate. Colossians 3:2 says, **“Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.”** That does not produce irresponsibility; it produces perspective. Money becomes stewardship rather than a god. Reputation becomes secondary to testimony. Trouble becomes temporary. Death becomes an enemy already sentenced to defeat. **A Christian who remembers where Christ is seated becomes much harder for this world to impress and much harder for this world to frighten.**

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 1:20 reveals the great historical demonstration of the power described in verse 19: **God raised Jesus Christ from the dead and exalted Him to His own right hand in heavenly places.** Resurrection proves Christ’s victory over death and validates the finished work of Calvary. His session at God’s right hand declares His authority, completed sacrifice, continuing intercession, and future triumph over every enemy.

The verse also introduces the heavenly framework that dominates Ephesians. Christ is seated above; believers are blessed and positionally seated in Him; spiritual conflict involves heavenly powers; and the Church’s calling is heavenly in character. None of that erases Israel’s earthly prophetic promises. Right division allows Christ to remain Head of the Church in heaven while Scripture still anticipates His future visible reign and the fulfillment of God’s promises on earth.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. Christ Raised From The Dead

Acts 2:24 — **“Whom God hath raised up.”**
Acts 13:30 — **“But God raised him from the dead.”**
Romans 6:4 — **“Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father.”**
1 Corinthians 15:20 — **“Now is Christ risen from the dead.”**
1 Peter 1:21 — **“God… raised him up from the dead.”**

2. Resurrection Essential To The Gospel

1 Corinthians 15:3 — **“Christ died for our sins.”**
1 Corinthians 15:4 — **“He rose again the third day.”**
1 Corinthians 15:14 — **“If Christ be not risen… your faith is also vain.”**
1 Corinthians 15:17 — **“If Christ be not raised… ye are yet in your sins.”**
Romans 4:25 — **“Raised again for our justification.”**

3. The Believer’s Future Resurrection

1 Corinthians 6:14 — **“Will also raise up us by his own power.”**
2 Corinthians 4:14 — **“Shall raise up us also by Jesus.”**
Romans 8:11 — **“Shall also quicken your mortal bodies.”**
1 Corinthians 15:52 — **“The dead shall be raised incorruptible.”**
Philippians 3:21 — **“Shall change our vile body.”**

4. Christ At God’s Right Hand

Psalm 110:1 — **“Sit thou at my right hand.”**
Mark 16:19 — **“Sat on the right hand of God.”**
Acts 2:33 — **“Being by the right hand of God exalted.”**
Hebrews 1:3 — **“Sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.”**
Colossians 3:1 — **“Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.”**

5. The Finished Sacrifice

John 19:30 — **“It is finished.”**
Hebrews 9:12 — **“Having obtained eternal redemption for us.”**
Hebrews 10:10 — **“The offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”**
Hebrews 10:12 — **“One sacrifice for sins for ever.”**
Hebrews 10:14 — **“By one offering he hath perfected for ever.”**

6. Christ’s Present Intercession

Romans 8:34 — **“Who also maketh intercession for us.”**
Hebrews 7:25 — **“He ever liveth to make intercession for them.”**
1 John 2:1 — **“We have an advocate with the Father.”**

Hebrews 9:24 — **“To appear in the presence of God for us.”**
Hebrews 4:14 — **“A great high priest… Jesus the Son of God.”**

7. Heavenly Places And The Church

Ephesians 1:3 — **“Spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.”**
Ephesians 2:6 — **“Sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”**
Ephesians 3:10 — **“Principalities and powers in heavenly places.”**
Ephesians 6:12 — **“Spiritual wickedness in high places.”**
Philippians 3:20 — **“Our conversation is in heaven.”**

8. Christ’s Future Triumph

Psalm 110:1 — **“Till I make thine enemies thy footstool.”**
1 Corinthians 15:25 — **“He must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.”**
Revelation 11:15 — **“He shall reign for ever and ever.”**
Revelation 19:16 — **“KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.”**
Zechariah 14:9 — **“The LORD shall be king over all the earth.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 1:20 forces Christianity to remain attached to history. The faith does not rest upon vague spirituality, inspirational morality, or the idea that the teachings of Jesus somehow survived His death. Paul says God **“raised him from the dead.”** Take that away and First Corinthians 15 says preaching is vain, faith is vain, and believers remain in their sins. Keep it, and everything changes. The resurrection means death met somebody it could not keep. It means Calvary succeeded. It means the gospel is not an optimistic theory about life after death but an announcement that Jesus Christ physically conquered the grave. **Christianity does not merely teach immortality; it points to a Man who walked out of His own funeral.**

Then God **“set him at his own right hand.”** That should cure the believer of thinking Jesus Christ is merely a religious figure waiting politely for humanity to decide whether He deserves attention. Men once judged Christ, struck Him, mocked Him, crucified Him, and posted soldiers around His grave. God reversed their verdict. The rejected Christ is exalted; the crucified Christ is enthroned; the mocked King is seated at the right hand of Majesty. Hebrews says He offered one sacrifice for sins forever and sat down. Religion keeps offering sacrifices, manufacturing mediators, and repeating ceremonies because it cannot leave finished work alone. Christ sits because redemption did not need another coat of religious paint after Calvary.

His position also gives enormous comfort to the believer because the One at God's right hand **"maketh intercession for us."** Christian assurance therefore rests upon more than remembering something Christ did two thousand years ago. The crucified Saviour is alive now. He represents His people now. He is their Advocate now. A believer may fail badly enough to need correction, chastening, confession, and restored fellowship, but his Representative before the Father has never lost a case through personal unrighteousness. Jesus Christ does not intercede as another sinner asking God to overlook a technicality. He stands there as **"Jesus Christ the righteous." Our salvation is defended in heaven by the only Advocate whose own record has never needed mercy.**

Finally, Christ is seated **"in the heavenly places,"** and that is where Ephesians keeps directing the Christian's attention. The believer lives on earth but belongs to a heavenly Head, possesses heavenly blessings, and has a heavenly calling. That does not erase Israel or turn earthly promises into allegories about the Church. It means God has given the body of Christ its own magnificent position in His purpose. The Christian therefore does not need this world to become heaven before he can possess hope. Christ is already above it, and the believer is in Christ. Governments change, economies shake, bodies age, reputations fade, and cemeteries fill, but none of those things can drag the risen Head back into Joseph's tomb. **The believer's future is secure because the One who represents him is no longer in the grave and cannot be voted out of the throne room.**

Ephesians 1:21 Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

"Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:"
Ephesians 1:21

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion"

The first two words ought to settle the matter before anybody starts arranging a religious committee to decide where Jesus Christ belongs. He is **"Far above."** Verse 20 has already seated Him at God's own right hand **"in the heavenly places,"** and verse 21 tells us the altitude of that exaltation. Christ is not merely above earthly kings, governments, armies, universities, churches, denominations, religious councils, and human dignitaries. He is **far above** every order of spiritual authority named in the verse. Colossians 1:16 says that by

Him were created **“thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers,”** and then closes the case by saying, **“all things were created by him, and for him.”** The Creator does not take a seat halfway down the hierarchy He created.

The terms **“principality, and power, and might, and dominion”** show that the invisible realm is not an unorganized spiritual fog. Scripture recognizes ranks, authorities, powers, and dominions beyond the merely human sphere. Some references concern holy heavenly authorities, while others concern rebellious powers. Ephesians 6:12 tells believers, **“we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers,”** and then speaks of **“spiritual wickedness in high places.”** Colossians 2:15 says Christ **“spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.”** Whatever rank they possess, whatever authority they exercise, and whatever terror they inspire among men, Christ is not struggling upward to reach them. He is already above them.

That gives this verse tremendous practical force. Christians sometimes talk about the devil as though Christ and Satan were two nearly equal powers locked in an eternal tug-of-war. They are not. Satan is a creature; Christ is the Creator. Satan operates under limits; Christ possesses all authority. The believer is warned not to underestimate spiritual opposition, but he is equally forbidden to inflate it until the devil becomes a dark counterfeit deity. James 4:7 does not say, “Spend your life trembling before the devil.” It says, **“Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” The Christian should take spiritual warfare seriously without giving the enemy a promotion Scripture never gave him.**

Christ being **“far above”** these powers also explains where the believer’s security ultimately rests. Ephesians 2:6 will say God **“hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”** The believer’s standing is in the One who is above every hostile principality. Romans 8:38–39 names **“angels, nor principalities, nor powers”** among the things unable to separate believers from the love of God in Christ. That does not make Christians invincible superheroes in the flesh; it makes Christ sufficient. **Our safety is not that we are stronger than every principality; it is that our Head is seated above every one of them.**

“and every name that is named”

Paul widens the statement. Christ is not merely above identifiable spiritual ranks; He is above **“every name that is named.”** A name in Scripture can signify identity, reputation, authority, title, office, or standing. Whatever title can be attached to human or spiritual greatness, it does not approach the supremacy of Jesus Christ. Philippians 2:9 says, **“God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name.”** Verse

10 continues, **“That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow.”** There will come a day when nobody will need an opinion poll to determine who occupies first place.

This destroys the religious habit of elevating human names until they eclipse Christ. Men love labels, schools, traditions, movements, institutions, personalities, famous pulpits, historical reputations, and ecclesiastical titles. Some of those things may have legitimate uses, but none deserves the loyalty that belongs to Christ. First Corinthians 1:12 rebukes believers for saying, **“I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.”** Paul asks in verse 13, **“Is Christ divided?”** The Church gets sick whenever servants become banners and Christ becomes background scenery. **A preacher may have a name worth remembering, but only Jesus Christ has a name before which every knee will finally bend.**

The name of Jesus should not be reduced to a verbal charm either. Acts 19 records men attempting to use the name of Jesus mechanically without possessing the relationship or authority they pretended to have. Scripture does not teach that syllables operate like religious magic. The authority lies in the Person whose name is used. Colossians 3:17 says, **“whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.”** That means acting under His authority, for His honour, and in harmony with His revealed will. Saying “in Jesus’ name” after a carnal prayer does not baptize selfishness into spirituality.

The phrase also brings human glory into perspective. Every celebrity name eventually fades. Every ruler’s name moves from headlines into history books. Every wealthy family name passes to another generation. Every institutional name can disappear from a building. But the name of Christ grows no smaller when civilizations collapse. Hebrews 13:8 says, **“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.” Time turns famous men into footnotes; eternity keeps enlarging the glory of the name that was above them before they were born.**

“not only in this world, but also in that which is to come”

Paul now gives the duration of Christ’s supremacy. It belongs **“not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.”** Christ’s exaltation is not a temporary arrangement fitted only for the present dispensation. He is supreme now, and He will remain supreme in the age to come. Hebrews 2:5 speaks of **“the world to come,”** and Scripture repeatedly looks forward to a future manifested reign of Christ. Revelation 11:15 announces, **“The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.”** Presently men reject His rule openly; one day His authority will be publicly manifested where rebellion can no longer pretend He is absent.

Right division matters here. Christ is presently seated at the Father's right hand in heaven, Head of the Church, while Scripture still anticipates His future visible reign. Psalm 110:1 says, **"Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool."** First Corinthians 15:25 says, **"For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet."** Zechariah 14:9 says, **"the LORD shall be king over all the earth."** The Church's present heavenly relationship to Christ does not cancel Israel's prophetic future or convert every kingdom promise into a metaphor about Christianity spreading gradually through society. The King is exalted now; the King will be manifested openly in His appointed time.

The phrase **"this world"** should also keep Christians from measuring Christ's glory by present public recognition. This world may mock His word, ignore His commandments, blaspheme His name, and organize itself as though He never rose from the dead. None of that changes His position by one inch. Psalm 2 pictures the kings of the earth taking counsel **"against the LORD, and against his anointed,"** while verse 4 says, **"He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh."** Heaven is not nervous because earth has become rebellious. **Unbelief can refuse to recognize the crown, but unbelief cannot remove it.**

Then comes **"that which is to come."** Christ's supremacy crosses the boundary into the future. The coming kingdom will not introduce a different ruler above Him. Eternity will not discover some authority higher than Him. First Corinthians 15:24–28 shows all rule, authority, power, and enemies ultimately subjected according to God's purpose. Revelation 22:3 says of the eternal order, **"the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him."** The future does not diminish Jesus Christ; it reveals more openly what is already true. **History is not moving toward the election of a new lord; it is moving toward the universal acknowledgment of the Lord it presently ignores.**

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 1:21 presents the **absolute supremacy of the risen Jesus Christ**. He is far above all spiritual ranks, authorities, powers, dominions, and every name that can be named. His superiority is not achieved through competition; it belongs to Him as Creator, risen Lord, and exalted Son. Demonic powers are real, spiritual warfare is real, and earthly authorities have temporary significance, but none occupies a position remotely equal to Christ.

The verse also extends Christ's supremacy across the present and future ages. He reigns in exaltation now and will manifest His authority in the world to come. The Church's present heavenly calling must not be confused with Israel's promised earthly kingdom, yet both ultimately serve the glory and supremacy of the same Lord Jesus Christ.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. Christ Above All Powers

Colossians 2:10 — **“The head of all principality and power.”**
Colossians 2:15 — **“Having spoiled principalities and powers.”**
1 Peter 3:22 — **“Angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.”**
Ephesians 1:22 — **“Hath put all things under his feet.”**
Matthew 28:18 — **“All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.”**

2. Christ Creator Of Heavenly Ranks

Colossians 1:16 — **“Thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers.”**
John 1:3 — **“All things were made by him.”**
Hebrews 1:2 — **“By whom also he made the worlds.”**
1 Corinthians 8:6 — **“By whom are all things.”**
Revelation 4:11 — **“Thou hast created all things.”**

3. Spiritual Opposition Beneath Christ

Ephesians 6:12 — **“Against principalities, against powers.”**
James 4:7 — **“Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”**
Romans 8:38 — **“Nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers.”**
Colossians 1:13 — **“Delivered us from the power of darkness.”**
1 John 4:4 — **“Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.”**

4. The Name Above Every Name

Philippians 2:9 — **“A name which is above every name.”**
Philippians 2:10 — **“At the name of Jesus every knee should bow.”**
Acts 4:12 — **“There is none other name under heaven… whereby we must be saved.”**
Hebrews 1:4 — **“A more excellent name than they.”**
Revelation 19:16 — **“KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.”**

5. Christ Versus Human Boasting

1 Corinthians 1:13 — **“Is Christ divided?”**
1 Corinthians 3:5 — **“Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers.”**
1 Corinthians 3:21 — **“Let no man glory in men.”**
Galatians 6:14 — **“God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross.”**
Colossians 1:18 — **“That in all things he might have the preeminence.”**

6. Christ’s Present Heavenly Exaltation

Psalm 110:1 — **“Sit thou at my right hand.”**
Acts 2:33 — **“By the right hand of God exalted.”**

Hebrews 1:3 — **“Sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.”**
Colossians 3:1 — **“Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.”**
Ephesians 1:20 — **“Set him at his own right hand.”**

7. The World To Come

Hebrews 2:5 — **“The world to come.”**
Hebrews 6:5 — **“The powers of the world to come.”**
Revelation 11:15 — **“He shall reign for ever and ever.”**
Zechariah 14:9 — **“The LORD shall be king over all the earth.”**
Luke 1:33 — **“Of his kingdom there shall be no end.”**

8. Every Enemy Finally Subjected

1 Corinthians 15:25 — **“He must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.”**
1 Corinthians 15:26 — **“The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.”**
Psalm 2:9 — **“Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron.”**
Hebrews 10:13 — **“Till his enemies be made his footstool.”**
Revelation 20:10 — **“The devil… was cast into the lake of fire.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 1:21 ought to cure Christians of making the devil too big and Christ too small. Spiritual opposition is real, but the verse does not show Jesus Christ standing nose-to-nose with principalities trying to win an uncertain contest. It shows Him **“Far above”** them. That distinction matters because fear thrives whenever Christians imagine the spiritual realm as a balanced struggle between nearly equal kingdoms. Satan is dangerous, deceptive, wicked, and far more intelligent than flesh, but he remains a created being under divine limits. Christ created the ranks of the invisible world and now sits exalted above every rebellious power within it. **The devil may be your enemy, but he has never been Christ’s equal.**

The verse should also cure religious hero worship. Christ is above **“every name that is named.”** That includes every preacher, theologian, teacher, denomination, movement, institution, political ruler, celebrity, and historical personality. God may use men greatly, and believers should honour faithful servants appropriately, but no servant belongs on the throne reserved for the Master. First Corinthians warns, **“Let no man glory in men.”** The Church becomes spiritually crooked whenever loyalty to a personality makes Scripture secondary. Men can help you understand the Bible; they cannot replace the Bible. Men may preach Christ; they cannot become Christ. **A useful servant points beyond his own name toward the Name that will still matter when every earthly reputation has turned to dust.**

There is also enormous comfort in the words **“not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.”** This present world frequently looks as though wickedness has permanent headquarters. Governments rebel, cultures decay, truth is mocked, Christ is blasphemed, and people organize their lives as though the Lord were an outdated religious opinion. Scripture tells us not to mistake temporary rebellion for ultimate authority. Jesus Christ is already exalted, and the future will publicly reveal His rule rather than overturn it. He does not need civilization’s permission to remain Lord. The world to come will not vote on His title. **History may spend centuries pretending Christ is irrelevant, but eternity will not inherit that delusion.**

Finally, Christ’s supremacy should govern the believer’s daily priorities. If He is far above every authority, then His word deserves first place over cultural pressure, human tradition, personal feelings, and religious reputation. If His name is above every name, His approval matters more than applause. If His kingdom extends into the world to come, then present losses suffered for faithfulness are not final losses. And if believers are joined to Him as members of His body, fear should give way to confidence without turning confidence into arrogance. Our strength does not come from pretending we possess Christ’s authority independently; it comes from belonging to the exalted Head. **The safest place in all creation is not where there are no enemies—it is in Christ, who sits far above every one of them.**

Ephesians 1:22 Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

“And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,”
Ephesians 1:22

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

“And hath put all things under his feet”

Verse 22 continues the exaltation of Jesus Christ begun in verses 20–21. God raised Him from the dead, set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, placed Him **“far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion,”** and now declares that He **“hath put all things under his feet.”** That language is not poetic decoration. It is the language of complete subjection. Psalm 8:6 says, **“thou hast put all things under his feet,”** and Hebrews 2:8 applies the same wording to Christ, saying, **“Thou hast put all**

things in subjection under his feet." The Son who was rejected on earth is enthroned in heaven, and everything that appeared above Him in human estimation is actually beneath Him in divine order.

The phrase **"all things"** must be allowed to remain as broad as Scripture makes it. First Corinthians 15:27 says, **"For he hath put all things under his feet."** Then Paul explains that God Himself is the obvious exception, for the Father is the One putting all things under Christ. The point is universal authority under the divine order. Death will bow. Devils will bow. Kings will bow. Nations will bow. Creation will bow. Rebellion may presently continue, but rebellion is not sovereignty. A criminal can violate the law without becoming greater than the judge. Likewise, men can resist Christ while remaining under the authority they reject. **The world may refuse the King's commands, but mutiny never turns a sailor into the captain.**

This language also points forward. Hebrews 2:8 says, **"But now we see not yet all things put under him."** That does not contradict Ephesians 1:22. Positionally and judicially, Christ possesses supremacy now; historically and visibly, every enemy has not yet been brought into manifested subjection. First Corinthians 15:25 says, **"For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet."** Verse 26 identifies the final enemy: **"The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death."** The present age therefore exists between accomplished exaltation and manifested universal subjection. The verdict has been handed down; history is waiting for the sentence to be fully executed.

Right division protects this truth from confusion. Christ's present heavenly exaltation does not mean every Old Testament kingdom promise has already been spiritually fulfilled in the Church. Psalm 110:1 says, **"Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool."** Zechariah 14:9 still says, **"the LORD shall be king over all the earth."** Revelation 19 still presents Christ returning as **"KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."** Israel's prophetic future and the Church's heavenly position are not competing truths. Both serve the same exalted Christ. **The Bible does not need us to erase one program in order to make Jesus Lord of the other.**

"and gave him to be the head over all things"

The verse now changes from the imagery of feet to the imagery of a head. God **"gave him to be the head over all things."** Christ is not merely one authority among many in the Church. He is **the Head**. Colossians 1:18 says, **"he is the head of the body, the church."** Ephesians 5:23 says, **"Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body."** The head governs, directs, coordinates, supplies identity, and gives the body unity. A

body with several competing heads is not healthy; it belongs in a medical journal. Likewise, the Church has one Head, and His name is Jesus Christ.

This destroys every religious claim that places a man, office, council, institution, denomination, or earthly organization between Christ and His body as the final governing authority. Men may pastor churches. Elders may rule well. Teachers may teach. Evangelists may preach. Believers are commanded to submit to legitimate spiritual oversight. But no servant becomes the Head. First Peter 5:3 warns leaders against being **"lords over God's heritage,"** and verse 4 calls Christ **"the chief Shepherd."** An under-shepherd who forgets the word **"under"** soon starts behaving as though the sheep were born for his reputation.

The wording is stronger still: Christ is Head **"over all things."** His headship is not restricted to Sunday worship or church administration. Verse 21 has already placed Him above principalities, powers, might, dominion, and every name. Verse 22 places all things under His feet and then declares His headship over all things. The Christ who heads the Church is the same Christ who possesses universal supremacy. The Church does not have a provincial religious leader tucked into one corner of creation. Its Head is the exalted Lord over everything.

That should transform how believers think about doctrine and practice. If Christ is Head, then His word governs. Colossians 3:16 says, **"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom."** John 14:15 says, **"If ye love me, keep my commandments."** Christian obedience is not submission to a man's private preferences dressed up as divine law; it is submission to Jesus Christ through what He has revealed. Religious tradition has legitimate value only where it bows to Scripture. **The moment a tradition requires Christ's words to step aside so the tradition can pass, somebody has reversed the head and the body.**

Christ's headship also gives the Church its unity. Ephesians 4:4 says, **"There is one body,"** and verse 5 says, **"One Lord."** The body does not create unity by pretending doctrine does not matter. The unity already exists in Christ through the Spirit. Ephesians 4:3 commands believers to **"keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."** We are not told to manufacture unity through doctrinal surrender. True unity exists because every saved believer is joined to the same Head. **Ecumenism tries to glue organizations together from the outside; the Holy Ghost builds one body from the inside.**

"to the church"

The final phrase tells us to whom this exalted Head has been given: **"to the church."** The verse does not define the Church merely as a building, denomination, corporation, or weekly meeting. Verse 23 immediately calls it **"his body."** First Corinthians 12:13 explains entrance into that body: **"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body."** The

Church in this doctrinal sense is the body of Christ, composed of those spiritually joined to Him. A local church is a real biblical assembly and matters greatly, but the body of Christ is larger than any single local congregation.

That distinction prevents two opposite errors. One error despises the local church because the body is spiritual. Scripture will not allow that. Paul wrote to local assemblies, appointed elders, commanded discipline, taught giving, regulated worship, and required believers to assemble. Hebrews 10:25 warns against **"forsaking the assembling of ourselves together."** The other error makes one local congregation or one denomination identical with the entire body of Christ and thereby excludes genuine believers outside its walls. First Corinthians 12:13 says **"whether we be Jews or Gentiles"** we are baptized by one Spirit into one body. The body is defined by union with Christ, not by the name painted on a sign.

Notice also the great gift contained in the wording: God **"gave him"** to the Church. Christ Himself is the Church's greatest possession. Before programs, buildings, teachers, ministries, publications, influence, money, or organization, the Church has Christ. Colossians 2:10 says believers are **"complete in him."** First Corinthians 3:21–23 says, **"all things are yours… And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's."** The Church may be poor in this world and still possess immeasurable riches because its Head is the One seated at God's right hand.

That should govern the Church's mission and character. The body is supposed to represent the Head. Ephesians 4:15 says believers are to **"grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ."** If the Church becomes more interested in popularity than Christ, more interested in entertainment than truth, more interested in institutional survival than obedience, or more interested in human personalities than its Head, it has begun acting like a body suffering neurological damage. **A church can survive without prestige, money, applause, or political influence; it cannot remain spiritually healthy while ignoring its Head.**

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 1:22 declares both the **universal supremacy and ecclesiastical headship of Jesus Christ**. All things are under His feet, and He is Head over all things. His present exaltation guarantees the future visible subjection of every enemy, while His authority over the Church establishes that no man, institution, council, or religious hierarchy can legitimately replace Him as the final Head.

The verse also identifies the Church's relationship to Christ. The Church is His body, joined to Him by the Spirit, governed by His word, and dependent upon Him for unity and

direction. Right division keeps the Church distinct from Israel without diminishing Christ's authority over either. Israel retains God's prophetic promises; the Church possesses its heavenly Head and position in Christ.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. All Things Under Christ's Feet

Psalm 8:6 — **"Thou hast put all things under his feet."**
1 Corinthians 15:27 — **"He hath put all things under his feet."**
Hebrews 2:8 — **"Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet."**
Ephesians 1:22 — **"Hath put all things under his feet."**
Psalm 110:1 — **"Till I make thine enemies thy footstool."**

2. Every Enemy Finally Subdued

1 Corinthians 15:25 — **"He must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet."**
1 Corinthians 15:26 — **"The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death."**
Hebrews 10:13 — **"Till his enemies be made his footstool."**
Revelation 19:15 — **"He shall rule them with a rod of iron."**
Philippians 2:10 — **"At the name of Jesus every knee should bow."**

3. Christ Is Head Of The Church

Colossians 1:18 — **"He is the head of the body, the church."**
Ephesians 5:23 — **"Christ is the head of the church."**
Colossians 2:19 — **"Holding the Head."**
Ephesians 4:15 — **"The head, even Christ."**
1 Peter 5:4 — **"The chief Shepherd shall appear."**

4. The Church Is Christ's Body

Ephesians 1:23 — **"Which is his body."**
1 Corinthians 12:12 — **"So also is Christ."**
1 Corinthians 12:13 — **"By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body."**
1 Corinthians 12:27 — **"Now ye are the body of Christ."**
Colossians 1:24 — **"His body's sake, which is the church."**

5. One Body Under One Lord

Ephesians 4:4 — **"There is one body."**
Ephesians 4:5 — **"One Lord, one faith, one baptism."**
Romans 12:5 — **"We, being many, are one body in Christ."**

1 Corinthians 10:17 — **“We being many are one bread, and one body.”**
Colossians 3:15 — **“Ye are called in one body.”**

6. Christ’s Word Governs His Body

Colossians 3:16 — **“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.”**
John 14:15 — **“If ye love me, keep my commandments.”**
John 8:31 — **“If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed.”**
2 Timothy 3:16 — **“All scripture is given by inspiration of God.”**
2 Timothy 3:17 — **“Throughly furnished unto all good works.”**

7. Christ Above Human Religious Authority

Matthew 23:8 — **“One is your Master, even Christ.”**
1 Corinthians 3:21 — **“Let no man glory in men.”**
1 Peter 5:3 — **“Neither as being lords over God's heritage.”**
2 Corinthians 4:5 — **“We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord.”**
Colossians 1:18 — **“That in all things he might have the preeminence.”**

8. Christ’s Future Manifested Reign

Zechariah 14:9 — **“The LORD shall be king over all the earth.”**
Revelation 11:15 — **“He shall reign for ever and ever.”**
Revelation 19:16 — **“KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.”**
Luke 1:33 — **“Of his kingdom there shall be no end.”**
Daniel 7:14 — **“His dominion is an everlasting dominion.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 1:22 ought to settle permanently who runs the Church. It does not say Christ is one respected voice among several. It does not say He is honorary chairman while earthly institutions handle the serious decisions. God **“gave him to be the head over all things to the church.”** That means every preacher, pastor, teacher, elder, denomination, ministry, and religious organization is subordinate. Leadership is legitimate only insofar as it serves under Christ and obeys His word. The moment a servant begins behaving as though the sheep belong to him, he has forgotten both the Shepherd and the sheep. **The Church does not need another head; it needs its members to stop acting as though the Head requires replacement.**

The image of all things being **“under his feet”** should also produce tremendous confidence. The believer does not belong to a defeated Christ trying to regain control of creation. Jesus Christ has already been raised, exalted, and seated above every principality and power. Not every enemy has yet been visibly subdued, but Scripture has already told

us where history ends. Death itself is scheduled for destruction. That means Christian hope is not based on present appearances. A world in rebellion may look chaotic, but chaos is not the final chapter. **What presently refuses to bow is not proof that Christ has lost authority; it is merely evidence that the final public demonstration of that authority has not yet arrived.**

Christ's headship should also protect believers from personality-driven Christianity. God certainly uses gifted men. Scripture commands honour toward faithful labourers and obedience toward legitimate spiritual leadership. But useful servants are still servants. Paul asked, **"Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed?"** The healthy Christian appreciates teachers without surrendering the conscience to them. He learns from men while testing everything by Scripture. He can thank God for a ministry without pretending that ministry owns the truth. **A preacher can point you toward the Head, but the moment he expects you to treat him like the head, he has pointed in the wrong direction.**

Finally, the words **"to the church"** reveal how rich the believer already is. God gave the Church Christ as Head. The body therefore possesses direction, identity, unity, protection, and life in Him. We do not need to imitate the world to make the Church relevant, nor borrow Israel's promises to make the Church important, nor manufacture earthly grandeur to prove the Church has value. Christ gives the Church its value. The body should therefore grow **"into him in all things,"** speak the truth in love, walk worthy of its calling, preserve the unity of the Spirit, and represent its Head faithfully while awaiting His return. **The Church becomes strongest not when it learns how to impress the world, but when every member remembers who sits above the world and whose body they belong to.**

Ephesians 1:23 Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

"Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."
Ephesians 1:23

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"Which is his body"

The word **"Which"** reaches directly back to **"the church"** in verse 22. God **"gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body."** There is no need to

manufacture a definition when the Holy Ghost supplies one in the next breath. In this doctrinal sense, the Church is **Christ's body**. First Corinthians 12:27 says, **"Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular."** Colossians 1:18 says, **"he is the head of the body, the church."** Colossians 1:24 calls it **"his body's sake, which is the church."** The Bible establishes the identification repeatedly: Christ is the Head, and the Church is His body.

Entrance into that body is spiritual, not institutional. First Corinthians 12:13 says, **"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles."** That baptism cannot be reduced to water, because water cannot place a sinner spiritually into Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit performs the operation. Galatians 3:28 says that in Christ there is **"neither Jew nor Greek,"** and Ephesians will explain that believing Jews and Gentiles have been reconciled **"unto God in one body by the cross"** (Ephesians 2:16). The body is therefore not Israel renamed, nor Gentiles grafted into a Jewish national identity. It is the **one new man** formed in Christ.

That does not make the local church irrelevant. Paul plainly recognizes local assemblies, pastors, teachers, discipline, worship, giving, fellowship, and ordered ministry. But a local congregation and the entire spiritual body of Christ are not identical terms in every passage. Local churches contain professing members whose hearts only God finally knows, whereas the body of Christ consists of those truly joined to Christ by the Spirit. The body is **one**, even though local assemblies are many. **A congregation can put your name on a membership roll; only the Holy Ghost can put you into the body of Christ.**

The imagery also settles the relationship between Christ and the Church. The body is not the Head, and the Head is not one member among many. Christ governs. The body receives direction from Him. Colossians 2:19 warns about failing to hold **"the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered… increaseth with the increase of God."** When a church begins taking its marching orders from culture, politics, commerce, entertainment, intellectual fashion, or religious tradition instead of Scripture, the body is trying to operate after disconnecting itself from its Head. **A body that refuses instructions from its head is not liberated; it is paralyzed.**

"the fulness of him"

Paul then calls the Church **"the fulness of him."** That is tremendous language, but it must be handled without saying something the Bible does not say. Jesus Christ is not deficient in deity and does not require sinners to make Him God. Colossians 2:9 says, **"For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."** John 1:16 says, **"And of his fulness**

have all we received." Christ possesses divine fullness inherently. The Church does not supply some missing ingredient in the Godhead.

The phrase concerns Christ and His body in God's redemptive purpose. A head joined to a body forms the complete picture Paul is developing. Christ is the Head; redeemed believers are His members. Ephesians 4:13 will speak of **"the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."** Ephesians 5 will compare Christ and the Church to husband and wife and then quote Genesis: **"they two shall be one flesh."** Paul immediately says, **"This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church"** (Ephesians 5:32). The Church is therefore bound to Christ in a union so intimate that Scripture describes believers as members of His body.

That gives extraordinary dignity to salvation without turning believers into deity. A Christian is not merely a forgiven criminal standing somewhere at the edge of heaven hoping not to be noticed. He has been placed **in Christ**, joined to the body, and made a member under the Head. First Corinthians 6:17 says, **"he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit."** Ephesians 5:30 says, **"For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones."** The relationship is real, intimate, and spiritual. But the member never becomes the Head, and union never turns the creature into the Creator. **Grace lifts the sinner higher than religion dares imagine without lifting him one inch onto God's throne.**

The word **"fulness"** also points toward completion. God is gathering a body in this present dispensation, Jew and Gentile reconciled in Christ. Ephesians 4 pictures that body growing toward maturity, **"unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."** The Church is not an accidental religious association inserted into history after Israel disappointed God. Ephesians has already shown that God's purpose in Christ reaches back before the foundation of the world. The body belongs to that purpose. **God did not discover the Church after prophecy went wrong; the Church exists because God's purpose never went wrong in the first place.**

"that filleth all in all"

The verse closes by calling Christ the One **"that filleth all in all."** The Head who fills the body is Himself the source of its life, sufficiency, growth, and spiritual completeness. Colossians 2:10 says to believers, **"And ye are complete in him."** John 1:16 says, **"of his fulness have all we received."** Ephesians 3:19 will pray that believers might **"be filled with all the fulness of God."** Everything spiritually necessary ultimately flows from God through Christ rather than being manufactured by flesh.

That should destroy the notion that Christ is merely the beginning of salvation and religion must supply what He forgot. Colossians 2 warns believers against philosophy, human

tradition, legal ordinances, voluntary humility, angel worship, and fleshly religion, and then points them back to their completeness in Christ. Men are forever selling additions to Jesus Christ. Christ plus ritual. Christ plus law. Christ plus denominational loyalty. Christ plus mystical experience. Christ plus human philosophy. The New Testament says **"complete in him." Religion has made a prosperous business out of selling spare parts for a salvation God says arrived complete.**

The phrase **"all in all"** must not be twisted into universal salvation or pantheism. Paul is not saying every lost man is secretly in Christ, every religion possesses Christ, or God spiritually inhabits everything in the same redemptive sense. The context is the Church, Christ's body, composed of those who have trusted the gospel and been sealed with the Spirit. Ephesians 2 will plainly distinguish those who were once **"without Christ"** from those afterward **"made nigh by the blood of Christ."** If everybody were automatically in Christ, nobody could ever have been **"without Christ."** The words must be allowed to mean what their context means rather than being stretched until they contradict the surrounding chapter.

Christ fills His body, and His supremacy extends beyond it. Ephesians 4:10 says He ascended **"far above all heavens, that he might fill all things."** Colossians 1:19 says, **"For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell."** Christ is not one spiritual resource alongside many competitors. He is the centre of God's purpose, the Head of the Church, the source of its life, and the One in whom believers are complete. **The Church does not fill Christ's deficiencies; Christ fills the Church's emptiness.**

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 1:23 defines the Church as **the body of Christ** and presents Jesus Christ as its indispensable Head and fullness. Believers enter that one body by the Holy Spirit, not by human ceremony or denominational registration. Jew and Gentile become members of one body in Christ without the Church becoming Israel or cancelling Israel's national promises.

The verse also presents the remarkable union between Christ and His Church. The Church is called **"the fulness of him,"** yet Christ remains fully divine and complete in Himself. He fills His people; they are complete in Him. This union grants dignity, security, identity, and purpose without confusing redeemed creatures with their Creator.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. The Church Is Christ's Body

Colossians 1:18 — **"He is the head of the body, the church."**
Colossians 1:24 — **"His body's sake, which is the church."**

1 Corinthians 12:27 — **“Ye are the body of Christ.”**
Ephesians 4:12 — **“For the edifying of the body of Christ.”**
Ephesians 5:30 — **“We are members of his body.”**

2. One Spiritual Body

Ephesians 4:4 — **“There is one body.”**
Romans 12:5 — **“We, being many, are one body in Christ.”**
1 Corinthians 10:17 — **“We being many are one bread, and one body.”**
Colossians 3:15 — **“Ye are called in one body.”**
1 Corinthians 12:20 — **“Many members, yet but one body.”**

3. Placed Into The Body By The Spirit

1 Corinthians 12:13 — **“By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body.”**
Galatians 3:26 — **“Children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.”**
Ephesians 1:13 — **“After that ye believed, ye were sealed.”**
Romans 8:9 — **“If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.”**
1 Corinthians 6:17 — **“He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.”**

4. Jew And Gentile In One Body

Ephesians 2:14 — **“Hath made both one.”**
Ephesians 2:15 — **“To make in himself of twain one new man.”**
Ephesians 2:16 — **“Reconcile both unto God in one body.”**
Ephesians 3:6 — **“Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body.”**
Galatians 3:28 — **“There is neither Jew nor Greek.”**

5. Christ Is The Head

Ephesians 1:22 — **“The head over all things to the church.”**
Colossians 1:18 — **“He is the head of the body.”**
Ephesians 4:15 — **“The head, even Christ.”**
Ephesians 5:23 — **“Christ is the head of the church.”**
Colossians 2:19 — **“Holding the Head.”**

6. Fullness Dwells In Christ

Colossians 1:19 — **“In him should all fulness dwell.”**
Colossians 2:9 — **“All the fulness of the Godhead bodily.”**
John 1:16 — **“Of his fulness have all we received.”**
Ephesians 3:19 — **“Filled with all the fulness of God.”**
Ephesians 4:13 — **“The fulness of Christ.”**

7. Believers Complete In Christ

Colossians 2:10 — **“Ye are complete in him.”**
1 Corinthians 1:30 — **“Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom.”**
Ephesians 1:3 — **“All spiritual blessings… in Christ.”**
2 Corinthians 5:17 — **“If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.”**
Philippians 3:9 — **“And be found in him.”**

8. Christ Fills His People

Ephesians 3:19 — **“That ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.”**
Ephesians 4:10 — **“That he might fill all things.”**
Colossians 3:11 — **“Christ is all, and in all.”**
Philippians 2:13 — **“God which worketh in you.”**
Galatians 2:20 — **“Christ liveth in me.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 1:23 gives one of the clearest answers in the New Testament to the question, **What is the Church?** Paul does not define it first as a building, denomination, tax-exempt corporation, religious brand, or crowd gathering at a certain hour. He says the Church **“is his body.”** That changes everything because a body derives identity from its head, and the Head is Jesus Christ. Local churches matter deeply, biblical order matters, pastors matter, assemblies matter, doctrine matters, and faithful membership matters, but none of those things can replace spiritual union with Christ. You can belong to the finest congregation in town and still be lost if you have never trusted the gospel. **A church roll can prove where you attend; only being in Christ proves where you belong eternally.**

This verse also destroys the notion that believers need Jesus Christ plus some religious supplement in order to become spiritually complete. The One who fills all in all has not left His body spiritually deficient so some institution can sell the missing pieces. Colossians says, **“ye are complete in him.”** That does not mean Christians know everything, behave perfectly, or have reached practical maturity. Standing and state must remain distinct. In standing, the believer is complete in Christ; in state, he must grow, learn, obey, put away sin, walk in the Spirit, and mature. Religion reverses that order and tells men to complete themselves so Christ can finally accept them. Grace says Christ accepts the believer in the Beloved and then begins producing a walk worthy of that position. **The Christian grows toward maturity from completeness in Christ, not toward completeness by climbing a religious ladder.**

The words **“the fulness of him”** also show how seriously Christ regards His people. He does not describe the Church as an audience He occasionally visits. Scripture describes a

body joined to a Head, members joined together, and a husband joined to a wife. That intimacy should change the way Christians treat one another. Believers may need correction, rebuke, discipline, admonition, and sometimes separation when Scripture requires it, but contempt for Christ's people is a dangerous habit. First Corinthians 12 teaches that the eye cannot say to the hand, **"I have no need of thee."** Members differ in function without becoming disposable. **The body of Christ contains different members because God is building a body, not an assembly line of identical spare parts.**

Finally, the phrase **"that filleth all in all"** puts Christ where He belongs: at the centre. He supplies the life, He governs the body, He gives the gifts, He produces the growth, He receives the glory, and He remains the believer's sufficiency. The Church gets into trouble whenever something else becomes functionally central—personality, politics, entertainment, tradition, money, numbers, influence, scholarship, emotional experience, or institutional survival. Those things can become enormous while Christ becomes strangely small. Ephesians will not permit it. Christ is Head, the Church is His body, and the body exists because of Him, through Him, and for Him. **A church may possess everything this world calls impressive and still be starving if it has lost hold of the Head; but the poorest assembly on earth is rich beyond calculation when Christ fills the place He rightfully owns.**

Chapter 2

Ephesians 2:1 Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

"And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;"
Ephesians 2:1

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"And you hath he quickened"

The chapter begins with **"And you,"** tying Ephesians 2 directly to the resurrection power described at the end of chapter 1. Paul has just spoken of **"the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe"** and of the mighty power God wrought in Christ **"when he**

raised him from the dead" (Ephesians 1:19–20). Now that resurrection language comes down from the exalted Christ to the saved sinner: **"And you hath he quickened."** The God who raised Christ physically from the grave has given spiritual life to men who were dead in sin. Salvation is not self-improvement, moral polishing, religious rehabilitation, or God teaching a corpse better manners. It is life where death had reigned. **Christianity does not put cosmetics on the old man. God gives life to the man who had none toward Him.**

To **quicken** means to make alive. Ephesians 2:5 repeats the doctrine plainly: **"Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ."** Colossians 2:13 says, **"you, being dead in your sins… hath he quickened together with him."** Romans 8:11 uses the same word concerning the future body, saying God **"shall also quicken your mortal bodies."** The word therefore carries the plain Bible idea of imparting life. In Ephesians 2:1 the subject is spiritual life given to a sinner who previously existed physically, thought mentally, acted morally or immorally, and walked through this world, yet remained spiritually dead toward God.

The quickening is God's work. The verse does not say, "And you improved yourselves," "And you joined yourselves," or "And you educated yourselves." God does what religion cannot do. A church can enroll a man, water can get him wet, moral discipline can alter habits, education can improve vocabulary, and social pressure can make him respectable, but none of those things can manufacture spiritual life. John 5:21 says, **"the Son quickeneth whom he will,"** and John 6:63 says, **"It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing."** Salvation requires divine action because flesh cannot create life from itself. **You can teach a dead man church etiquette all day long and still need God before he becomes alive.**

Yet this divine quickening should not be twisted into the claim that God secretly regenerates a sinner before he believes the gospel. Ephesians 1:13 has already given the revealed order: **"after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed."** Romans 10:17 says, **"faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."** The gospel is preached, the sinner hears, the sinner believes, and God saves. Divine grace initiates, provides, convicts, calls, and accomplishes salvation, but Scripture never requires us to reverse the words God put in order. **When the Bible says they heard and believed, theology has no business sneaking regeneration in through the back door before either one happened.**

"who were dead"

Paul says these believers **"were dead."** The tense matters. He is describing their former spiritual condition, not their present standing in Christ. Verse 5 will again say, **"when we**

were dead in sins." Colossians 2:13 says, **"you, being dead in your sins… hath he quickened."** Salvation therefore marks an actual transition from death to life. First John 3:14 says, **"We know that we have passed from death unto life."** There is a before and an after. Whatever religion may say about universal fatherhood, Scripture does not teach that everybody begins life spiritually alive to God and simply needs encouragement to discover it.

Spiritual death does not mean the lost man is physically dead, mentally nonexistent, or incapable of responding to words. Ephesians 2:2 immediately says these spiritually dead people **"walked according to the course of this world."** Dead men in this sense walked, desired, chose, obeyed, disobeyed, thought, sinned, and followed the world. Romans 6:13 later tells believers to yield themselves unto God **"as those that are alive from the dead,"** distinguishing spiritual life from physical existence. Luke 15:24 uses similar language of the prodigal: **"this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found."** The fellow had not been lying in a cemetery. Death described separation and ruin in relationship.

That keeps the doctrine from being hijacked into fatalism. Lost sinners are spiritually dead, but Scripture still commands them to hear, repent, believe, receive, and call upon the Lord. Acts 16:31 says, **"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."** John 3:18 says the unbeliever is condemned **"because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."** Condemnation for unbelief makes no sense if unbelief were merely an unavoidable condition imposed upon a man who had no real responsibility concerning the truth presented to him. Spiritual death is terrible, but it does not erase moral accountability. **The sinner is dead toward God, not excused before God.**

The believer should remember that former condition because it destroys pride. First Corinthians 6:11 says after listing grievous sins, **"And such were some of you."** Titus 3:3 says, **"we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived."** Ephesians does not permit the saved man to stand on a hill looking down at lost people as though he climbed out by superior character. He was dead too. Grace made the difference. **A man pulled from a grave has very little reason to boast about how well he dug himself out.**

"in trespasses and sins"

Paul does not leave the cause or sphere of that death vague. They were dead **"in trespasses and sins."** A trespass is a violation, a crossing of a boundary God established. Sin is missing God's righteous standard and rebelling against His holiness. Romans 3:23 says, **"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."** First John 3:4 says, **"sin is the transgression of the law."** James 4:17 adds another dimension: **"to him that**

knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." Scripture catches man coming and going. He sins by doing what God forbids and by failing to do what God requires.

The phrase **"in trespasses and sins"** describes more than isolated mistakes. The unsaved man existed in a realm characterized by sin. Verse 2 says, **"Wherein in time past ye walked."** Sin was not merely something that occasionally happened to them; it marked their former walk. Romans 6:17 says, **"ye were the servants of sin."** John 8:34 says, **"Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin."** Human nature prefers the word "mistake" because a mistake sounds repairable with better information. God calls the problem sin because the issue is moral rebellion against Him. **Man keeps trying to diagnose himself with poor judgment because he does not like the Physician writing "sin" on the chart.**

This does not mean every lost person commits every possible sin or lives at the same outward level of degradation. Some dead sinners wear prison uniforms; others wear business suits. Some curse openly; others sing hymns while trusting their own righteousness. Romans 10:3 describes men **"going about to establish their own righteousness"** and still refusing God's righteousness. Isaiah 64:6 says, **"all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags."** The respectable sinner and scandalous sinner differ greatly in social consequence, but neither possesses spiritual life merely because one has polished the outside. **A corpse in a tuxedo is better dressed than a corpse in rags, but the tailor did not perform a resurrection.**

Salvation changes the believer's relationship to sin without instantly removing the sinful flesh. Romans 6:6 says, **"our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed."** Colossians 2:11 speaks of **"putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ."** The believer still battles the flesh, which is why Paul later commands Christians to put away lying, stealing, bitterness, fornication, and uncleanness. But the saved man is no longer described as spiritually dead in sin. He has been quickened. His standing changed before his state reached perfection. **The Christian still fights sin because he is alive, not because salvation failed to make him alive.**

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 2:1 presents salvation as **divine quickening from spiritual death to spiritual life**. The sinner's natural condition is not spiritual neutrality but death **"in trespasses and sins."** God supplies life through Christ. This quickening is not religious improvement, sacramental membership, moral reform, or human achievement. It is a saving act of God connected with the resurrection power already introduced in Ephesians 1.

The verse also preserves human responsibility. Spiritual death does not mean physical inability to hear words, make choices, or respond to the gospel, for the same spiritually dead people are immediately described as walking according to the world. The gospel is heard and believed, and God saves the believer. Once quickened, the Christian possesses new standing in Christ while still needing practical victory over the flesh.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. Spiritually Dead In Sin

Ephesians 2:5 — **"Even when we were dead in sins."**
Colossians 2:13 — **"You, being dead in your sins."**
1 Timothy 5:6 — **"She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth."**
Luke 15:24 — **"Was dead, and is alive again."**
John 5:24 — **"Is passed from death unto life."**

2. God Gives Spiritual Life

Ephesians 2:5 — **"Hath quickened us together with Christ."**
Colossians 2:13 — **"Hath he quickened together with him."**
John 5:21 — **"The Son quickeneth whom he will."**
John 6:63 — **"It is the spirit that quickeneth."**
2 Corinthians 3:6 — **"The spirit giveth life."**

3. Resurrection Power Behind Quickening

Ephesians 1:19 — **"The exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe."**
Ephesians 1:20 — **"When he raised him from the dead."**
Romans 6:4 — **"Christ was raised up from the dead."**
Romans 8:11 — **"Shall also quicken your mortal bodies."**
1 Corinthians 6:14 — **"Will also raise up us by his own power."**

4. The Universality Of Sin

Romans 3:23 — **"For all have sinned."**
Romans 3:10 — **"There is none righteous, no, not one."**
Ecclesiastes 7:20 — **"There is not a just man upon earth… that sinneth not."**
1 John 1:8 — **"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves."**
Galatians 3:22 — **"The scripture hath concluded all under sin."**

5. Trespass And Transgression

1 John 3:4 — **"Sin is the transgression of the law."**
James 4:17 — **"To him it is sin."**

Romans 5:20 — **“The law entered, that the offence might abound.”**
Romans 7:7 — **“I had not known sin, but by the law.”**
Psalm 51:3 — **“I acknowledge my transgressions.”**

6. Faith Comes Through Hearing

Romans 10:17 — **“Faith cometh by hearing.”**
Ephesians 1:13 — **“After that ye heard the word of truth.”**
Acts 15:7 — **“Hear the word of the gospel, and believe.”**
Acts 16:31 — **“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”**
John 20:31 — **“Believing ye might have life through his name.”**

7. From Servitude To New Life

Romans 6:17 — **“Ye were the servants of sin.”**
Romans 6:18 — **“Being then made free from sin.”**
Romans 6:22 — **“Being made free from sin, and become servants to God.”**
2 Corinthians 5:17 — **“If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.”**
Galatians 2:20 — **“Christ liveth in me.”**

8. No Room For Human Boasting

Ephesians 2:8 — **“For by grace are ye saved through faith.”**
Ephesians 2:9 — **“Not of works, lest any man should boast.”**
Titus 3:5 — **“Not by works of righteousness which we have done.”**
Romans 4:5 — **“To him that worketh not, but believeth.”**
1 Corinthians 1:29 — **“That no flesh should glory in his presence.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 2:1 strips the paint off human nature before grace ever begins decorating the house. Paul does not say the sinner is basically alive but spiritually inexperienced, morally undereducated, socially damaged, or merely in need of encouragement. He says **“dead in trespasses and sins.”** That is why salvation must be more than religious reform. You can teach manners to flesh, educate flesh, restrain flesh, frighten flesh, entertain flesh, baptize flesh, and put flesh on a church pew every Sunday, but none of those things creates spiritual life. God must quicken. The doctrine is offensive to human pride because it leaves the natural man nothing to brag about. **Religion tells a dead man to improve his posture; the gospel announces that God can give him life.**

At the same time, spiritual death must not be forced to mean something the context refuses to mean. Verse 2 immediately describes these dead people walking. They follow the course of this world, obey the spirit working in disobedience, fulfil fleshly desires, and

live under wrath. They are morally active while spiritually dead. Scripture therefore never treats the sinner as an unconscious corpse incapable of hearing the gospel or morally responsible only after God regenerates him first. Ephesians 1:13 says they heard, believed, and were sealed. Romans says faith comes by hearing. Acts says, **"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." A doctrine that requires reversing the Bible's verbs may sound sophisticated, but grammar has ruined more than one theological castle.**

The words **"trespasses and sins"** also destroy the modern habit of turning sin into nothing more than dysfunction. Sin certainly produces damage, pain, bondage, broken relationships, and disastrous habits, but those consequences do not define the deepest problem. Sin is against God. David said, **"Against thee, thee only, have I sinned"** (Psalm 51:4). Until a man understands that, he will keep trying to cure guilt with self-esteem and rebellion with therapy language. A sinner does not merely need to feel better about himself; he needs reconciliation to God through Jesus Christ. The blood deals with guilt because the problem is moral and judicial before it is emotional. **Calvary was not erected because mankind needed better coping skills.**

Finally, the believer should never forget the past tense: **"who were dead."** That little word **"were"** is a monument to grace. The Christian may still struggle, stumble, need chastening, confess sin, grow slowly, and fight the flesh every day, but his standing has changed. He is alive in Christ. That should produce humility toward the lost, gratitude toward God, hatred of sin, and confidence in grace. We do not look back at the grave because we miss it; we look back so we remember who brought us out. **The strongest testimony of Ephesians 2:1 is not that we became better dead men, but that where death once ruled, God gave life.**

Ephesians 2:2 Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

"Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:"
Ephesians 2:2

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"Wherein in time past ye walked"

The word **“Wherein”** reaches back to verse 1 and identifies the sphere in which these Ephesian believers formerly lived: **“trespasses and sins.”** They had been spiritually dead, yet physically active. That alone prevents us from turning spiritual death into the idea that the lost man is unable to hear words, think, choose, resist, pursue, or respond. These dead men **walked**. They had conversation, desires, habits, loyalties, decisions, and an entire course of life. Spiritual death is separation from the life of God, not physical unconsciousness. A corpse in a cemetery does not walk, but the spiritually dead man in Ephesians 2 certainly does. **A doctrine that forgets verse 2 while defining the death in verse 1 will bury more than the sinner. It will bury the context.**

Paul says **“in time past.”** Those three words establish a before and an after. This was their former walk. Ephesians repeatedly uses that contrast. Ephesians 2:11 says, **“Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh.”** Ephesians 5:8 says, **“For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light.”** Salvation therefore changes standing immediately and should increasingly change conduct practically. The believer does not remain spiritually where he was before conversion, even though the flesh remains and must be dealt with daily.

The word **“walked”** is one of Paul’s great practical terms. Walking describes the direction and pattern of a man’s life. Later Ephesians will command believers to **“walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called”** (Ephesians 4:1), **“walk in love”** (Ephesians 5:2), **“walk as children of light”** (Ephesians 5:8), and **“walk circumspectly”** (Ephesians 5:15). Before salvation they walked in sin; after salvation they are commanded to walk according to their new position. **Grace does not merely change the destination on the ticket. It changes the road the traveler ought to be walking.**

That does not mean every true Christian walks perfectly. Ephesians would not contain so many commands if saved people automatically behaved correctly. Standing and state must remain distinct. The believer is alive in Christ, sealed by the Spirit, and accepted in the Beloved, yet he must still learn to put away the habits of the old walk. A saved man can stumble back onto an old road, but he no longer belongs to the old country. **The Christian may step in the mud, but Ephesians will not let him rename the mud his home.**

“according to the course of this world”

Before salvation these Ephesians walked **“according to the course of this world.”** The world has a course. It moves in a recognizable direction, carries assumptions, establishes values, rewards certain behaviour, mocks certain truths, and presses men toward conformity. Romans 12:2 warns believers, **“be not conformed to this world.”** Galatians 1:4 calls it **“this present evil world.”** First John 2:15 commands, **“Love not the world,**

neither the things that are in the world." The world in this moral sense is not merely trees, rivers, food, work, families, or the physical creation God made. It is the fallen system organized apart from God and hostile to His truth.

The unsaved man naturally moves with that current. He may congratulate himself on being independent while thinking the thoughts, pursuing the goals, repeating the slogans, adopting the morality, and craving the approval of the age in which he lives. The world has always admired nonconformity as long as everybody becomes a nonconformist in exactly the approved way. John 15:19 records Christ saying, **"because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."** A Christian who follows Christ will eventually collide with the current because Christ walks upstream.

The phrase **"course of this world"** also tells us why cultural approval is such a poor measure of biblical truth. The course changes. Practices once condemned become celebrated. Ideas once treated as foolish become compulsory. Yesterday's scandal becomes today's virtue signal, and today's virtue can become tomorrow's embarrassment. Isaiah 5:20 warns of men who **"call evil good, and good evil."** God's word does not need revision every time society rearranges its adjectives. **If your compass is popular opinion, you will eventually discover that north moves every election cycle.**

Yet the Christian is not commanded to leave the world physically. First Corinthians 5:10 makes clear that separation does not mean abandoning all contact with unsaved people, **"for then must ye needs go out of the world."** Christ prayed concerning His disciples, **"I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil"** (John 17:15). The believer is to live among men without letting the world supply his moral direction. He works, serves, witnesses, loves his neighbour, raises his family, and fulfils responsibilities while receiving his marching orders from above. **The ship belongs in the water. The trouble begins when the water belongs in the ship.**

"according to the prince of the power of the air"

Paul now reveals that the world's course is not merely accidental human confusion. Behind it stands **"the prince of the power of the air."** Scripture identifies Satan as **"the god of this world"** in 2 Corinthians 4:4, the one who blinds **"the minds of them which believe not."** John 12:31 calls him **"the prince of this world."** The devil is not God's equal, not an independent sovereign, and not the owner of creation in any absolute sense. He is a created rebel operating under divine limits. But Scripture plainly gives him real influence over the fallen world system.

The phrase **"power of the air"** fits naturally with the spiritual conflict later described in Ephesians. Ephesians 6:12 says, **"we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against**

principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." Ephesians does not present evil as merely bad sociology, inadequate education, or political malfunction. There is a spiritual dimension behind human rebellion. That does not mean every bad decision is caused by a demon or that every unsaved man is personally demon possessed. It means the world system operates under satanic influence and spiritual darkness far beyond what the natural eye sees.

That should keep the believer from being naïve. Second Corinthians 2:11 says, **"we are not ignorant of his devices."** First Peter 5:8 warns that **"your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour."** The devil works through lies, deception, temptation, false doctrine, pride, accusation, counterfeit religion, and the values of a fallen world. He does not need to appear in a red suit with a pitchfork when men will gladly obey his principles while insisting they do not believe he exists. **The devil has never required public recognition to conduct private business.**

But believers must not magnify Satan beyond Scripture either. Ephesians 1 has just placed Christ **"far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion."** Colossians 2:15 says Christ **"spoiled principalities and powers."** James 4:7 says, **"Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."** Spiritual warfare is real, but Christ is supreme. The Christian's confidence is not in his ability to shout louder than evil spirits but in his union with the risen Head who sits above them. **Satan is a prince, but Jesus Christ is King of kings and Lord of lords. Do not promote the enemy past his rank.**

"the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience"

Paul identifies this satanic influence further as **"the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience."** The word **"worketh"** indicates active operation. Evil is not spiritually neutral. Satanic influence is presently at work within the fallen order. Ephesians 5:6 again uses the expression **"children of disobedience,"** warning that **"because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience."** Colossians 3:6 says the same. The phrase describes those characterized by unbelief and rebellion toward God.

The expression **"children of disobedience"** speaks of nature and identification. Scripture frequently uses "children of" language to describe those marked by a particular character. In the next verse Paul will say mankind was **"by nature the children of wrath."** Jesus told certain unbelievers in John 8:44, **"Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do."** This is very different from the sentimental doctrine that every human being is already a child of God in the saving sense. John 1:12 says, **"as many as received**

him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God." Men must become what they were not by nature.

The satanic spirit works primarily through disobedience, deception, and unbelief. Second Corinthians 4:4 says the god of this world blinds minds **"lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ… should shine unto them."** Second Thessalonians 2:10 speaks of those who **"received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved."** The heart of the issue is resistance to truth. Satan has always trafficked in the same merchandise he sold in Genesis 3: question God's word, contradict God's warning, promise independence, and make rebellion look like enlightenment.

Yet the gospel breaks this bondage. Colossians 1:13 says God **"hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son."** Acts 26:18 speaks of turning men **"from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God."** The believer's past may have been under the course of this world and the influence of the prince of the power of the air, but that is not his present standing. **The gospel does not negotiate better living conditions in Satan's system. It transfers the sinner out of darkness into Christ.**

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 2:2 describes the believer's former life as a walk shaped by **sin, the world system, satanic influence, and disobedience**. The verse reveals three interconnected enemies that appear throughout the New Testament: the world, the devil, and, as verse 3 will add, the flesh. The unsaved man may believe himself independent, but Scripture shows him moving according to forces opposed to God.

The verse also magnifies the difference salvation makes. These things belong to **"time past."** The Christian still lives in the world, faces satanic opposition, and carries the flesh, but he no longer belongs to the old realm. He has been quickened in Christ and is called to a new walk under a new Head.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. The Former Walk

Ephesians 2:1 — **"Dead in trespasses and sins."**
Ephesians 4:17 — **"Walk not as other Gentiles walk."**
Colossians 3:7 — **"In the which ye also walked some time."**
Titus 3:3 — **"We ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient."**
1 Peter 4:3 — **"The time past of our life may suffice us."**

2. The Course Of This World

Galatians 1:4 — **“This present evil world.”**
Romans 12:2 — **“Be not conformed to this world.”**
1 John 2:15 — **“Love not the world.”**
James 4:4 — **“The friendship of the world is enmity with God.”**
John 15:19 — **“Ye are not of the world.”**

3. Satan As Prince Of This World

John 12:31 — **“The prince of this world.”**
John 14:30 — **“The prince of this world cometh.”**
John 16:11 — **“The prince of this world is judged.”**
2 Corinthians 4:4 — **“The god of this world.”**
Luke 4:6 — **“All this power will I give thee.”**

4. Spiritual Powers Behind Darkness

Ephesians 6:12 — **“Against principalities, against powers.”**
Colossians 1:13 — **“The power of darkness.”**
Colossians 2:15 — **“Having spoiled principalities and powers.”**
Daniel 10:13 — **“The prince of the kingdom of Persia.”**
1 Peter 3:22 — **“Angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.”**

5. Satan’s Work Through Deception

Genesis 3:1 — **“Yea, hath God said.”**
John 8:44 — **“He is a liar, and the father of it.”**
2 Corinthians 11:14 — **“Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.”**
2 Corinthians 4:4 — **“Hath blinded the minds of them which believe not.”**
Revelation 12:9 — **“Which deceiveth the whole world.”**

6. Children Of Disobedience

Ephesians 5:6 — **“The wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.”**
Colossians 3:6 — **“The wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience.”**
John 3:36 — **“He that believeth not the Son shall not see life.”**
John 8:44 — **“Ye are of your father the devil.”**
Romans 11:32 — **“God hath concluded them all in unbelief.”**

7. Delivered From Satan’s Power

Acts 26:18 — **“From the power of Satan unto God.”**
Colossians 1:13 — **“Delivered us from the power of darkness.”**
Hebrews 2:14 — **“Destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.”**

James 4:7 — **“Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”**
1 John 4:4 — **“Greater is he that is in you.”**

8. The Believer’s New Walk

Ephesians 4:1 — **“Walk worthy of the vocation.”**
Ephesians 5:2 — **“Walk in love.”**
Ephesians 5:8 — **“Walk as children of light.”**
Ephesians 5:15 — **“Walk circumspectly.”**
Colossians 2:6 — **“So walk ye in him.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 2:2 is a brutal cure for the myth of human independence. The lost man likes to imagine himself as a free thinker standing above religion, morality, Scripture, and tradition, making his own decisions without anybody influencing him. Paul says otherwise. He walked **“according to the course of this world,”** and that course itself moves under the influence of **“the prince of the power of the air.”** That does not mean every unbeliever is consciously worshipping Satan or personally possessed by a devil. It means rebellion against God does not lead into neutral territory. Once man rejects God’s authority, he does not become sovereign. **The fellow boasting that nobody tells him what to think may simply be repeating the world’s script with unusual confidence.**

The world’s course is especially dangerous because it normally feels normal. Fish do not hold committee meetings about whether water is wet, and men raised inside a fallen culture rarely recognize how thoroughly its assumptions have soaked into them. Ideas about morality, success, sexuality, money, family, truth, power, entertainment, and personal freedom can be absorbed long before anyone examines them by Scripture. Romans 12:2 therefore tells believers not to be conformed to this world but transformed by the renewing of the mind. The Christian needs continual correction from the Bible because conversion does not erase every worldly assumption accumulated before salvation. **Being saved gets you out of the world’s ownership immediately; getting the world’s thinking out of you can take a lifetime of Bible.**

The verse also gives proper perspective concerning Satan. He is real, active, deceptive, and involved in the spiritual darkness of this age. That should prevent the childish notion that every problem is merely psychological, sociological, economic, educational, or political. Yet Satan must not be made bigger than Scripture makes him. Ephesians has just placed Jesus Christ far above every principality and power. The devil may influence the world system, but he does not sit on God’s throne, does not possess unlimited power, does not know everything, and does not determine the believer’s final destiny. **The Bible gives Satan**

enough reality to make us watchful and gives Christ enough supremacy to keep us from becoming frightened fools.

Finally, Paul says all of this belonged to **"time past."** That phrase ought to produce both gratitude and responsibility. The Christian used to move with the current, but now he has been quickened. He once belonged to darkness, but now he is light in the Lord. He once followed the course of this world, but now his walk is to be directed by Christ. That does not mean the old pressures vanish. The world still pushes, the devil still deceives, and the flesh still complains. But the believer now possesses a new life, a new Head, a new Spirit, a new calling, and a new destination. **Grace does not merely forgive the old walk. It gives the believer a reason, a power, and a command to start walking another way.**

Ephesians 2:3 Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

"Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."
Ephesians 2:3

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past"

Paul now broadens the indictment. Verse 2 described the Ephesian Gentiles walking according to the course of this world and under the influence of **"the prince of the power of the air."** Verse 3 says, **"Among whom also we all."** Paul does not stand outside the courtroom pointing at Gentiles while polishing his Jewish pedigree. He places himself inside the indictment. Jew and Gentile alike had a natural condition that required salvation. Romans 3:9 asks, **"are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin."** Religious heritage may alter privileges and responsibilities, but it does not manufacture spiritual life.

The word **"conversation"** in the King James Bible means more than talking. It includes conduct, manner of life, and behaviour. First Peter 1:15 says, **"be ye holy in all manner of conversation,"** and Philippians 1:27 commands, **"Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ."** Paul is describing the entire former manner of life. The old conversation was not merely dirty language, although that could be part of it. It was the

whole life lived apart from God, governed by fallen desires, worldly thinking, and the natural man.

Again Paul says **“in times past.”** Grace creates a dividing line. The believer once lived this way, but he is not supposed to keep treating the old life as home territory. Titus 3:3 gives the same backward glance: **“For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived.”** The point is not to romanticize sin or spend a lifetime introducing ourselves by what we used to be. We remember the past so grace receives the glory. **A testimony should show how deep the pit was without making the pit more interesting than the Hand that pulled us out.**

The phrase **“we all”** also destroys spiritual snobbery. Paul had education, religion, zeal, ancestry, and outward morality before salvation. Yet Philippians 3:8 says he counted those things **“but dung, that I may win Christ.”** A respectable sinner may have a cleaner public record than a notorious sinner, but both need Christ. One man may roll in the mud while another presses his suit before going to hell. Better tailoring does not equal regeneration. **Grace does not merely rescue the scandalous. It also rescues the respectable man from trusting his respectability.**

“in the lusts of our flesh”

Paul identifies one governing force of the former life as **“the lusts of our flesh.”** Flesh in this doctrinal context is more than skin, muscles, and bones. It is fallen human nature expressing itself through bodily appetites and self-centered desires. Galatians 5:17 says, **“the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh.”** Romans 7:18 says, **“For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing.”** The flesh wants what it wants, when it wants it, and naturally resents any authority that says no.

Lust is not limited to sexual sin. Scripture speaks of many desires that can become corrupt when they rule the man. First John 2:16 names **“the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.”** Appetite, comfort, pleasure, possessions, attention, status, vengeance, laziness, indulgence, and self-preservation can all become channels through which the flesh demands control. The natural man asks, “What do I want?” The spiritual man must learn to ask, “What does God want?” **The flesh is a terrible master because it never says, “That is enough.” It only learns new ways to spell more.**

This explains why salvation cannot be reduced to behavioural cleanup. A man may quit one outward sin while the flesh simply changes clothes. Pride can replace drunkenness. Religious vanity can replace worldly vanity. Self-righteousness can become more dangerous than open rebellion because it learns Bible vocabulary while still worshipping self. Colossians 2:23 warns about things that have **“a shew of wisdom in will worship,**

and humility," yet are **"not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh."** Flesh can become religious without becoming spiritual.

The believer still possesses flesh after salvation, which is why Paul commands, **"Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh"** (Galatians 5:16). The difference is that the Christian is no longer spiritually dead and helplessly identified with the old realm. He has the Holy Spirit, a new man, a new standing, and a new power for obedience. The flesh remains an enemy, but it is no longer the rightful landlord. **Salvation does not improve the old tenant. It puts a new man in the house and tells him to stop letting the old one run the place.**

"fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind"

Paul now divides natural desire into two broad areas: **"the flesh"** and **"the mind."** Man sins bodily and intellectually. The flesh wants gratification; the mind wants its own way of thinking. Romans 1 shows both. Men became **"vain in their imaginations"** and their foolish heart was darkened, then their corrupt thinking expressed itself in corrupt conduct. Sin is not merely below the neck. A man can commit rebellion while sitting quietly in a library chair.

The **"desires of the flesh"** include bodily appetites and outward indulgences. The **"desires… of the mind"** include pride, imagination, ambition, resentment, unbelief, covetousness, envy, intellectual vanity, and every inward scheme that exalts itself against God. Second Corinthians 10:5 speaks of **"Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God."** Colossians 1:21 says lost men were **"alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works."** The mind is not automatically a safe zone simply because nobody else can see what is happening there.

That corrects the modern habit of treating sin only as external behaviour. Jesus said in Matthew 15:19, **"For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies."** The factory is inside before the product reaches the loading dock. Proverbs 23:7 says, **"For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he."** God does not merely inspect visible actions; He judges motives, thoughts, intentions, and inward rebellion.

After salvation the mind must therefore be renewed. Romans 12:2 says, **"be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind."** Philippians 4:8 gives the Christian a new standard for thought. Colossians 3:2 says, **"Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth."** The Christian life is not simply keeping the body away from forbidden places. It is bringing the mind under the authority of Scripture. **A man can keep his feet**

out of the barroom while his imagination spends the evening there. God intends to govern both.

“and were by nature the children of wrath”

Here is one of the strongest statements in the chapter concerning man’s natural condition. Paul says they **“were by nature the children of wrath.”** Not merely by bad education, poor environment, unfortunate circumstances, or social influence. **“By nature.”** Something is wrong at the root. Psalm 51:5 says, **“Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.”** Romans 5:12 says, **“by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin.”** Adam’s fall did not merely set a bad example. It introduced sin and death into the human race.

This demolishes the sentimental idea that every person is automatically a child of God in the saving sense. John 1:12 says those who receive Christ are given **“power to become the sons of God.”** If men must become sons of God through receiving Christ, then natural birth does not put them into that saving relationship. Galatians 3:26 says, **“For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.”** New birth, not natural birth, brings the sinner into God’s family.

The word **“wrath”** must also be allowed to remain biblical. John 3:36 says of the unbeliever, **“the wrath of God abideth on him.”** Romans 1:18 says, **“the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.”** God is love, but His love does not cancel His holiness, justice, or judgment. A gospel that speaks of divine affection while hiding divine wrath leaves the sinner ignorant of what he needs to be saved from. **A lifeboat means very little to the man who has been assured the ship cannot sink.**

Yet wrath is not the final word for the believer. Verse 4 begins, **“But God, who is rich in mercy.”** That may be one of the greatest turns in Scripture. Nature placed us under wrath; mercy intervened. Sin condemned; grace saved. We were dead; God quickened. The darker verse 3 becomes, the brighter verse 4 shines. **Mercy does not look impressive until you understand the judgment it withheld.**

“even as others”

Paul closes the indictment with **“even as others.”** No racial, religious, social, intellectual, or moral class receives exemption from the natural condition described here. Jew and Gentile alike need grace. Romans 3:22 says, **“there is no difference.”** Verse 23 explains why: **“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”** Men differ greatly in privilege, conduct, responsibility, culture, and consequence, but none enters salvation through natural advantage.

This phrase therefore protects the gospel from both ethnic pride and religious elitism. Israel possessed tremendous covenant privileges, as Romans 9:4–5 plainly teaches, but individual Jews still needed Christ. Gentiles were strangers from Israel's covenants, as Ephesians 2:12 will explain, but grace later brings believing Jew and Gentile together in one body. Right division preserves Israel's national distinctions without inventing two moral standards for sin. **Different dispensational privileges do not create different definitions of human guilt.**

The phrase also produces compassion. If we were **"even as others,"** then we have no biblical basis for treating lost people as though we were naturally superior specimens. First Corinthians 4:7 asks, **"what hast thou that thou didst not receive?"** Grace should produce humility, not swagger. The Christian warns sinners because wrath is real, but he warns them as one who needed the same mercy. **A rescued drowning man may shout urgently to those still in the water, but he has no reason to brag about being naturally better at breathing.**

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 2:3 completes the picture of mankind's natural condition by adding the **flesh** to the world and the devil already introduced in verse 2. Before salvation, men live according to bodily and mental desires, possess a fallen nature, and stand under divine wrath. Paul includes himself and says **"we all,"** removing every basis for religious or ethnic pride.

The verse also prepares the great contrast of verse 4. Man's nature cannot save him, religious respectability cannot rescue him, and worldly improvement cannot remove wrath. The solution must come from God. The darker the diagnosis becomes, the more magnificent mercy appears.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. The Former Manner Of Life

Titus 3:3 — **"We ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived."**
Colossians 3:7 — **"In the which ye also walked some time."**
1 Peter 4:3 — **"The time past of our life may suffice us."**
Ephesians 4:22 — **"The old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts."**
Philippians 3:18 — **"Many walk… the enemies of the cross of Christ."**

2. The Lusts Of The Flesh

Galatians 5:16 — **"Ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh."**
Galatians 5:17 — **"The flesh lusteth against the Spirit."**
1 John 2:16 — **"The lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes."**

Romans 13:14 — **“Make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.”**
1 Peter 2:11 — **“Abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.”**

3. The Corruption Of The Mind

Romans 1:21 — **“Became vain in their imaginations.”**
Ephesians 4:17 — **“In the vanity of their mind.”**
Colossians 1:21 — **“Enemies in your mind by wicked works.”**
2 Corinthians 10:5 — **“Casting down imaginations.”**
Titus 1:15 — **“Even their mind and conscience is defiled.”**

4. Sin Begins Within

Matthew 15:19 — **“Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts.”**
Jeremiah 17:9 — **“The heart is deceitful above all things.”**
Mark 7:21 — **“From within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts.”**
Proverbs 23:7 — **“As he thinketh in his heart, so is he.”**
James 1:14 — **“Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust.”**

5. Man’s Fallen Nature

Psalm 51:5 — **“I was shapen in iniquity.”**
Romans 5:12 — **“By one man sin entered into the world.”**
Romans 5:19 — **“By one man's disobedience many were made sinners.”**
Job 14:4 — **“Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?”**
Genesis 8:21 — **“The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth.”**

6. Children Of Wrath

John 3:36 — **“The wrath of God abideth on him.”**
Romans 1:18 — **“The wrath of God is revealed from heaven.”**
Romans 2:5 — **“Treasurest up unto thyself wrath.”**
Colossians 3:6 — **“The wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience.”**
Ephesians 5:6 — **“Cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.”**

7. Becoming Children Of God

John 1:12 — **“Power to become the sons of God.”**
Galatians 3:26 — **“Children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.”**
Romans 8:15 — **“Ye have received the Spirit of adoption.”**
Galatians 4:6 — **“Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son.”**
1 John 3:1 — **“That we should be called the sons of God.”**

8. No Ground For Boasting

Romans 3:22 — **“There is no difference.”**
Romans 3:23 — **“For all have sinned.”**
1 Corinthians 4:7 — **“What hast thou that thou didst not receive?”**
Ephesians 2:9 — **“Not of works, lest any man should boast.”**
Titus 3:5 — **“Not by works of righteousness which we have done.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 2:3 removes the last hiding places of human pride. The sinner cannot blame everything on society because Paul speaks of **“the lusts of our flesh.”** He cannot pretend sin is only bodily because Paul includes **“the desires… of the mind.”** He cannot claim natural innocence because Paul says we were **“by nature the children of wrath.”** He cannot place himself in a privileged category because Paul says **“we all”** and closes with **“even as others.”** God’s diagnosis reaches through behaviour, thought, nature, and status until every mouth is stopped. That is not cruelty. A doctor who refuses to name the disease because the diagnosis sounds negative is not compassionate. **The gospel begins with terrible news about man because only then does the good news about Christ make biblical sense.**

The verse also shows why self-improvement cannot save. Flesh can become disciplined without becoming spiritual, and the mind can become educated without becoming reconciled to God. A man may stop drinking, learn manners, earn degrees, build a business, support charities, become politically respectable, and sit faithfully in church while still remaining outside Christ. Those things may improve earthly life and benefit society, but none provides the new birth. Scripture does not say, “Educate the children of wrath until they become sons of God.” It says men become sons **“by faith in Christ Jesus.”** Natural birth placed us in Adam’s ruined race; new birth places the believer into a new relationship with God. **Civilization can teach Adam how to wear a necktie. Only Christ can give the sinner life.**

The phrase **“children of wrath”** must also be recovered in gospel preaching. Modern religion often wants God’s love without His holiness, mercy without judgment, heaven without hell, salvation without condemnation, and a cross that never tells anybody why blood had to be shed. But if wrath is imaginary, mercy becomes unnecessary. If man is naturally safe, Christ becomes an optional improvement rather than a necessary Saviour. John 3:36 does not say wrath might someday come upon the unbeliever; it says **“the wrath of God abideth on him.”** That truth should never be preached with fleshly delight, cruelty, or arrogance. It should be preached with tears because it is precisely what makes the next words, **“But God, who is rich in mercy,”** so glorious. **You cannot appreciate rescue while pretending there was never any danger.**

Finally, Paul's words should produce humility toward every lost person we meet. Before grace intervened, **"we all"** belonged to the same ruined family. Some displayed their ruin openly; others hid it behind religion, education, money, manners, or respectable clothing. The difference between the saved man and the lost man is not that the saved man possessed better natural material. The difference is Christ. That truth allows the Christian to speak plainly about sin without becoming proud and to preach judgment without pretending he was born above it. We warn because wrath is real, witness because Christ saves, and love because we remember where grace found us. **The Christian never stands above the lost man as proof of superior nature. He stands beside the cross as proof that mercy can rescue children of wrath.**

Ephesians 2:4 Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

"But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,"
Ephesians 2:4

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"But God"

Those may be two of the greatest words in the entire chapter. Ephesians 2:1–3 has already dragged fallen man into the courtroom and removed every excuse. He is **"dead in trespasses and sins"** (Ephesians 2:1). He walks **"according to the course of this world"** (Ephesians 2:2). He follows **"the prince of the power of the air"** (Ephesians 2:2). His life is governed by **"the lusts of our flesh"** and **"the desires of the flesh and of the mind"** (Ephesians 2:3). Worst of all, he is **"by nature"** a child of wrath. Man reaches the end of verse 3 with no spiritual pulse, no righteousness worth offering, no claim upon God, and no ladder long enough to climb out of the hole. Then verse 4 opens the door: **"But God."** The entire direction changes because God enters the sentence.

The contrast is deliberate. Man was dead, **but God**. Man was disobedient, **but God**. Man was under wrath, **but God**. Man followed the world, the flesh, and the devil, **but God**. Salvation does not begin with man finally deciding to become impressive. It begins with God acting toward men who had nothing spiritually attractive to recommend them. Romans 5:8 says, **"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."** First Corinthians 1:27 says, **"But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise."** First Corinthians 3:6 says, **"I have**

planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase." Scripture repeatedly brings human ability to the end of itself and then introduces the One who does what man cannot do.

That should crush every salvation system built around human merit. If the answer to Ephesians 2:1–3 were moral reform, the verse would say, "But man improved himself." If the answer were ceremonial religion, it would say, "But man joined the proper institution." If the answer were law-keeping, it would say, "But man performed enough commandments to reverse Adam." It says none of those things. It says **"But God."** Verse 8 will eventually declare, **"For by grace are ye saved through faith,"** and verse 9 will slam the door on boasting with **"Not of works."** The Bible does not merely reduce man's percentage in salvation. It removes his invoice completely. **Grace begins where man's résumé ends.**

Those two words also teach the believer how to look at impossible situations. They do not promise that God will always change every earthly circumstance according to our preference, but they remind us that human impossibility never exhausts divine resources. Abraham faced a dead womb, **but God** gave Isaac. Israel faced the Red Sea, **but God** opened it. David faced Goliath, **but God** gave victory. Christ went into the grave, **but God** raised Him. The Church faces a world growing darker, but its Head is still seated above every principality and power. **Faith does not deny the impossible facts; it refuses to write the final paragraph before God has spoken.**

"who is rich in mercy"

Paul does not say merely that God has mercy. He says God **"is rich in mercy."** Mercy is not a scarce commodity in heaven rationed out by a reluctant God who fears running short. Psalm 103:8 says, **"The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy."** Psalm 86:5 says He is **"plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee."** Titus 3:5 says, **"according to his mercy he saved us."** First Peter 1:3 speaks of God's **"abundant mercy."** The Bible keeps choosing words of abundance because the sinner's need is enormous and God's supply is greater.

Mercy must be understood against verse 3. We were **"children of wrath."** Mercy therefore is not God pretending sin is harmless. If there were no wrath, mercy would have very little meaning. God's holiness demands judgment against sin. Romans 1:18 says, **"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men."** John 3:36 says of the unbeliever, **"the wrath of God abideth on him."** Mercy becomes magnificent precisely because judgment is deserved. The sentimental god invented by modern religion is too weak to be merciful because he was never holy enough

to judge anything in the first place. **Mercy is not God discovering sin was no big deal; mercy is God providing a righteous way to spare sinners from what sin deserves.**

That righteous way is the blood of Jesus Christ. Ephesians 1:7 has already said, **"In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace."** Romans 3:25 says God set forth Christ **"to be a propitiation through faith in his blood."** Mercy does not cancel justice by pretending the debt vanished. The cross satisfies the righteous demands of God while opening salvation to the guilty. God is not bribed into mercy by religious works. God Himself provided the sacrifice that makes mercy righteous.

This distinction also protects mercy from becoming permission for sin. Romans 6:1 asks, **"Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?"** Verse 2 answers, **"God forbid."** The man who uses mercy as an excuse to live for the flesh has misunderstood the very mercy that rescued him. Romans 12:1 says, **"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice."** Mercy should produce surrender, not presumption. **The right response to being spared from judgment is gratitude and holiness, not asking how close you can move back toward the fire without getting burned.**

The riches of God's mercy should also shape the way Christians treat one another. Ephesians 4:32 will say, **"be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."** A man who lives every day because God showed mercy ought to become increasingly careful about demanding the last ounce of payment from everybody who wrongs him. That does not erase justice, accountability, boundaries, or church discipline. It means a Christian knows what it feels like to stand before God without enough righteousness and survive only because Christ supplied everything lacking. **People who remember how much mercy they needed usually become slower to act as though everybody else deserves none.**

"for his great love wherewith he loved us"

Paul now tells us why mercy moved toward us: **"for his great love."** Again the wording is extravagant. Not merely love, but **"great love."** God's love is not measured by human sentimentality but by Calvary. John 3:16 says, **"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son."** Romans 5:8 says God commended His love **"while we were yet sinners."** First John 4:10 says, **"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son."** Biblical love gives. It sacrifices. It acts toward the undeserving.

Notice carefully who was loved in the immediate context. The people God loved were the same people verse 1 called dead, verse 2 called disobedient, and verse 3 called children of

wrath. That destroys the notion that God loved them because He discovered hidden spiritual beauty within them. Romans 5:6 says, **"when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly."** Verse 8 says, **"while we were yet sinners."** Verse 10 says, **"when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son."** The sequence is devastating to human pride. Weak. Ungodly. Sinners. Enemies. Loved. Christ died. **God did not wait for the corpse to become attractive before deciding to raise it.**

At the same time, God's love must never be separated from His holiness. The same Bible that says God loved also says men were children of wrath. The same John who wrote **"God is love"** also wrote, **"he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him"** (John 3:36). Biblical love does not mean universal salvation. God's love provided salvation in Christ, but men must receive the Son. John 1:12 says, **"as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God."** Love opened the door; unbelief still leaves a man outside.

The phrase **"wherewith he loved us"** makes the love personal. Paul is not discussing a vague divine benevolence floating somewhere over humanity. These believers had experienced its saving results. Verse 5 will say God **"hath quickened us together with Christ."** Verse 6 says He **"hath raised us up together."** Verse 7 says He intends to show **"the exceeding riches of his grace."** Love moves from divine character into divine action. **God's love is not a greeting card sent from heaven; Calvary put nails through it.**

This love also becomes the pattern for Christian living. Ephesians 5:2 says, **"walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us."** Christian love therefore cannot be reduced to warm feelings or pleasant vocabulary. It gives, sacrifices, forgives, serves, bears burdens, tells truth, and seeks another person's good. Sometimes love comforts. Sometimes love rebukes. Sometimes love gives money. Sometimes love says no. Biblical love has enough backbone to tell the truth and enough heart to pay the price for telling it rightly. **Love without truth becomes sentiment; truth without love becomes a hammer in the hand of flesh. Christ supplies both.**

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 2:4 is the great turning point between **human ruin and divine rescue**. Verses 1–3 describe mankind as dead in sin, walking with the world, influenced by Satan, governed by flesh, and naturally under wrath. Verse 4 changes everything with **"But God."** Salvation originates in God's mercy and love rather than human merit or religious performance.

The verse also holds together truths men often separate: **wrath and mercy, holiness and love, judgment and grace**. God's mercy is rich because man's guilt is real. God's love is

great because it moved toward sinners who deserved wrath, providing salvation through Jesus Christ. Mercy does not minimize sin, and love does not abolish the necessity of faith in Christ.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. The Great Turn Of "But God"

Romans 5:8 — **"But God commendeth his love toward us."**
1 Corinthians 1:27 — **"But God hath chosen the foolish things."**
1 Corinthians 3:6 — **"But God gave the increase."**
1 Corinthians 10:13 — **"But God is faithful."**
Galatians 3:18 — **"But God gave it to Abraham by promise."**

2. God Rich In Mercy

Psalm 103:8 — **"Plenteous in mercy."**
Psalm 86:5 — **"Plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee."**
1 Peter 1:3 — **"According to his abundant mercy."**
Titus 3:5 — **"According to his mercy he saved us."**
Micah 7:18 — **"He delighteth in mercy."**

3. Mercy Against Deserved Judgment

Romans 1:18 — **"The wrath of God is revealed from heaven."**
John 3:36 — **"The wrath of God abideth on him."**
Romans 9:23 — **"The riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy."**
Psalm 103:10 — **"He hath not dealt with us after our sins."**
Lamentations 3:22 — **"It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed."**

4. God's Great Love

John 3:16 — **"God so loved the world."**
Romans 5:8 — **"While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."**
1 John 4:10 — **"He loved us, and sent his Son."**
1 John 4:19 — **"We love him, because he first loved us."**
Jeremiah 31:3 — **"I have loved thee with an everlasting love."**

5. Loved While Undeserving

Romans 5:6 — **"Christ died for the ungodly."**
Romans 5:8 — **"While we were yet sinners."**
Romans 5:10 — **"When we were enemies."**

Ephesians 2:5 — **“Even when we were dead in sins.”**
Titus 3:3 — **“We ourselves also were sometimes foolish.”**

6. Love Demonstrated Through Christ

John 15:13 — **“Greater love hath no man than this.”**
Galatians 2:20 — **“Who loved me, and gave himself for me.”**
Ephesians 5:2 — **“Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us.”**
1 John 3:16 — **“He laid down his life for us.”**
Revelation 1:5 — **“Loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.”**

7. Mercy Produces Holy Living

Romans 12:1 — **“By the mercies of God… present your bodies a living sacrifice.”**
Romans 6:1 — **“Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?”**
Romans 6:2 — **“God forbid.”**
Titus 2:12 — **“Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts.”**
Ephesians 4:32 — **“Forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.”**

8. Salvation Comes From God

Jonah 2:9 — **“Salvation is of the LORD.”**
Ephesians 2:8 — **“For by grace are ye saved through faith.”**
Ephesians 2:9 — **“Not of works.”**
Titus 3:5 — **“Not by works of righteousness which we have done.”**
Romans 4:5 — **“To him that worketh not, but believeth.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 2:4 is glorious because verses 1–3 are terrible. If man were merely confused, he would need instruction. If he were merely discouraged, he would need encouragement. If he were merely socially disadvantaged, he would need improved circumstances. Paul says he was dead, disobedient, governed by fleshly desire, and by nature under wrath. Then come the words **“But God.”** Salvation enters the chapter from outside the sinner because the sinner does not contain the cure within himself. God initiates mercy, God demonstrates love, Christ provides redemption, and faith receives what grace supplies. **The gospel is not the story of man climbing high enough to reach God; it is the story of God coming down far enough to rescue man.**

The phrase **“rich in mercy”** should also correct both despair and presumption. Despair says, “My sins are too many for God to forgive.” Scripture answers that God is rich in mercy and Christ’s blood cleanseth from all sin. Presumption says, “Since God is merciful, my sin

must not matter very much." Scripture answers that mercy was necessary precisely because wrath was deserved and blood had to be shed. The cross simultaneously tells us how horrible sin is and how abundant mercy is. God did not wave His hand over guilt and call it irrelevant. Jesus Christ bore sin at Calvary. **If you want to know how seriously God takes sin, look at the cross; if you want to know how deeply God loves sinners, keep looking at the same cross.**

Then Paul speaks of **"his great love wherewith he loved us."** That love should destroy the notion that God reluctantly saves people after they perform enough religious labour to persuade Him. Romans says Christ died for the ungodly, sinners, and enemies. God's love moved first. Yet the same truth destroys the modern counterfeit that turns divine love into universal acceptance regardless of Christ. Love provided the Saviour, but Scripture still commands men to believe on Him. Love does not make faith unnecessary; love provided the One faith receives. The God who loved enough to send His Son is also holy enough to tell the truth about what happens when men reject Him. **Biblical love never lies to sinners about the danger from which love came to rescue them.**

Finally, Ephesians 2:4 ought to shape Christian character. We live because God was merciful. We belong to Him because He loved us when we had nothing to bargain with. That should make us humble toward the lost, patient with growing believers, generous toward the needy, forgiving toward repentant brethren, and serious about holiness. A man who has received oceans of mercy should think carefully before handing out teaspoons to everyone else. We will never reproduce God's mercy perfectly, but we are commanded to reflect the character of the One who saved us. Verse 4 does not leave believers staring endlessly at what they once were. It turns their eyes toward who God is. **The darkest truth about our past is answered by two words stronger than the grave, stronger than sin, and stronger than wrath: "But God."**

Ephesians 2:5 Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

"Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)"
Ephesians 2:5

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"Even when we were dead in sins"

The word **“Even”** reaches backward into the black background of verses 1–3 and emphasizes the timing of God’s intervention. God did not wait until sinners had become spiritually attractive, morally respectable, religiously improved, or halfway alive. He acted **“when we were dead in sins.”** That is the condition already established in verse 1: **“dead in trespasses and sins.”** Verse 5 repeats it because God wants the diagnosis understood before the cure is admired. The sinner’s problem is not that he needs a little religious assistance added to an otherwise healthy spiritual life. He is dead toward God, separated by sin, walking according to the world, the devil, and the flesh. Romans 5:6 says, **“when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.”** Romans 5:8 adds, **“while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”** God’s saving action begins where human boasting has already been buried.

Notice again the exact wording: **“dead in sins.”** Not merely surrounded by sin, injured by sin, influenced by sin, or inconvenienced by sin. The sinner is **in** sins. John 8:24 warns, **“if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.”** The lost man is identified with the fallen realm in which he lives. He has natural life but no spiritual life in Christ. That is why the new birth is necessary. John 3:6 says, **“That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”** Natural birth puts a man into Adam’s ruined race; spiritual birth gives life from God. First Corinthians 15:22 states the contrast plainly: **“For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”** The Bible does not prescribe stronger flesh as the cure for dead flesh. **You cannot train Adam hard enough to turn him into Christ.**

The phrase also destroys the sentimental idea that man’s greatest problem is merely bad environment. Environment matters, education matters, family influence matters, and bad company certainly corrupts good manners, but none of those things explains the depth of the problem. Adam fell in a perfect garden. Israel sinned with visible miracles behind them. Judas walked beside Christ and still betrayed Him. The root goes deeper than surroundings. Jeremiah 17:9 says, **“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.”** A man can move out of a bad neighborhood without moving out of Adam. He can exchange a barroom for a boardroom and remain spiritually dead. **Changing the scenery around a corpse does not constitute resurrection.**

“hath quickened us together with Christ”

The answer to death is life, and the word the King James Bible uses is **“quickened.”** To quicken is to make alive. The same chapter began, **“And you hath he quickened,”** and now Paul explains the connection more fully: God **“hath quickened us together with Christ.”** Salvation is bound to the resurrection life of Jesus Christ. First Corinthians 15:45 calls the Lord **“the last Adam… a quickening spirit.”** Romans 6:4 says that **“like as Christ was**

raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." The believer is not merely forgiven and then left spiritually where he was. He receives life in union with the risen Christ.

The words **"together with Christ"** are crucial. Christianity is not simply imitation from a distance; it is union with Christ. Colossians 2:13 says, **"you, being dead in your sins… hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses."** Romans 6:5 says, **"if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection."** Ephesians 2 will continue the thought in verse 6 by saying God **"hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."** The believer's standing is joined to Christ's triumph. Christ died, was buried, rose, ascended, and sits above every principality and power; the saved man is spiritually identified with Him.

That does not mean the Christian's mortal body has already received final redemption. Romans 8:23 says believers are still **"waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body."** The inner man has spiritual life now, but the body remains mortal, corruptible, and subject to death unless the Lord comes first. That distinction keeps present salvation and future glorification in their proper places. The Christian is genuinely saved now, genuinely alive in Christ now, and genuinely sealed now, while still awaiting the transformation of the body. First Corinthians 15:52 says, **"the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." God has already begun the resurrection story in the believer, but He has not yet written the final chapter on the body.**

The practical consequence is enormous. A quickened man is no longer required to live as though he were still spiritually dead. Romans 6:11 says, **"reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."** Verse 13 tells believers to yield themselves **"unto God, as those that are alive from the dead."** That is Christian living from position rather than toward position. We do not struggle to become alive; we obey because God has made us alive in Christ. **The new walk is not a down payment on life. It is evidence that life has already entered the house.**

"(by grace ye are saved;)"

Paul cannot mention quickening without stopping to insert the parenthetical declaration, **"by grace ye are saved."** The Holy Ghost will repeat and enlarge it in verses 8–9, but here the truth bursts into the sentence almost as though Paul cannot wait. Grace means salvation is God's gift toward the undeserving rather than wages paid to the deserving. Romans 11:6 makes the distinction airtight: **"if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace."** Romans 4:5 says, **"to him that worketh not, but**

believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." If salvation depended upon religious works, ceremonies, moral improvement, perseverance, sacraments, law-keeping, or human merit, then grace would cease to be grace.

The wording is also present possession: **"ye are saved."** Paul does not say Christians are slowly earning salvation or might be saved if their performance survives inspection. Ephesians 1:13 has already said that after hearing and believing the gospel, believers were **"sealed with that holy Spirit of promise."** Ephesians 4:30 says that sealing reaches **"unto the day of redemption."** Salvation in this present Church-age gospel rests on Christ's finished work, received by faith, and secured by God. Good works follow salvation, as Ephesians 2:10 will immediately teach, but they do not create it or keep it alive. **Grace is not God helping a man finish a salvation project. Grace is God saving the man who could never start one worth presenting.**

Right division is essential here because the Bible contains commands, covenants, and tests given to people under different administrations. Israel under the law had requirements connected with that covenant. Kingdom passages have their own setting. Tribulation passages contain endurance and works in contexts that must not be carelessly dumped into Pauline salvation doctrine for the Church. Ephesians 2:5 is addressed to believers in Christ and belongs to the doctrinal heart of salvation by grace. Second Timothy 2:15 commands us to be **"rightly dividing the word of truth."** When men refuse those divisions, they turn clear grace into a religious stew and then wonder why nobody can taste assurance anymore. **A verse in the wrong dispensation can become a theological crowbar in the hands of a man determined to pry grace off the hinges.**

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 2:5 centers on three great truths: **human death, divine quickening, and saving grace**. Man contributes the deadness; God contributes the life. The sinner is not regenerated by moral reform or religious ceremony but made alive **"together with Christ."** Salvation therefore rests on Christ's resurrection life and the believer's union with Him.

The verse also distinguishes present spiritual salvation from future bodily redemption. The Christian is saved now, quickened now, sealed now, and spiritually joined to Christ now, while still waiting for the redemption of the body. Grace secures the standing; Christian obedience follows as the proper walk of one already made alive.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. Dead In Sin

Ephesians 2:1 — **“Dead in trespasses and sins.”**
Colossians 2:13 — **“Dead in your sins.”**
John 8:24 — **“Ye shall die in your sins.”**
1 Timothy 5:6 — **“Is dead while she liveth.”**
Romans 5:12 — **“Death by sin.”**

2. Quickened By God

John 5:21 — **“The Son quickeneth whom he will.”**
John 6:63 — **“It is the spirit that quickeneth.”**
Colossians 2:13 — **“Hath he quickened together with him.”**
1 Corinthians 15:45 — **“The last Adam was made a quickening spirit.”**
Romans 8:11 — **“Shall also quicken your mortal bodies.”**

3. Union With Christ

Romans 6:5 — **“Planted together in the likeness of his death.”**
Galatians 2:20 — **“Christ liveth in me.”**
Colossians 3:3 — **“Your life is hid with Christ in God.”**
1 Corinthians 6:17 — **“He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.”**
Ephesians 5:30 — **“We are members of his body.”**

4. Resurrection Life

Romans 6:4 — **“Walk in newness of life.”**
Romans 6:11 — **“Alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”**
Romans 6:13 — **“As those that are alive from the dead.”**
Colossians 3:1 — **“If ye then be risen with Christ.”**
Philippians 3:10 — **“The power of his resurrection.”**

5. Salvation By Grace

Ephesians 2:8 — **“For by grace are ye saved through faith.”**
Romans 11:6 — **“If by grace, then is it no more of works.”**
Titus 3:5 — **“Not by works of righteousness which we have done.”**
Romans 4:5 — **“To him that worketh not, but believeth.”**
2 Timothy 1:9 — **“Not according to our works.”**

6. Present Possession Of Salvation

John 5:24 — **“Hath everlasting life.”**
1 John 5:12 — **“He that hath the Son hath life.”**
Ephesians 1:13 — **“Ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise.”**

Ephesians 4:30 — **“Sealed unto the day of redemption.”**
Colossians 1:13 — **“Hath delivered us from the power of darkness.”**

7. Future Redemption Of The Body

Romans 8:23 — **“Waiting for the adoption… the redemption of our body.”**
Philippians 3:21 — **“Who shall change our vile body.”**
1 Corinthians 15:52 — **“The dead shall be raised incorruptible.”**
1 Corinthians 15:53 — **“This mortal must put on immortality.”**
Romans 8:11 — **“Shall also quicken your mortal bodies.”**

8. Grace Produces Good Works

Ephesians 2:10 — **“Created in Christ Jesus unto good works.”**
Titus 2:11–12 — **“The grace of God… Teaching us.”**
Philippians 2:13 — **“God which worketh in you.”**
James 2:18 — **“I will shew thee my faith by my works.”**
Colossians 1:10 — **“Being fruitful in every good work.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 2:5 leaves human pride with nowhere comfortable to sit. We were not spiritually alive people who merely needed encouragement; we were **“dead in sins.”** That means religion could not educate life into us, morality could not discipline life into us, water could not wash life into us, and works could not earn life for us. God had to quicken. That single truth explains why salvation is grace from beginning to end. A dead man cannot send God a bill for assisting in his resurrection. **The gospel gives man responsibility to believe while giving God every ounce of glory for the life salvation produces.**

The words **“together with Christ”** are equally important because Christianity is not merely admiration for Jesus Christ from a safe religious distance. The believer is joined to Him. His death answers our guilt, His resurrection supplies our life, His righteousness becomes our standing, and His future becomes our hope. That does not make us deity, nor does it remove the present battle with the flesh. It means our spiritual position has been transferred from Adam’s ruined line into Christ. The believer still carries a mortal body, still needs discipline, still can grieve the Holy Spirit, and still awaits bodily redemption, but he is no longer spiritually where he was. **The Christian does not fight for life; he fights because life has already been given.**

Then comes the parenthesis that ought to settle a thousand religious arguments: **“by grace ye are saved.”** If a church, preacher, sacrament, ordinance, law, ritual, performance, emotional experience, or personal reform must be added to Christ in order to complete

salvation, grace has been replaced by wages. Good works absolutely matter, but Scripture puts them after salvation, not inside the price. The same chapter that says **“Not of works”** immediately says believers are **“created in Christ Jesus unto good works.”** That is the Bible’s balance. Works do not produce the new birth; the new birth produces a life that ought to work. **Religion puts the cart in front of the horse and then spends centuries writing explanations for why it will not move.**

This verse should also give settled assurance without producing careless living. **“Ye are saved”** is not uncertain language. Yet the believer who has been quickened should never use security as permission to crawl back into the graveyard. Romans 6 asks how those who are dead to sin can continue living under its rule. The proper response to grace is gratitude, surrender, holiness, and service. We are not trying to stay alive by good behaviour; we are learning to live like people whom God has already made alive. One day the body itself will be redeemed, changed, and fashioned like Christ’s glorious body. Until then, Ephesians 2:5 gives the Christian a solid place to stand: **we were dead, God quickened us with Christ, and by grace we are saved.**

Ephesians 2:6 Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

“And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:”
Ephesians 2:6

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

“And hath raised us up together”

Ephesians 2:6 continues the resurrection language that began in verse 5. We were **“dead in sins,”** but God **“hath quickened us together with Christ,”** and now He **“hath raised us up together.”** The order is deliberate: death, quickening, raising, seating. Paul is describing what God has done for the believer because of his union with the risen Christ. Ephesians 1:20 has already established the pattern by saying God’s mighty power was wrought in Christ **“when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places.”** What God did physically and historically with Christ becomes the pattern for the believer’s spiritual position. The Christian’s salvation is connected to a risen Saviour, not a dead religious founder lying beneath a monument somewhere. **Christianity begins where every cemetery normally ends—with somebody getting up.**

The words **“hath raised”** are already accomplished in the believer’s spiritual standing. Paul does not say God may raise us spiritually if we perform well enough. Romans 6:4 says, **“like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”** Colossians 3:1 says, **“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above.”** The believer has passed from spiritual death into resurrection life. That is why Christian conduct is supposed to change. Holiness does not create resurrection life; resurrection life supplies the basis for holiness. We do not behave ourselves into being raised with Christ. We are raised with Christ and then commanded to live like people who no longer belong in the graveyard.

Yet this must not be confused with the future bodily resurrection. The Christian’s mortal body still grows old, gets sick, weakens, and eventually dies if the Lord tarries. Romans 8:23 says believers are **“waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.”** Philippians 3:21 says Christ **“shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body.”** First Corinthians 15:52 promises, **“the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.”** Ephesians 2:6 therefore deals with present spiritual position while Scripture still leaves future bodily glorification ahead. Standing and physical condition must not be confused. **The believer is already raised in Christ positionally, while his knees may still remind him every morning that the body has not received the memo yet.**

The word **“together”** is also important. God is not merely improving isolated individuals. Believers share a common union with Christ and, consequently, with one another in His body. First Corinthians 12:13 says, **“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body.”** Ephesians 4:4 will say, **“There is one body, and one Spirit.”** Jew and Gentile who believe are not given competing spiritual destinations inside Christ. They become members of one body under one Head. This does not erase Israel’s national promises or turn the Church into Israel; it reveals the unique spiritual unity of the body of Christ in this present calling.

“and made us sit together in heavenly places”

Now the language climbs higher. God has not only quickened and raised believers; He **“made us sit together in heavenly places.”** Ephesians has already used this expression. Ephesians 1:3 says believers are blessed **“with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ,”** and Ephesians 1:20 says Christ was set at God’s right hand **“in the heavenly places.”** Later Ephesians 3:10 speaks of **“principalities and powers in heavenly places,”** and Ephesians 6:12 warns of **“spiritual wickedness in high places.”** Ephesians is a book with its eyes lifted upward. The Christian’s calling is heavenly, his Head is heavenly, his blessings are heavenly, his warfare reaches into heavenly realms, and his position is heavenly.

The word **“sit”** speaks of position, rest, and settled standing. Christ finished His redemptive work and sat down. Hebrews 10:12 says, **“this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God.”** The believer is said to sit **“in Christ Jesus”** because his standing rests upon Christ’s finished work, not upon an unfinished religious probation. Salvation is not a treadmill where the sinner keeps running because heaven might cancel the membership if he slows down. Christ finished the payment. The believer rests in what Christ accomplished. **Religion keeps a man pacing the hallway wondering whether the bill is paid; grace shows him the receipt and gives him a chair.**

That seated position does not mean the Christian becomes inactive. Ephesians will shortly command him to **walk** in good works (2:10), walk worthy (4:1), walk in love (5:2), walk as a child of light (5:8), walk circumspectly (5:15), and finally **stand** against spiritual wickedness (6:11–14). There is a beautiful order in the epistle: first sit, then walk, then stand. Position comes before practice, and practice comes before warfare. A Christian who does not understand where he sits will never walk correctly, and a Christian who does not walk correctly will have a miserable time trying to stand in battle. **God establishes the believer’s position before He issues the believer’s marching orders.**

The expression **“heavenly places”** also distinguishes the Church’s calling from Israel’s national earthly promises. Israel was promised land, throne, kingdom, nationhood, restoration, and earthly dominion under Messiah. Those promises remain what God said they were. Romans 11 warns Gentiles against boasting, and nothing in Ephesians licenses the Church to steal Israel’s land deed and write “spiritual” over the address. The Church is blessed in **heavenly places**. Israel’s future kingdom blessings on earth and the Church’s heavenly position in Christ are not enemies; they are different parts of God’s program. **Right division does not tear the Bible apart. It keeps men from moving everybody into the wrong house.**

“in Christ Jesus”

The entire verse rests on these three words: **“in Christ Jesus.”** The believer has not been raised and seated because he possesses natural spiritual greatness. He possesses the position because he is in Christ. Ephesians 1:3 says every spiritual blessing is **“in Christ.”** Ephesians 1:6 says we are **“accepted in the beloved.”** Ephesians 1:7 says, **“In whom we have redemption through his blood.”** Ephesians 1:13 says believers trusted **“in whom”** after hearing the gospel. The location of blessing is not a denomination, sacrament, institution, ceremony, nationality, or religious pedigree. It is Christ.

To be **“in Christ Jesus”** is spiritual union without confusion of persons. The believer does not become Jesus Christ, does not become deity, and does not acquire Godhead. Colossians 2:9 says of Christ, **“in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily,”** while verse 10 says believers are **“complete in him.”** There is the distinction. Christ possesses deity inherently; believers receive completeness through union with Him. First Corinthians 6:17 says, **“he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.”** Ephesians 5:30 says, **“For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.”** The union is real, profound, and spiritual, but grace never promotes the creature into the Creator.

That union also explains access to God. Ephesians 3:12 says, **“In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.”** Hebrews 4:16 says, **“Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace.”** The believer does not need a human priest, departed saint, religious mediator, institutional gatekeeper, or spiritual secretary to obtain an appointment. First Timothy 2:5 says, **“there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”** Because the believer is in Christ, he has access through Christ. **When your Head is already in heaven, you do not need a committee on earth to get your prayers through the ceiling.**

Finally, **“in Christ Jesus”** is the great dividing line between the saved and lost condition described in this chapter. Verse 12 will describe the former Gentile condition as **“without Christ,”** while verse 13 begins, **“But now in Christ Jesus.”** That is the difference. Not better ancestry, improved temperament, greater intelligence, stronger willpower, or superior religious affiliation. Outside Christ, a man is still where Ephesians 2 found him. In Christ, he is quickened, raised, seated, accepted, redeemed, sealed, and blessed. **The greatest change in salvation is not merely what happens around the sinner; it is where God puts him.**

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 2:6 teaches the believer’s **present heavenly position through union with the risen Christ**. God has spiritually raised believers and seated them in heavenly places because they are in Christ Jesus. The verse continues the resurrection sequence of Ephesians 2:5 and points back to Christ’s own resurrection and exaltation in Ephesians 1:20. The Christian’s position is therefore settled by Christ’s finished work rather than maintained by religious performance.

The verse also emphasizes the Church’s distinctive heavenly calling. Israel’s earthly covenant promises remain intact, while the body of Christ possesses spiritual blessings and heavenly standing in Christ. This position produces practical responsibility: believers

who are seated with Christ are then commanded to walk worthy on earth and stand against spiritual opposition.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. Raised With Christ

Romans 6:4 — **“Walk in newness of life.”**
Romans 6:5 — **“Planted together in the likeness of his death.”**
Colossians 2:12 — **“Risen with him through the faith.”**
Colossians 3:1 — **“If ye then be risen with Christ.”**
Ephesians 2:5 — **“Quickened us together with Christ.”**

2. Christ Exalted In Heaven

Ephesians 1:20 — **“Set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places.”**
Ephesians 1:21 — **“Far above all principality, and power.”**
Philippians 2:9 — **“God also hath highly exalted him.”**
Hebrews 1:3 — **“Sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.”**
Hebrews 10:12 — **“Sat down on the right hand of God.”**

3. Heavenly Position And Blessing

Ephesians 1:3 — **“All spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.”**
Philippians 3:20 — **“For our conversation is in heaven.”**
Colossians 3:2 — **“Set your affection on things above.”**
Hebrews 3:1 — **“Partakers of the heavenly calling.”**
1 Peter 1:4 — **“An inheritance… reserved in heaven for you.”**

4. Union With Christ

1 Corinthians 6:17 — **“Joined unto the Lord is one spirit.”**
1 Corinthians 12:27 — **“Ye are the body of Christ.”**
Ephesians 5:30 — **“We are members of his body.”**
Galatians 2:20 — **“Christ liveth in me.”**
Colossians 3:3 — **“Your life is hid with Christ in God.”**

5. Complete And Accepted In Him

Ephesians 1:6 — **“Accepted in the beloved.”**
Ephesians 1:7 — **“In whom we have redemption through his blood.”**
Colossians 2:10 — **“Ye are complete in him.”**
Romans 8:1 — **“No condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.”**
2 Corinthians 5:17 — **“If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.”**

6. Access Through Christ

Ephesians 2:18 — **“Through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.”**
Ephesians 3:12 — **“Boldness and access with confidence.”**
Hebrews 4:16 — **“Come boldly unto the throne of grace.”**
Romans 5:2 — **“By whom also we have access by faith.”**
1 Timothy 2:5 — **“One mediator… the man Christ Jesus.”**

7. Position Before Practice

Ephesians 2:10 — **“We should walk in them.”**
Ephesians 4:1 — **“Walk worthy of the vocation.”**
Ephesians 5:2 — **“Walk in love.”**
Ephesians 5:15 — **“Walk circumspectly.”**
Ephesians 6:13 — **“Having done all, to stand.”**

8. Future Bodily Redemption

Romans 8:23 — **“Waiting for… the redemption of our body.”**
Philippians 3:21 — **“Who shall change our vile body.”**
1 Corinthians 15:52 — **“The dead shall be raised incorruptible.”**
1 Corinthians 15:53 — **“This mortal must put on immortality.”**
1 John 3:2 — **“We shall be like him.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 2:6 forces the Christian to think about himself from God’s viewpoint rather than merely from what his eyes report. Physically, we are still on earth. We pay bills, grow tired, fight temptation, bury people we love, and live inside bodies that remind us regularly that redemption is not yet finished physically. Yet God says He **“hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”** Faith does not deny earthly circumstances; it believes that spiritual reality is greater than what circumstances can display. The believer’s position is not determined by whether he feels heavenly on a particular morning. It is determined by where God placed him in Christ. **Feelings report the weather; Scripture gives the address.**

That heavenly position also exposes the poverty of religion built on insecurity. If salvation leaves a man wondering every night whether he performed enough to remain accepted, he is not resting in the language of Ephesians. Christ is seated because His redemptive work is finished, and the believer is said to sit in Him. That does not excuse laziness or carnality. Ephesians will demand an exacting walk and serious spiritual warfare. But conduct follows position; it does not purchase position. A soldier does not fight to become a citizen every

morning and lose his citizenship whenever he stumbles in the mud. Likewise, the Christian serves because he belongs to Christ, not because he is trying to earn another twenty-four hours inside the family.

The verse should also lift the believer's thinking above the endless machinery of this present world. Colossians says, **"Set your affection on things above."** That does not mean neglecting family, work, responsibilities, government, neighbors, or ministry. It means those earthly matters are no longer the highest things by which life is measured. Money can disappear. Reputation can turn overnight. Health can fail. Governments change, businesses close, friends move, and human applause has a shorter shelf life than milk left in the sun. The Christian possesses a position none of those things can reach because his life is **"hid with Christ in God."** A man who knows where he is seated can work faithfully down here without pretending down here is all he has.

Right division also matters tremendously in this verse. The Church's heavenly position must not be used as a theological bulldozer to flatten Israel's earthly promises. God did not forget Abraham, David, the land, Jerusalem, or the kingdom because Gentiles were blessed in heavenly places. Romans 11 will not tolerate Gentile boasting. God can give Israel an earthly national future and simultaneously give the body of Christ a heavenly calling without confusing either program. The Bible becomes confused only when men insist that every promise must belong to themselves. **Faith believes what God gave us without stealing what God gave somebody else.**

Finally, the words **"in Christ Jesus"** should settle the believer's heart. Everything depends on Him. Our life is in Him, our acceptance is in Him, our redemption is in Him, our heavenly position is in Him, and our future is bound to Him. That does not make the Christian careless; it gives him the strongest reason imaginable to live differently. A man raised from spiritual death should not spend his days decorating the grave he left behind. A believer seated in heavenly places should not let every earthly appetite drag his mind through the gutter. We still walk on earth, but our standing is above. **The Christian life works properly when the feet remember they are walking below while the heart remembers where God says we are seated.**

Ephesians 2:7 Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

“That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.”
Ephesians 2:7

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

“That in the ages to come”

Ephesians 2:7 begins with purpose. Verses 4–6 have told us what God has done: He loved us, quickened us together with Christ, raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Verse 7 now tells us something of **why** He has done it: **“That in the ages to come.”** God’s saving work is not exhausted by getting a sinner safely through death and into heaven. Salvation stretches into a future so vast that Paul does not merely speak of an age to come, but **“ages to come.”** The present world is not the final scene, the Millennium is not the final scene, and even the great prophetic events still ahead do not exhaust what God intends to display. Revelation 20 speaks of the thousand years, while Revelation 21:1 looks farther and says, **“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth.”** God’s program does not end when man’s calendar runs out of pages.

The plural **“ages”** should be allowed to stand exactly as God wrote it. Ephesians 1:21 has already distinguished **“this world”** from **“that which is to come.”** Here Paul goes beyond a single coming age and says **“ages to come.”** Revelation 22:5 says concerning the redeemed, **“they shall reign for ever and ever.”** Isaiah 9:7 says of Christ’s government, **“Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.”** Eternity is not a blank white room where saints sit around with harps wondering what happened to the rest of existence. Scripture presents continuing glory, worship, service, reign, fellowship, and divine purpose. **God did not spend six thousand years displaying His wisdom only to spend eternity doing nothing.**

This also keeps prophecy rightly divided. The Church’s present heavenly position does not erase the coming kingdom promised to Israel, nor does Israel’s future earthly kingdom exhaust the believer’s eternal destiny in Christ. Revelation 20 gives an actual thousand-year reign. Revelation 21 gives what follows afterward. God can fulfill His promises to Israel on earth and still have purposes for the body of Christ extending into the ages beyond. Right division does not shrink the future; it opens the Bible wide enough to let every promise remain where God put it. **The man who turns every future promise into one spiritualized cloud usually ends with less future than the Bible actually gave him.**

“he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace”

God intends to **“shew”** something. Salvation therefore becomes an everlasting exhibition of the character of God. What will He show? **“The exceeding riches of his grace.”** Earlier

Paul spoke of **“the riches of his grace”** in Ephesians 1:7. Now the language grows: **“the exceeding riches.”** Grace is already rich enough to save a dead sinner, forgive his sins, seal him with the Spirit, put him into Christ, raise him spiritually, and seat him in heavenly places. Yet apparently eternity itself will be required to display what was contained in that grace. The believer understands grace now, but he has not seen the bottom of it because it has no bottom that a redeemed creature can reach.

The word **“exceeding”** is characteristic of Ephesians. Ephesians 1:19 speaks of **“the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe.”** Ephesians 3:20 speaks of God doing **“exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.”** Here we have **“the exceeding riches of his grace.”** God’s power exceeds our calculations, His working exceeds our requests, and His grace exceeds our ability to measure it. Man loves to reduce salvation to the smallest possible religious transaction: say the right formula, perform the right ceremony, join the right institution, and collect your ticket. God presents something infinitely larger. He takes a child of wrath, makes him alive in Christ, gives him heavenly standing, and then announces that future ages will continue displaying what grace accomplished. **Religion hands out certificates. Grace opens eternity.**

Those riches are unearned. Ephesians 2:8–9 will immediately explain, **“For by grace are ye saved through faith… Not of works, lest any man should boast.”** Romans 11:6 says, **“if by grace, then is it no more of works.”** If future glory rested upon the believer having earned salvation, eternity would become an exhibition of human achievement. Verse 7 says it will be an exhibition of **His grace**. The redeemed will not spend eternity pointing at themselves and explaining how wisely they qualified. Revelation 5:9 centers the song upon the Lamb: **“thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood.”** Heaven’s vocabulary puts the glory where it belongs. **Nobody reaches glory by grace and then spends eternity bragging about his ladder.**

Grace also reaches farther than mere escape from punishment. A pardon could release a criminal without adopting him into the king’s household. Grace does more. Ephesians 1 says the believer is accepted in the Beloved, redeemed through His blood, forgiven, sealed, and given an inheritance. Ephesians 2 says he is quickened, raised, and seated with Christ. Romans 8:17 calls believers **“heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.”** First Peter 1:4 speaks of **“an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.”** God did not merely drag us out of the courtroom before sentencing. He brought us into the family and wrote an inheritance into the story. **Mercy keeps the guilty man from receiving what he deserved; grace proceeds to give him what he never could have deserved.**

“in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus”

The exceeding riches of grace are displayed **“in his kindness toward us.”** That word deserves attention because biblical kindness is not sentimental weakness. God’s kindness moved toward people who were described only a few verses earlier as dead, disobedient, flesh-driven, and children of wrath. Titus 3:3–4 gives the same contrast: **“For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived,”** followed by, **“But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared.”** Divine kindness does not pretend the sinner was harmless. It knows exactly what he was and acts graciously anyway.

Romans 2:4 speaks of **“the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering”** and says **“the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance.”** God’s kindness should never be twisted into permission to despise His holiness. The kindness that saves is kindness extended by the same God whose wrath rested upon sin in Ephesians 2:3. Modern religion often tries to create a harmless deity who is kind because he has no standards strong enough to offend anybody. The Bible’s God is kind while remaining absolutely holy. That makes His kindness greater, not smaller. **A judge who calls evil good is not kind; he is corrupt. God’s kindness shines because His holiness never had to be lowered to show it.**

Notice also the direction: **“toward us.”** Grace is not merely an abstract attribute stored in heaven. It moves toward actual sinners. Ephesians 1:19 spoke of God’s power **“to us-ward who believe.”** Here His kindness is **“toward us.”** Christianity is filled with these personal prepositions: Christ for us, Spirit in us, believers in Christ, grace toward us. The gospel is not a philosophical lecture concerning divine benevolence. Galatians 2:20 says of the Son of God, **“who loved me, and gave himself for me.”** Paul could move from the universal provision of Calvary to personal possession without apology.

But all of this kindness comes **“through Christ Jesus.”** There is the channel, ground, and mediator of the whole blessing. God does not distribute saving grace around the cross. John 14:6 records Christ saying, **“no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”** First Timothy 2:5 says, **“there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”** Romans 5:1–2 says believers have peace with God **“through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand.”** Grace comes through Christ because redemption comes through His blood, righteousness comes through Him, access comes through Him, resurrection life comes through Him, and eternal kindness will still be displayed through Him.

That destroys the idea that sincere religion can provide alternate roads to the same destination. Ephesians does not say God’s kindness reaches us through Christ Jesus, Mary, saints, sacraments, philosophy, law, personal merit, and whatever else happens to be available in the spiritual marketplace. It says **“through Christ Jesus.”** Acts 4:12 says,

“Neither is there salvation in any other.” The exclusiveness belongs to the text, not to the temperament of the preacher. **When God builds one bridge over the chasm, calling every ditch a bridge does not make men safer.**

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 2:7 reveals that salvation has an **eternal purpose of display**. God has quickened, raised, and seated believers in Christ so that future ages may exhibit the immeasurable wealth of His grace. Salvation therefore reaches far beyond forgiveness at conversion. The redeemed become everlasting witnesses to what divine grace can accomplish with people who were once dead in sins and under wrath.

The verse also centers every future blessing in **Christ Jesus**. God’s kindness is real, personal, holy, and inexhaustible, but it reaches the believer through Christ. The coming ages will not glorify human religion, morality, or works; they will magnify God’s grace and the Saviour through whom that grace was given.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. Ages Yet To Come

Ephesians 1:21 — **“Not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.”**
Revelation 20:6 — **“They shall reign with him a thousand years.”**
Revelation 21:1 — **“I saw a new heaven and a new earth.”**
Revelation 22:5 — **“They shall reign for ever and ever.”**
Isaiah 9:7 — **“Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.”**

2. The Riches Of Grace

Ephesians 1:7 — **“According to the riches of his grace.”**
Romans 5:20 — **“Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.”**
Romans 11:6 — **“If by grace, then is it no more of works.”**
2 Corinthians 8:9 — **“Though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor.”**
Ephesians 3:8 — **“The unsearchable riches of Christ.”**

3. God’s Exceeding Work

Ephesians 1:19 — **“The exceeding greatness of his power.”**
Ephesians 3:20 — **“Exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.”**
2 Corinthians 4:17 — **“A far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”**
1 Timothy 1:14 — **“The grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant.”**
Psalm 103:11 — **“As the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy.”**

4. Divine Kindness

Titus 3:4 — **“The kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared.”**
Romans 2:4 — **“The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance.”**
Romans 11:22 — **“Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God.”**
Psalm 117:2 — **“His merciful kindness is great toward us.”**
Luke 6:35 — **“He is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil.”**

5. Grace Apart From Works

Ephesians 2:8 — **“For by grace are ye saved through faith.”**
Ephesians 2:9 — **“Not of works, lest any man should boast.”**
Romans 4:5 — **“To him that worketh not, but believeth.”**
Titus 3:5 — **“Not by works of righteousness which we have done.”**
2 Timothy 1:9 — **“Not according to our works.”**

6. Blessing Through Christ

Romans 5:1 — **“Peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”**
Romans 5:2 — **“By whom also we have access by faith into this grace.”**
Ephesians 1:7 — **“In whom we have redemption through his blood.”**
John 14:6 — **“No man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”**
1 Timothy 2:5 — **“One mediator… the man Christ Jesus.”**

7. The Believer’s Future Inheritance

Romans 8:17 — **“Heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.”**
1 Peter 1:4 — **“An inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled.”**
Colossians 3:24 — **“Ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance.”**
Ephesians 1:14 — **“The earnest of our inheritance.”**
Hebrews 9:15 — **“The promise of eternal inheritance.”**

8. Eternal Glory Belongs To God

Revelation 5:9 — **“Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood.”**
Ephesians 1:6 — **“To the praise of the glory of his grace.”**
Ephesians 1:12 — **“That we should be to the praise of his glory.”**
Jude 25 — **“Glory and majesty, dominion and power.”**
Romans 11:36 — **“To whom be glory for ever. Amen.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 2:7 teaches us that salvation is bigger than most Christians habitually think. We often reduce it to the moment a sinner trusts Christ, receives forgiveness, and knows he will go to heaven when he dies. All of that is gloriously true, but Paul looks beyond

conversion, beyond this present life, and beyond a single coming age into **"the ages to come."** God intends to keep showing what His grace accomplished. That means our salvation is part of an eternal demonstration of His character. The people who were dead in sins become evidence forever that God is rich in mercy and rich beyond measure in grace. **Heaven will not merely contain saved sinners; saved sinners will forever testify to what kind of God saved them.**

The phrase **"exceeding riches of his grace"** should permanently cure the Christian of thinking that grace is merely God giving him one narrow escape from hell. Grace forgives, but it also accepts. Grace redeems, seals, adopts, quickens, raises, seats, gives access, promises inheritance, and guarantees a future with Christ. Good works have their place, and the next verses will put them exactly where they belong, but works cannot purchase any of this. When men attach ceremonies, endurance, law-keeping, institutional membership, or personal worthiness to salvation, they are trying to hang a price tag on what God deliberately called grace. If you pay for it, it becomes wages. If you earn it, it becomes debt. **Grace begins where boasting dies and continues long after every human trophy has turned to dust.**

God's **kindness** must also be understood biblically. His kindness does not mean that sin ceased to matter or judgment became imaginary. Ephesians 2:3 had just called us **"children of wrath."** The kindness of verse 7 is astonishing precisely because the wrath of verse 3 was deserved. Calvary does not prove that God stopped caring about righteousness; Calvary proves that His righteousness and His mercy met without either being compromised. Christ bore what sin deserved, and through Christ the sinner receives what he never deserved. This should make the believer both secure and humble. We are secure because our standing rests in Christ; we are humble because nothing in our former condition explains why such kindness came toward us.

Finally, the words **"through Christ Jesus"** keep eternity centered where it belongs. Christ is not merely the doorway we use at conversion and then leave behind while we move on to more advanced spiritual subjects. Every blessing comes through Him, every spiritual position is in Him, and every future display of grace will still magnify Him. The Christian therefore has no reason to spend this life chasing religious prestige as though Christ were merely the starting point. Our highest privilege now and forever is to be found in Him. The ages to come will not make Christ less important; they will reveal more fully how much God gave us through Him. **Eternity will not exhaust grace because eternity will never exhaust the worth of Jesus Christ.**

Ephesians 2:8 Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:"
Ephesians 2:8

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"For by grace are ye saved"

The word **"For"** connects verse 8 with everything Paul has just said. The believer was dead in sins, but God quickened him. He was under wrath, but God was rich in mercy. He was walking according to the world, the flesh, and the devil, but God raised him up together with Christ and made him sit in heavenly places. Why? Because salvation rests upon **grace**. Paul had already inserted the parenthetical declaration in verse 5, **"by grace ye are saved,"** and now he returns to it deliberately. Grace is not God rewarding a man who climbed most of the mountain. Grace is God saving a sinner who had no spiritual life with which to begin the climb. Romans 11:6 says, **"if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace."** Mix one ounce of human merit into grace as the basis of salvation and you have changed the substance entirely. **Grace plus merit is not improved grace; it is ruined grace.**

The wording **"are ye saved"** is equally decisive. Paul does not say, "By grace ye are being tested to see whether salvation will eventually be approved." He speaks of a present possession. The same Ephesian believers had already heard **"the gospel of your salvation,"** believed, and were **"sealed with that holy Spirit of promise"** (Ephesians 1:13). Ephesians 4:30 says they are **"sealed unto the day of redemption."** Salvation is therefore not a religious probationary period in which the believer remains one bad week away from spiritual eviction. Christ's blood paid the price, God's grace provides the salvation, faith receives it, and the Spirit seals the believer. Eternal security does not arise from the believer's perfect performance; it arises from God's finished provision.

That does not turn grace into permission to sin. Verse 10 is already waiting to say believers are **"created in Christ Jesus unto good works."** Grace places works where God places them—after salvation as fruit, not before salvation as price. Titus 2:11–12 says, **"the grace of God that bringeth salvation"** also teaches believers to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts. The man who says grace means conduct no longer matters has not read far enough. The man who says conduct must help purchase salvation has read too much religion and not enough Bible. **Grace saves without works and then refuses to leave the saved man useless.**

“through faith”

Grace is the source; faith is the means of reception. Paul says **“through faith.”** Faith does not purchase salvation because faith is not a work of merit. Romans 4:5 says, **“to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.”** Scripture deliberately contrasts believing with working in that passage. The sinner does not present faith to God as though it were a spiritual coin worth the price of Calvary. Faith is the empty hand receiving what Christ purchased. **A beggar does not become the benefactor because he opened his hand to receive the gift.**

Biblical faith also has an object and a message. Ephesians 1:13 has already established the order: **“after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed.”** Romans 10:17 says, **“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”** The sinner does not save himself by believing hard enough in belief. He hears God’s word concerning Christ and trusts the Saviour presented in that gospel. First Corinthians 15:3–4 identifies the gospel facts: **“Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.”** Faith without the proper object is merely confidence, and men can be confidently wrong on their way to judgment.

This is why water baptism, sacraments, church membership, law-keeping, turning over a new leaf, religious endurance, and every other human addition must stay out of the saving equation. Paul did not say “through faith plus water.” He did not say “through faith after enough works prove the faith valid.” Acts 16:31 says, **“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”** The Ethiopian in Acts 8 believed before entering the water. Cornelius and his household received the Holy Ghost before water baptism in Acts 10. First Corinthians 1:17 says, **“Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel.”** If water were part of the gospel that saves, that sentence would be theological nonsense. **The gospel does not need a baptistry attached to Calvary before the blood starts working.**

Faith is therefore essential without becoming meritorious. Unbelief condemns because it rejects God’s testimony concerning His Son. John 3:18 says, **“he that believeth not is condemned already.”** John 3:36 says, **“he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.”** God commands the sinner to believe, gives him His word to believe, presents Christ as the object of faith, and promises life to the believer. That preserves both divine grace and human responsibility. **God does not ask the sinner to manufacture a Saviour. He asks him to trust the One already provided.**

“and that not of yourselves”

Now Paul closes another escape hatch for human pride: **“and that not of yourselves.”** Whatever the sinner possesses in salvation, he cannot finally point back to himself as the source. He did not design the plan, send the Son, shed the blood, raise Christ from the dead, provide the gospel, justify himself, seal himself, or seat himself in heavenly places. God did all of that. Second Timothy 1:9 says God **“hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works.”** Titus 3:5 says, **“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us.”** Salvation has no room left for self-congratulation.

The phrase also keeps faith from becoming disguised self-righteousness. A man can become proud of almost anything, including humility, which proves the flesh has a sense of humor. But saving faith is not self-trust. It is the abandonment of self-trust in favor of Christ. Philippians 3:9 speaks of being found in Him, **“not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ.”** Romans 10:3 describes Israel **“going about to establish their own righteousness”** and failing to submit to the righteousness of God. The issue is not whether a sinner has religious sincerity. The issue is where he has placed his confidence.

The sinner’s response of faith is real, but nothing in that response gives him grounds to boast. Suppose a drowning man grabs the rope thrown from the ship. He would be a peculiar character to climb aboard and spend the evening boasting about the magnificent quality of his grip. The rope, the ship, and the rescuer explain why he is alive. Likewise, faith receives Christ without becoming a rival to Christ. **The man who trusts the Saviour has made a real choice, but he has not become his own saviour by making it.**

This also guards against the opposite error of saying a sinner must first be secretly regenerated before he can believe. Ephesians 1:13 gives the revealed sequence: they heard, believed, and were sealed. John 20:31 says the Scriptures were written **“that believing ye might have life through his name.”** The verse does not say, “that having life ye might believe.” Acts 16:31 says, **“Believe… and thou shalt be saved,”** not “Be saved so that you can believe.” Systems may enjoy reversing the order, but the English sentence stubbornly refuses to cooperate. **When theology has to make the sinner alive before God tells him to believe unto life, theology has gotten ahead of the verse.**

“it is the gift of God”

Salvation is finally called exactly what it is: **“the gift of God.”** Romans 6:23 gives the same language: **“the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”** A gift is not wages. Romans 4:4 says, **“Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.”** If a man earns something, God owes it as a debt. If God gives it by grace, man

receives what he did not earn. Eternal life belongs in the second category. **The minute heaven becomes a paycheck, grace has left the building.**

The gift is also inseparable from Christ. God does not hand eternal life to sinners as an independent commodity they carry away from the Son. First John 5:11 says, **"God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son."** Verse 12 follows, **"He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."** The gift is found in a Person. That is why every religious system promising salvation while bypassing Jesus Christ is offering a package God never shipped. John 14:6 remains clear: **"I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."**

Because salvation is God's gift, assurance rests on the Giver rather than the receiver's changing emotional temperature. One day a believer feels strong; another day he feels like he could trip over a carpet pattern. Feelings fluctuate. Christ does not. God's promise does not. The blood does not. The Spirit's seal does not. First John 5:13 says these things were written **"that ye may know that ye have eternal life."** Eternal life is not presented as a religious lottery ticket. **God did not call it a gift and then hide monthly payments in the fine print.**

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 2:8 teaches salvation as **grace received through faith and given entirely by God**. Grace is the source, faith is the means, Christ is the object, and eternal life is the gift. Human works, ritual, merit, law-keeping, and religious achievement contribute nothing to the basis of justification.

The verse also preserves both assurance and responsibility. The sinner genuinely believes the gospel, but believing does not become a meritorious work. God provides Christ, His word, His promise, and the gift of eternal life; the sinner receives that gift by faith. Good works follow in verse 10 as the result of salvation rather than its cause.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. Saved By Grace

Ephesians 2:5 — **"By grace ye are saved."**
Romans 11:6 — **"If by grace, then is it no more of works."**
Titus 2:11 — **"The grace of God that bringeth salvation."**
Acts 15:11 — **"Through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved."**
2 Timothy 1:9 — **"According to his own purpose and grace."**

2. Faith As The Means

Romans 5:1 — **“Being justified by faith, we have peace with God.”**
Romans 4:5 — **“Believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly.”**
Acts 16:31 — **“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”**
John 3:16 — **“Whosoever believeth in him should not perish.”**
Galatians 3:26 — **“Children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.”**

3. Faith Comes By The Word

Romans 10:17 — **“Faith cometh by hearing.”**
Ephesians 1:13 — **“After that ye heard the word of truth.”**
John 20:31 — **“That ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ.”**
Acts 15:7 — **“Hear the word of the gospel, and believe.”**
1 Corinthians 15:2 — **“By which also ye are saved.”**

4. Not Of Ourselves

Titus 3:5 — **“Not by works of righteousness which we have done.”**
Philippians 3:9 — **“Not having mine own righteousness.”**
Romans 10:3 — **“Going about to establish their own righteousness.”**
2 Timothy 1:9 — **“Not according to our works.”**
1 Corinthians 1:29 — **“That no flesh should glory in his presence.”**

5. Eternal Life Is God’s Gift

Romans 6:23 — **“The gift of God is eternal life.”**
1 John 5:11 — **“God hath given to us eternal life.”**
John 4:10 — **“If thou knewest the gift of God.”**
Romans 5:17 — **“The gift of righteousness.”**
Romans 5:18 — **“The free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.”**

6. Christ Is The Object Of Faith

John 3:36 — **“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.”**
John 6:47 — **“He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.”**
Acts 10:43 — **“Whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.”**
Acts 13:39 — **“By him all that believe are justified.”**
1 John 5:12 — **“He that hath the Son hath life.”**

7. Salvation Apart From Religious Works

Romans 4:4 — **“The reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.”**
Romans 4:5 — **“To him that worketh not.”**
Galatians 2:16 — **“A man is not justified by the works of the law.”**

Philippians 3:9 — **“Not having mine own righteousness.”**
Ephesians 2:9 — **“Not of works, lest any man should boast.”**

8. Assurance Of Present Salvation

John 5:24 — **“Hath everlasting life.”**
1 John 5:13 — **“That ye may know that ye have eternal life.”**
Ephesians 1:13 — **“Ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise.”**
Ephesians 4:30 — **“Sealed unto the day of redemption.”**
Romans 8:1 — **“No condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 2:8 is one of those verses religion has spent centuries trying to decorate because the plain statement leaves human pride unemployed. **“By grace are ye saved through faith.”** Grace means God supplies what the sinner cannot earn. Faith means the sinner receives what God has provided in Christ. The arrangement leaves no room for sacramental bookkeeping, spiritual installment payments, or religious résumé-building. Men are comfortable with religion when they can contribute something impressive enough to make God their debtor. Paul closes that office. Salvation comes from the Giver, not the applicant. The sinner’s responsibility is to believe the gospel, but even then he is trusting Another rather than presenting himself.

The verse also protects faith from two opposite distortions. One crowd turns faith into a work and then adds more works to make sure faith is respectable enough. Another crowd rearranges the order and says a man must already be regenerated before he can believe. The King James Bible requires neither invention. Ephesians 1:13 says they heard the gospel and believed; Acts 16:31 says believe and be saved; John 20:31 says believing brings life through Christ’s name. Faith does not manufacture salvation, but neither is it an afterthought occurring only after salvation has secretly happened. God presents His Son through His word, and the sinner is commanded to believe. **The Bible leaves the door wide open to “whosoever,” while theology sometimes spends its afternoon installing locks God never ordered.**

Calling salvation **“the gift of God”** should also settle the believer’s assurance. A gift is not a wage, a loan, or a rental agreement. Eternal life is located in Christ, and the believer possesses life because he possesses the Son. That does not excuse sin; the very next verses lead directly into good works. But obedience belongs to discipleship and Christian service, not to the purchase price of eternal life. A saved believer can grieve the Spirit, lose fellowship, damage testimony, invite chastening, waste opportunities, and suffer loss of

reward without somehow reversing the new birth. Security magnifies responsibility because a son should care how he represents the Father whose grace saved him.

Finally, the verse exposes the difference between Christianity and every system built around man reaching upward. Religion says do enough, improve enough, endure enough, wash enough, confess enough, sacrifice enough, and perhaps the scales will finally tip your direction. The gospel says Christ died for our sins, was buried, rose again, and eternal life is offered as God's gift through Him. That is why grace is good news. The sinner does not need another staircase; he needs a Saviour. The believer does not need to spend his life wondering whether today's performance has kept Calvary effective. **Grace puts salvation in Christ's hands, faith receives it, and God gets the glory from beginning to end.**

Ephesians 2:9 Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

"Not of works, lest any man should boast."
Ephesians 2:9

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"Not of works"

Ephesians 2:9 is short enough for a child to memorize and plain enough to ruin an entire warehouse full of man-made religion. Verse 8 has just declared, **"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God."** Verse 9 now closes the door behind that statement and locks it: **"Not of works."** Paul does not say salvation is not mostly of works. He does not say works are unnecessary only at the beginning but required later to keep eternal life alive. He does not say ceremonial works are excluded while moral works remain part of the payment. He simply says **"Not of works."** Romans 11:6 gives the same division: **"And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace."** Grace and works cannot both occupy the same place as the basis of salvation. Once human merit becomes part of the price, grace has been turned into wages.

Romans 4:4–5 explains the mathematics: **"Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."** There is no theological fog there unless somebody brought the fog machine with him. Work produces debt; grace

gives what is not earned. Faith receives righteousness apart from works. Titus 3:5 says, **“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us.”** Notice that Paul excludes even **works of righteousness**. The problem is not merely bad works. Good works cannot save either. A clean rag is still the wrong currency when God requires the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

That excludes every religious substitute men have tried to insert between the sinner and Christ. Water baptism cannot become part of the saving price because Paul says **“Not of works.”** Church membership cannot save. Sacraments cannot save. Commandment keeping cannot save. Giving money cannot save. Enduring religious hardship cannot save. Reforming one’s habits cannot save. Philippians 3:9 speaks of being found in Christ, **“not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ.”** The problem with trusting your righteousness is not that your righteousness is always socially worthless. The problem is that it is **yours**. Salvation requires a righteousness God can accept, and that righteousness is found in Christ.

Right division is essential here because Scripture contains works in many contexts without contradicting Ephesians 2:9. Israel under the law lived under a national covenant containing commandments, sacrifices, ordinances, blessings, and judgments. James discusses faith demonstrated by works in a setting that must be read carefully. Tribulation passages contain endurance and obedience in circumstances distinct from the present Church-age gospel. But when Paul explains the salvation of the body of Christ, he could hardly be plainer: **“Not of works.”** Second Timothy 2:15 tells the workman to be **“rightly dividing the word of truth.”** Without those divisions, men grab every command in the Bible, throw it into one bucket, stir vigorously, and then wonder why grace tastes like Sinai. **The Bible never contradicts grace; men contradict grace when they refuse to read the address on the mail.**

This does not remove works from the Christian life. Verse 10 immediately says, **“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.”** Works are not excluded from discipleship, service, testimony, reward, or practical holiness. They are excluded from salvation’s foundation. The order matters. Verse 9 says not of works; verse 10 says unto good works. God does not save us **by** good works but **unto** good works. **Works make an excellent servant after salvation and a miserable saviour before it.**

“lest any man should boast”

God not only removes works; He tells us why: **“lest any man should boast.”** Salvation is arranged so that no redeemed sinner will ever be able to enter glory, straighten his halo, clear his throat, and explain how heaven was fortunate to acquire him. First Corinthians

1:29 gives the divine purpose: **“That no flesh should glory in his presence.”** Verse 31 concludes, **“He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.”** God designed salvation to put the glory where it belongs. The sinner receives mercy; Christ receives praise.

Boasting is one of the flesh’s oldest diseases. Give the flesh a rule and it will find a way to keep part of it and boast. Give it a ceremony and it will boast about having undergone it. Give it a denomination and it will boast about being on the correct membership roll. Give it religious suffering and it will boast about how much it endured. Give it knowledge and **“knowledge puffeth up”** (1 Corinthians 8:1). Human pride can turn almost anything into a trophy, including humility. That is why grace is so offensive to religious flesh: grace insists that the sinner contribute nothing worthy of applause.

Romans 3:27 asks, **“Where is boasting then? It is excluded.”** Paul does not merely reduce boasting; he throws it out of the room. **“By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.”** Faith glorifies its object. When a sinner believes on Christ, the testimony becomes, “He saved me,” not, “I qualified myself.” Galatians 6:14 says, **“But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.”** The cross is God’s demolition crew against human pride. Calvary announces that man’s condition was so hopeless that the Son of God had to bleed for him. Nobody stands at the foot of that cross and sensibly congratulates himself.

This is also why religious systems that mix works with grace always produce either pride or fear. If a man thinks he is performing well, he becomes proud. If he thinks he is performing poorly, he becomes terrified. The system oscillates between arrogance and anxiety because assurance rests on the performer instead of Christ. The gospel destroys both extremes by placing salvation entirely in the finished work of Jesus Christ. The believer can be humble because he did not earn it and secure because Christ did. **Grace gives the proud man nothing to brag about and the trembling man Someone solid to trust.**

Boasting is also eliminated at the judgment seat regarding salvation itself, though Christian service will still be evaluated. First Corinthians 3:13 says, **“Every man's work shall be made manifest.”** Some believers receive reward; others suffer loss. But verse 15 says of the man whose work burns, **“he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.”** There is the distinction again. Works affect reward and service; they do not become the basis of justification. The believer may have reason to regret wasted years, but he will never have reason to boast that wasted or successful years purchased eternal life.

The practical lesson is not that Christians should despise good works but that they should perform them from the right motive. Ephesians 2:10 calls believers God’s workmanship. Philippians 2:13 says, **“For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his**

good pleasure." Even after salvation, the proper attitude is dependence rather than self-congratulation. If anything spiritually worthwhile comes out of a saved life, God deserves the credit. **The Christian's crown is safest when he already knows where he intends to throw it.**

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 2:9 establishes the absolute exclusion of **human works from the basis of salvation**. Salvation is by grace through faith, not by ritual, morality, law-keeping, endurance, church membership, religious service, or personal righteousness. Works enter the Christian life after salvation as fruit and obedience, not as payment for eternal life.

The verse also reveals God's purpose in excluding works: **human boasting must die so divine grace receives the glory**. The gospel leaves no room for self-righteousness and no room for despair based on imperfect performance. Christ's finished work becomes the believer's confidence, while good works become the believer's grateful response.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. Salvation Apart From Works

Romans 4:5 — **"To him that worketh not, but believeth."**
Titus 3:5 — **"Not by works of righteousness which we have done."**
2 Timothy 1:9 — **"Not according to our works."**
Galatians 2:16 — **"A man is not justified by the works of the law."**
Romans 3:28 — **"A man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law."**

2. Grace And Works Cannot Mix

Romans 11:6 — **"If by grace, then is it no more of works."**
Romans 4:4 — **"The reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt."**
Galatians 5:4 — **"Ye are fallen from grace."**
Galatians 3:11 — **"No man is justified by the law in the sight of God."**
Romans 6:14 — **"Ye are not under the law, but under grace."**

3. Human Righteousness Cannot Save

Philippians 3:9 — **"Not having mine own righteousness."**
Romans 10:3 — **"Going about to establish their own righteousness."**
Isaiah 64:6 — **"All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags."**
Luke 18:9 — **"Trusted in themselves that they were righteous."**
Romans 3:10 — **"There is none righteous, no, not one."**

4. Boasting Is Excluded

Romans 3:27 — **“Where is boasting then? It is excluded.”**
1 Corinthians 1:29 — **“That no flesh should glory in his presence.”**
1 Corinthians 1:31 — **“He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.”**
Galatians 6:14 — **“God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross.”**
Jeremiah 9:24 — **“Let him that glorieth glory in this.”**

5. Christ Alone Provides Righteousness

Romans 3:22 — **“The righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ.”**
1 Corinthians 1:30 — **“Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us… righteousness.”**
2 Corinthians 5:21 — **“That we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”**
Romans 5:19 — **“By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.”**
Philippians 3:9 — **“The righteousness which is of God by faith.”**

6. Good Works Follow Salvation

Ephesians 2:10 — **“Created in Christ Jesus unto good works.”**
Titus 2:14 — **“Zealous of good works.”**
Titus 3:8 — **“Be careful to maintain good works.”**
Colossians 1:10 — **“Being fruitful in every good work.”**
James 2:18 — **“I will shew thee my faith by my works.”**

7. Works And Reward

1 Corinthians 3:13 — **“Every man's work shall be made manifest.”**
1 Corinthians 3:14 — **“He shall receive a reward.”**
1 Corinthians 3:15 — **“He shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved.”**
2 Corinthians 5:10 — **“We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.”**
Colossians 3:24 — **“Ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance.”**

8. Glory Belongs To God

Psalm 115:1 — **“Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory.”**
Romans 11:36 — **“To whom be glory for ever.”**
Ephesians 1:6 — **“To the praise of the glory of his grace.”**
Revelation 5:9 — **“Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood.”**
Jude 25 — **“Glory and majesty, dominion and power.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 2:9 is where human religion runs into a brick wall with **“NOT OF WORKS”** painted across it in letters large enough for anybody willing to read. The verse does not insult good works; it simply refuses to let them sit on Christ’s throne. Feeding the poor is

good. Living morally is good. Going to church is good. Baptism is good in its proper place. Prayer, giving, service, sacrifice, Bible reading, witnessing, and obedience are all good, but none of them can purchase eternal life. The problem begins when a good thing is promoted into a saving thing. **A gold-plated ladder still cannot reach a heaven God only opens through Christ.**

The reason God arranged salvation this way is stated in the verse itself: **"lest any man should boast."** Man loves to boast because pride wants some corner of salvation where it can hang a plaque with its own name on it. If water helped save him, he can boast in the water. If church membership helped save him, he can boast in the institution. If law-keeping helped save him, he can compare his law-keeping with somebody else's. If endurance keeps him saved, he can boast that he endured when weaker Christians did not. Grace strips the walls bare. Christ paid it all, and the sinner receives the benefit by faith. Heaven will therefore be full of redeemed people praising the Lamb, not standing around comparing spiritual résumés.

This doctrine also protects assurance. A works-based system cannot produce settled peace because the performer never knows whether enough has been performed. How many prayers? How much obedience? How many sins can occur before the account collapses? How long must endurance last before salvation becomes certain? Once the foundation is moved from Christ to man, uncertainty is inevitable because man is uncertain. But Romans says we are justified by faith, Ephesians says salvation is not of works, and the Spirit seals the believer unto the day of redemption. That does not produce carelessness; it produces a stable platform from which genuine obedience can finally operate. **A man works far better for a Father who has accepted him than for a judge he is forever trying to bribe.**

Finally, verse 9 must always be read beside verse 10. God did not save us by works, but He certainly intends to produce works through us. That distinction keeps grace from becoming either legalism or laziness. Legalism puts works before salvation and tells the sinner to earn life. Laziness removes works after salvation and tells the saint that conduct no longer matters. Scripture rejects both. We are saved apart from works and then created in Christ Jesus unto good works. That leaves the glory with God and the responsibility with us. **The Christian has nothing to boast about in getting saved, but he has every reason to spend the saved life serving the One who did all the saving.**

Ephesians 2:10 Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."
Ephesians 2:10

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"For we are his workmanship"

The word **"For"** ties verse 10 directly to verses 8–9. We have just been told, **"For by grace are ye saved through faith,"** and then, **"Not of works, lest any man should boast."** Somebody might immediately ask, "Then where do works belong?" Verse 10 answers before religion has time to drag the sinner back under the payroll system: **"For we are his workmanship."** The Christian is not his own saving project. God is the Worker before the believer becomes the worker. Salvation is not something the sinner manufactures and asks God to approve; it is something God performs in the sinner who believes on Christ. Philippians 1:6 speaks of **"he which hath begun a good work in you,"** and Philippians 2:13 says, **"For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."** The order is magnificent: God works in us, and then God works through us.

The possessive pronoun matters: **"his workmanship."** The workmanship belongs to God. Ephesians 2 began with the raw material described as **"dead in trespasses and sins."** By verse 10 that dead sinner has been quickened, raised, seated in heavenly places, saved by grace, and declared God's workmanship. That is some work. Men boast about remodeling houses; God takes a child of wrath and makes him a member of Christ's body. Titus 3:5 says salvation is **"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us."** The difference between verse 9 and verse 10 is not whether work exists; it is **whose work saves**. Our works cannot save us, but God's work certainly can.

This truth ought to humble the believer even after salvation. If anything genuinely spiritual, holy, useful, charitable, courageous, faithful, or Christ-honoring comes from our lives, we have no reason to crow over it like a rooster who thinks he raised the sun. First Corinthians 15:10 says, **"by the grace of God I am what I am,"** and then Paul says, **"I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."** He worked hard without stealing credit for the power behind the work. That is the healthy balance. **Grace does not make a Christian lazy; it makes him ashamed to sign his own name across work God enabled him to do.**

"created in Christ Jesus unto good works"

The believer is **“created in Christ Jesus.”** Second Corinthians 5:17 says, **“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.”** That new-creature position does not belong to every natural-born descendant of Adam automatically. A man must be **“in Christ.”** Ephesians 1:13 has already explained the gospel order: the word of truth is heard, the gospel is believed, and the believer is sealed with the Holy Spirit. John 1:12 says, **“as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God.”** The sinner is not in Christ because some secret decree placed him there before he ever believed. He enters Christ upon receiving the Saviour God has offered through the gospel.

Creation language also shows the inadequacy of mere self-reformation. God is not sanding down the old man until he becomes spiritually presentable. Ephesians 4:22 calls the old man **“corrupt according to the deceitful lusts,”** while verse 24 tells believers to **“put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”** Christianity involves something God creates that did not exist in the sinner’s natural condition. The flesh remains flesh and must be denied, but the saved man now possesses spiritual life, the indwelling Spirit, a new standing, and a new man. **Religion keeps putting fresh paint on Adam; God puts the believer in Christ and begins with something new.**

But notice the purpose: **“unto good works.”** Verse 9 said **not of works**; verse 10 says **unto good works**. There is the balance that both legalism and lawlessness manage to miss while shouting at each other from opposite ditches. Works are not the root of salvation, but they ought to be the fruit. Titus 2:14 says Christ **“gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”** Titus 3:8 says believers should **“be careful to maintain good works.”** Salvation costs the sinner nothing because Christ paid everything, but a salvation that never affects the saved man’s life is certainly not being lived as God intended.

Good works include far more than church activity. Colossians 3:17 says, **“whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.”** Honest labor is a good work. Giving is a good work. Caring for others is a good work. Teaching truth is a good work. Raising children under Scripture, forgiving a brother, controlling the tongue, helping the weak, preaching the gospel, supporting ministry, praying, serving quietly, and refusing sin are all areas where God expects saved life to show itself. The believer is not saved by producing fruit, but living union with Christ should produce fruit. **A tree does not bear apples to become an apple tree; it bears apples because that is what it already is.**

“which God hath before ordained”

Now Paul says these good works were those **“which God hath before ordained.”** The verse does not say God foreordained certain people to eternal life while arbitrarily passing

over everybody else. The immediate antecedent is **“good works.”** God has ordained beforehand that saved people should live lives characterized by them. The purpose of salvation was never merely to rescue sinners from hell and leave them spiritually unemployed until the rapture. God had a practical purpose for the redeemed life before the believer ever began carrying it out.

The word **“ordained”** must also be allowed to mean what the context says rather than being loaded with philosophical baggage. First Corinthians 9:14 says, **“Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.”** Yet Paul says in the next verse, **“But I have used none of these things.”** Something God ordained could be a divine arrangement or appointed order without turning the people involved into robots incapable of violating it. Ephesians 2:10 itself confirms this by saying **“that we should walk in them,”** not that every Christian inevitably will. Divine intention does not erase human responsibility.

That distinction is vital. God’s will for the Christian is holiness, but Christians can sin. God commands prayer, yet Christians can neglect prayer. God commands forgiveness, yet Christians can become bitter. God commands truthfulness, yet believers can lie. The existence of commands proves that Christian obedience is not mechanically irresistible. Romans 12:2 speaks of proving **“what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”** First Thessalonians 4:3 says, **“For this is the will of God, even your sanctification.”** A believer can resist what God wants for his practical life and suffer the consequences. **If every ordained duty happened automatically, half the New Testament commandments could have been replaced with a nap.**

At the same time, God’s prior purpose gives dignity to ordinary obedience. Good works are not random religious hobbies we invent to keep ourselves busy. God has already determined that redeemed people ought to be productive for His glory. The believer does not need to manufacture some exotic destiny to make life meaningful. He needs to obey the written word in the opportunities already before him. **A Christian hunting for a mysterious calling while ignoring plain biblical duty is searching the attic for treasure while stepping over gold on the staircase.**

“that we should walk in them”

The final phrase returns to one of Ephesians’ great words: **“walk.”** In Ephesians 2:2 the unsaved man **“walked according to the course of this world.”** Now verse 10 says the saved man **“should walk”** in good works. Salvation changes the direction of the walk. The old walk followed the world, the devil, and the flesh. The new walk is supposed to display the workmanship of God. Ephesians will later command, **“walk worthy of the vocation**

wherewith ye are called" (4:1), **"walk in love"** (5:2), **"walk as children of light"** (5:8), and **"walk circumspectly"** (5:15). Grace does not merely change where a man is going when he dies. It gives him an entirely new road to walk while he lives.

Notice again the word **"should."** It establishes responsibility without making obedience automatic. Every Christian should walk in good works; not every Christian always does. That distinction keeps standing and state in their proper places. The believer's standing rests in Christ and is settled by grace. His state—his practical walk—can be faithful or carnal, fruitful or barren, obedient or disobedient. First Corinthians 3 teaches that a saved man's works can be rewarded or burned, while **"he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire."** The possibility of loss does not erase salvation, and the certainty of salvation does not erase the seriousness of loss.

The Christian walk therefore matters tremendously. Good works affect testimony before men, usefulness to God, fellowship, chastening, spiritual maturity, and reward at the judgment seat of Christ. Second Corinthians 5:10 says, **"we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body."** Eternal life is not earned there; the believer already has eternal life. Service is evaluated there. **The Judgment Seat of Christ is not God deciding whose blood was good enough to save; it is Christ examining what saved people did after His blood already saved them.**

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 2:10 establishes the proper place of **good works after salvation**. Verses 8–9 exclude works as the cause of salvation, while verse 10 restores them as the intended result. The believer is God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus with a divine purpose for practical holiness, service, and fruitfulness.

The verse also distinguishes **God's workmanship from the believer's walk**. God creates, saves, and places the believer in Christ; the believer is then responsible to walk in the good works God ordained for saved life. Grace establishes standing, while obedience governs state, usefulness, testimony, fellowship, and reward.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. God's Work In The Believer

Philippians 1:6 — **"He which hath begun a good work in you."**
Philippians 2:13 — **"It is God which worketh in you."**
1 Corinthians 15:10 — **"Yet not I, but the grace of God."**

Hebrews 13:21 — **“Working in you that which is wellpleasing.”**
Psalm 100:3 — **“It is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves.”**

2. Created In Christ

2 Corinthians 5:17 — **“If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.”**
Ephesians 4:24 — **“The new man, which after God is created.”**
Galatians 6:15 — **“A new creature.”**
Colossians 3:10 — **“Put on the new man.”**
Ephesians 2:6 — **“Made us sit together… in Christ Jesus.”**

3. Works Do Not Save

Ephesians 2:9 — **“Not of works.”**
Titus 3:5 — **“Not by works of righteousness which we have done.”**
Romans 4:5 — **“To him that worketh not, but believeth.”**
Romans 11:6 — **“If by grace, then is it no more of works.”**
Galatians 2:16 — **“Not justified by the works of the law.”**

4. Saved Unto Good Works

Titus 2:14 — **“Zealous of good works.”**
Titus 3:8 — **“Be careful to maintain good works.”**
Colossians 1:10 — **“Fruitful in every good work.”**
Hebrews 10:24 — **“Provoke unto love and to good works.”**
Matthew 5:16 — **“That they may see your good works.”**

5. Walking After Salvation

Ephesians 4:1 — **“Walk worthy of the vocation.”**
Ephesians 5:2 — **“Walk in love.”**
Ephesians 5:8 — **“Walk as children of light.”**
Ephesians 5:15 — **“Walk circumspectly.”**
Colossians 2:6 — **“So walk ye in him.”**

6. God’s Will For Holy Living

1 Thessalonians 4:3 — **“This is the will of God, even your sanctification.”**
Romans 12:2 — **“That good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”**
1 Peter 2:15 — **“For so is the will of God.”**
1 Thessalonians 5:18 — **“This is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.”**
Ephesians 5:17 — **“Understanding what the will of the Lord is.”**

7. Works And Christian Fruit

John 15:5 — **“He that abideth in me… bringeth forth much fruit.”**
Galatians 5:22 — **“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace.”**
Philippians 1:11 — **“Being filled with the fruits of righteousness.”**
Colossians 1:6 — **“Bringeth forth fruit.”**
Romans 7:4 — **“That we should bring forth fruit unto God.”**

8. Works And Future Reward

1 Corinthians 3:13 — **“Every man's work shall be made manifest.”**
1 Corinthians 3:14 — **“He shall receive a reward.”**
1 Corinthians 3:15 — **“He shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved.”**
2 Corinthians 5:10 — **“We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.”**
Colossians 3:24 — **“Ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 2:10 is the verse that keeps grace from being slandered as laziness. Verses 8–9 have already shut works out of salvation, but verse 10 immediately brings good works back through the proper door. We are not saved **by** them; we are saved **unto** them. That difference is not wordplay. It is the difference between Christianity and religion. Religion tells the dead sinner to work until he earns life; the gospel gives the believing sinner life and then tells the living man to get to work. One system has the corpse pushing the ambulance. The other has God raising the dead and giving the resurrected man somewhere worth walking.

The phrase **“his workmanship”** ought to cure both pride and despair. Pride has no room because anything truly spiritual produced through us is ultimately the result of God’s grace working within us. Despair has no right to say God cannot make anything useful from a damaged life because Ephesians began with people dead in sins and ended this section by calling them His workmanship. God is not limited by the material He started with. That does not excuse sin or make consequences disappear, but it means our past does not possess more creative authority than God. When He saves a sinner, He does not merely erase an old record; He begins working through a new relationship in Christ. **The masterpiece does not boast against the Artist, and the unfinished canvas should not accuse the Artist of being finished too soon.**

The words **“which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them”** also correct deterministic confusion. God ordained the path, but the believer is still told he **should** walk in it. Christians can resist God’s will, waste opportunities, grieve the Spirit, live carnally, and suffer loss. If obedience were automatic, exhortation would be meaningless. Grace gives security without producing robots. God saves the believer completely and then deals

with him as a responsible son whose choices matter. That is why Scripture contains commands, warnings, chastening, rewards, loss, and the judgment seat of Christ. **Eternal security does not make choices less important; it makes them the choices of someone who already belongs to Christ.**

Finally, this verse should make Christian service both serious and joyful. We do not serve God with a stopwatch running against eternal life. We do not witness, pray, give, forgive, teach, labor, resist temptation, and help others because we fear Christ will tear up our adoption papers if today's performance disappoints Him. We serve because grace saved us for a purpose. There are good works prepared to be walked in, opportunities to use, people to help, truth to defend, a gospel to preach, a body to edify, and a Saviour to glorify. One day our works will be examined, and some things will prove eternal while others become smoke. The answer is not to work for salvation but to refuse wasting the salvation already given. **We are not our own workmanship trying to earn God's heaven; we are God's workmanship, already in Christ, called to spend the rest of the journey walking like it.**

Ephesians 2:11 Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

"Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands;" Ephesians 2:11

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"Wherefore remember"

Paul begins with **"Wherefore,"** connecting verse 11 directly to everything already established in verses 1–10. These believers had been dead in sins, quickened together with Christ, raised together, seated together in heavenly places, saved by grace through faith, and created in Christ Jesus unto good works. Now Paul tells them to **remember** what they were before grace intervened. Salvation does not require the believer to live chained to his past, but Scripture does require him to remember enough of it to keep pride from growing back. Titus 3:3 uses the same medicine: **"For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived."** The Christian remembers the pit without climbing back into it.

Memory serves grace when it magnifies the difference Christ made. Paul himself remembered being **"before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious"** (1 Timothy 1:13), but he did not turn that memory into endless self-condemnation. He used it to magnify mercy. First Corinthians 6:11 follows a catalogue of sin with the words, **"And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified."** That is biblical remembrance. Look backward long enough to appreciate grace, then look upward to Christ and forward to the calling He has given you. **Grace remembers the grave to praise the resurrection, not to move the furniture back into the cemetery.**

The command also guards believers against spiritual arrogance. Ephesians is about to explain the former Gentile condition in relation to Israel, the covenants, and the promises. Gentiles who have been brought near must never become boastful against the people through whom God gave the Scriptures and the Messiah. Romans 11:18 gives the warning plainly: **"Boast not against the branches."** A saved Gentile has tremendous spiritual blessings in Christ, but grace does not authorize him to rewrite history and pretend Israel never possessed a distinct national calling. **Forgetting where grace found you is often the first step toward stealing somebody else's promises and calling the theft theology.**

"that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh"

Paul now identifies the Ephesian believers according to their former natural position: **"Gentiles in the flesh."** The distinction is physical and national. First Corinthians 10:32 recognizes three categories in the present biblical framework: **"the Jews… the Gentiles… the church of God."** Before salvation these Ephesians belonged to the Gentile nations rather than Israel. They were not descendants of Jacob, were not members of Israel's commonwealth, and did not possess Israel's covenantal privileges by natural birth. Verse 12 will expand the matter in devastating detail.

The phrase **"in the flesh"** is essential because Paul will later describe the spiritual unity found **in Christ**. Galatians 3:28 says, **"There is neither Jew nor Greek… for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."** That does not mean racial and national distinctions ceased to exist physically. Paul himself could still say in Romans 11:1, **"For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin."** Spiritually, saved Jew and saved Gentile are one in Christ; physically, a Jew does not cease being a Jew and a Gentile does not become a biological Israelite. **Union in Christ removes spiritual superiority without erasing every distinction God wrote into history.**

That point matters enormously in rightly dividing Scripture. Gentile believers do not become Israel by salvation. They do not inherit Israel's national identity, tribal ancestry, land boundaries, Davidic throne, or every covenant promise addressed to Jacob. Ephesians

2 will show Gentiles being brought near **by the blood of Christ**, reconciled with believing Jews in **one body**, and made fellowcitizens with the saints. That is greater than pretending Gentiles secretly became Jews. God creates something new in Christ without cancelling what He promised Israel. Romans 11:29 says, **"For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." The Church does not need to become Israel in order to be blessed; being in Christ is already a better position than theological identity theft can provide.**

The words **"in time past"** also establish another dispensational marker. Paul is describing what these Gentiles once were before being brought near in Christ. Verse 13 will say, **"But now in Christ Jesus."** That contrast—**time past / but now**—is one of the most important movements in the passage. Their fleshly Gentile identity had not changed, but their spiritual relationship to God had. The gospel did not give them Abraham's genealogy. It gave them Christ.

"who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands"

Paul next gives the vocabulary by which Jews and Gentiles distinguished one another: Gentiles were **"called Uncircumcision,"** while Jews were **"called the Circumcision."** Circumcision began as the covenant sign given to Abraham. Genesis 17:11 says, **"ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you."** It later became inseparably associated with Israel's national identity. Romans 3:1 asks, **"What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision?"** and answers, **"Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God."** The distinction was real and historically significant.

But Paul carefully qualifies it: **"in the flesh made by hands."** Physical circumcision marked the flesh; it did not automatically regenerate the soul. Israel's own Scriptures had already warned against resting merely in the outward sign. Deuteronomy 10:16 commanded, **"Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart."** Jeremiah 4:4 similarly said, **"Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, and take away the foreskins of your heart."** Romans 2:28 later states, **"For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh."** Outward covenant privilege was real, but outward flesh could never substitute for inward faith and obedience.

This prepares the reader for the contrast with the believer's spiritual circumcision. Colossians 2:11 says Christians are **"circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ."** There is the difference. Ephesians 2:11 specifically says Israel's physical circumcision was

“made by hands,” while Colossians describes a spiritual operation **“made without hands.”** One marks flesh physically; the other describes God’s spiritual operation in the believer. Water, knives, rituals, and religious hands cannot perform what the Holy Ghost accomplishes in Christ.

Paul’s wording also quietly knocks pride out of both camps. The Gentile had no grounds for boasting because he had been outside Israel’s covenant privileges. The Jew had no grounds for trusting the physical sign because circumcision in the flesh could not save an unbelieving heart. Romans 3:9 concludes, **“for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin.”** Different privileges, same need of salvation. Different histories, same Saviour. **A mark in the flesh can identify your ancestry; it cannot write your name in the book of life.**

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 2:11 begins Paul’s great explanation of the relationship between **Gentiles, Israel, and the one body in Christ**. Gentile believers are told to remember their former position without Christ so that grace, rather than pride, controls their understanding. They were Gentiles **“in the flesh,”** distinct from Israel and outside the covenant sign of circumcision.

The verse also distinguishes **physical circumcision from spiritual reality**. Circumcision had genuine covenantal significance for Abraham’s descendants, but being physically circumcised never guaranteed spiritual righteousness. In Christ, salvation does not turn Gentiles into national Israel; instead, God brings believing Jew and Gentile into one spiritual body while preserving the distinctions Scripture itself maintains.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. Remembering The Former Condition

Titus 3:3 — **“We ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived.”**
1 Corinthians 6:11 — **“And such were some of you.”**
Ephesians 5:8 — **“For ye were sometimes darkness.”**
1 Peter 4:3 — **“The time past of our life may suffice us.”**

2. Jew And Gentile Distinguished

1 Corinthians 10:32 — **“Neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God.”**
Romans 1:16 — **“To the Jew first, and also to the Greek.”**
Romans 3:29 — **“Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles?”**
Romans 9:24 — **“Not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?”**

3. Israel's Distinct National Calling

Romans 9:4 — **"Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants."**
Romans 3:2 — **"Unto them were committed the oracles of God."**
Deuteronomy 7:6 — **"The LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people."**
Romans 11:28 — **"As touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes."**

4. The Covenant Sign Of Circumcision

Genesis 17:11 — **"It shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you."**
Genesis 17:13 — **"My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant."**
Romans 4:11 — **"He received the sign of circumcision."**
Acts 7:8 — **"And he gave him the covenant of circumcision."**

5. Outward Circumcision Cannot Save

Romans 2:28 — **"He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly."**
Romans 2:29 — **"Circumcision is that of the heart."**
Deuteronomy 10:16 — **"Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart."**
Jeremiah 4:4 — **"Circumcise yourselves to the LORD."**

6. Spiritual Circumcision In Christ

Colossians 2:11 — **"The circumcision made without hands."**
Colossians 2:12 — **"Buried with him in baptism."**
Philippians 3:3 — **"For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit."**
Romans 2:29 — **"Whose praise is not of men, but of God."**

7. One In Christ Without Becoming Israel

Galatians 3:28 — **"Ye are all one in Christ Jesus."**
Ephesians 2:14 — **"Who hath made both one."**
Ephesians 2:16 — **"Reconcile both unto God in one body."**
1 Corinthians 12:13 — **"Whether we be Jews or Gentiles… into one body."**

8. Gentiles Must Not Boast Against Israel

Romans 11:18 — **"Boast not against the branches."**
Romans 11:20 — **"Be not highminded, but fear."**
Romans 11:25 — **"Blindness in part is happened to Israel."**
Romans 11:29 — **"The gifts and calling of God are without repentance."**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 2:11 tells saved Gentiles to **remember**, and that command is worth more than it first appears. Grace becomes clearer when we remember what grace actually changed. Gentiles were not born into Israel's covenant privileges, did not possess the sign of circumcision, and were not naturally members of the commonwealth that God established through Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses. The next verse will make the condition darker still. Yet remembering that past should not produce inferiority any more than salvation should produce Gentile arrogance. It should produce gratitude. God did not bring Gentiles near so they could spend the next two thousand years bragging that He had thrown Israel away. **A man living on mercy looks ridiculous when he begins boasting over somebody else's chastening.**

The phrase **"Gentiles in the flesh"** is especially important because it protects the Bible from replacement theology. Salvation does not transform a Gentile into a descendant of Jacob. Being one in Christ does not make every distinction in Scripture evaporate. Paul could proclaim spiritual equality in Christ and still speak plainly of Jews, Gentiles, and Israel's continuing prophetic significance. Romans 11 is impossible to read honestly while pretending national Israel simply vanished into the Church. The Church receives tremendous spiritual blessings, but God does not need to break one set of promises in order to keep another. **Grace toward Gentiles is not proof that God became unfaithful to Jews; it is proof that His mercy reached farther than Gentiles ever had reason to expect.**

Circumcision provides the second great lesson. The outward mark mattered because God established it as a covenant sign, but the mark itself could never regenerate the heart. That principle reaches far beyond circumcision. Men still love visible religion because visible things can be counted, displayed, certified, framed, sprinkled, dipped, signed, stamped, and shown to the neighbors. God keeps looking deeper. Physical ceremony may testify to something spiritual, but it cannot manufacture the spiritual reality it symbolizes. Water baptism has its proper place after salvation, church membership has its proper place, and Christian ordinances have their proper place, but none can substitute for being in Christ. **Religion is forever trying to get human hands to perform operations that Scripture says require God.**

Finally, verse 11 prepares us for one of the greatest passages on the Church in the New Testament. Paul is about to move from Gentile alienation to reconciliation, from distance to nearness, from division to one body, and from strangers to fellowcitizens. But he does not begin by pretending the former distinctions never existed. He begins by telling us to remember them. Right division honors the road God actually traveled rather than painting over the road signs afterward. Jew and Gentile had different covenant positions in the flesh,

but both needed reconciliation through Christ. In the body, neither can boast over the other because both arrive by grace. **The cross does not prove the distinctions were imaginary; it proves Christ was great enough to reconcile people who really were divided.**

Ephesians 2:12 Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

"That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:"
Ephesians 2:12

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"That at that time ye were without Christ"

Paul is still commanding these saved Gentiles to **remember** their former condition. Verse 11 called them **"Gentiles in the flesh,"** and verse 12 now opens the inventory of what that condition actually meant: **"at that time ye were without Christ."** The phrase **"at that time"** matters because verse 13 will answer it with one of the great dispensational turns in the chapter: **"But now in Christ Jesus."** There was a time when these people were outside Christ; now they are in Him. Salvation changed more than their religious opinion. It changed their spiritual position.

To be **"without Christ"** is the central tragedy beneath every other loss in this verse. A man may possess education, health, money, family, reputation, citizenship, morality, religion, and respectable surroundings and still be without Christ. If he is without Christ, he is without the One in whom Ephesians says we have redemption, forgiveness, acceptance, inheritance, sealing, resurrection life, and heavenly standing. John 3:36 says, **"he that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."** Men spend enormous energy improving the furniture in a house that has no foundation.

The phrase also reminds us that the Gentile world did not naturally possess Israel's Messianic hope. Christ came **"of the seed of David according to the flesh"** (Romans 1:3), and Romans 9:5 says concerning Israel, **"of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came."** The Messiah arose from Israel's prophetic program, Davidic line, and covenant history. Gentiles were not naturally standing inside that stream of promise. Yet the gospel would bring them not merely near to Israel's blessings but into Christ Himself. **The Gentile's great**

need was never to become more Jewish; it was to get into the Jewish Messiah who died and rose for sinners.

“being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel”

Paul next says Gentiles were **“aliens from the commonwealth of Israel.”** An alien is an outsider to a political or national order. The **commonwealth of Israel** refers to Israel’s God-established national arrangement—its people, law, priesthood, covenants, promises, worship, land, kingdom expectation, and unique historical relationship to the LORD. Romans 9:4 says of Israelites, **“to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises.”** Those privileges belonged historically to Israel, not indiscriminately to all nations.

This distinction must not be erased by careless theology. Deuteronomy 7:6 says Israel was **“a special people unto himself.”** Romans 3:2 says **“unto them were committed the oracles of God.”** Psalm 147:19–20 says God showed His word unto Jacob and then adds concerning other nations, **“He hath not dealt so with any nation.”** That does not mean every Jew was saved, nor does it mean every Gentile was beyond divine mercy. It means Israel possessed a national covenant standing the Gentiles did not possess. **Equality of human sin never meant equality of dispensational privilege.**

The Church therefore does not become the commonwealth of Israel by salvation. Verse 19 will say Gentile believers are **“fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God,”** but Paul does not suddenly rename them Israel. Ephesians 2 will explain something new: believing Jew and Gentile reconciled unto God **“in one body”** through the cross. Romans 11 simultaneously preserves Israel’s future and warns Gentiles, **“Boast not against the branches.”** God did not save Gentiles by cancelling His promises to Israel. **Grace opened another door; it did not burn Israel’s deed to the house.**

“and strangers from the covenants of promise”

The Gentiles were also **“strangers from the covenants of promise.”** Scripture contains specific covenants made by God with particular people, and Ephesians refuses to pretend the Gentiles originally owned them. The Abrahamic covenant contained promises concerning Abraham’s seed, land, and blessing. The Mosaic covenant governed Israel nationally under the law. The Davidic covenant promised a throne and kingdom through David’s line. Romans 9:4 deliberately says **“the covenants”** pertained to Israel. The ordinary Gentile was a stranger to that covenant structure.

This is one of the clearest safeguards against replacement theology. A stranger becoming blessed does not prove he was secretly the original covenant party. God can bless Gentiles through Abraham’s promised Seed without turning Gentiles into Abraham’s physical

descendants. Galatians 3:14 says, **“That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ.”** The blessing comes **through Christ**, not through Gentiles confiscating Israel’s national identity. Romans 15:8 says Christ came **“to confirm the promises made unto the fathers,”** while verse 9 adds that Gentiles glorify God **“for his mercy.”** Promise to the fathers; mercy to the Gentiles. The wording is worth keeping.

Yet Gentile distance makes grace all the more remarkable. They were strangers, but verse 13 will say they are **“made nigh by the blood of Christ.”** The blood accomplishes what natural descent could not. A Gentile did not need Abraham’s bloodstream to receive eternal life; he needed Christ’s blood. The covenants explain Israel’s historical privilege, while Calvary explains the Church’s spiritual access. **God did not rewrite the Gentile’s family tree; He gave him a place in Christ that genealogy could never purchase.**

“having no hope”

Then Paul removes the sentimental varnish: **“having no hope.”** This is not saying Gentiles had no wishes, ambitions, religions, philosophies, dreams of immortality, or optimistic ideas. The ancient world had plenty of all of those. Paul means they possessed no revealed, covenant-grounded, divinely guaranteed hope. Biblical hope is not wishful thinking. Romans 5:2 speaks of rejoicing **“in hope of the glory of God,”** and Titus 2:13 calls Christ’s return **“that blessed hope.”** Hope in Scripture is certainty directed toward the future.

Without Christ, that certainty disappears. Proverbs 14:32 says, **“the wicked is driven away in his wickedness: but the righteous hath hope in his death.”** First Thessalonians 4:13 distinguishes believers from **“others which have no hope.”** A lost man may avoid thinking about death, joke about it, philosophize about it, insure against everything short of it, and arrange an expensive funeral after it, but none of that answers what comes next. **A polished coffin does not improve the destination of the man inside it.**

For the believer, hope is now tied directly to Christ. Colossians 1:27 says, **“Christ in you, the hope of glory.”** First Peter 1:3 speaks of **“a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”** Hope rests on a risen Person, not positive thinking. That is why Christian hope can survive gravesides, persecution, sickness, disappointment, and the collapse of earthly plans. **The world says hope means believing tomorrow may improve; the Bible says hope means knowing Christ already owns tomorrow.**

“and without God in the world”

Paul reaches the bottom: **“without God in the world.”** The Gentiles had gods everywhere, yet Paul says they were **without God**. That ought to settle the fashionable claim that all religion is simply mankind approaching the same God by different roads. Acts 17 describes

Athens as wholly given to idolatry and even possessing an altar **"TO THE UNKNOWN GOD."** Paul did not congratulate them for already knowing God under different names. He said, **"Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you."**

Being religious is not the same as having God. First Corinthians 8:5 acknowledges **"gods many, and lords many,"** but verse 6 says, **"to us there is but one God, the Father… and one Lord Jesus Christ."** Psalm 96:5 says, **"For all the gods of the nations are idols."** The Gentile world had temples, priests, sacrifices, philosophies, mysteries, rituals, and enough religious merchandise to keep an empire busy. Paul still describes them as **"without God." Humanity has never suffered from a shortage of religion; it suffers from being separated from the true God.**

Finally, notice the location: **"in the world."** The world cannot cure the condition because the world itself lies under sin. Ephesians 2:2 called its direction **"the course of this world."** A man without God may become successful in that world and still remain spiritually bankrupt. But verse 13 is about to reverse everything: **"But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ."** The answer to being without God is not discovering divinity within yourself. It is reconciliation through Jesus Christ.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 2:12 gives one of Scripture's starkest descriptions of the **former Gentile condition**: without Christ, alien from Israel's commonwealth, stranger to the covenants, without hope, and without God. It combines spiritual lostness with dispensational distance. Gentiles lacked both Israel's historical covenant privileges and, apart from Christ, saving life before God.

The verse also prepares the great contrast of verse 13. Gentiles are not saved by becoming national Israel or taking Israel's promises away from her. They are brought near **in Christ Jesus by His blood**. Right division therefore preserves Israel's covenant identity while magnifying the grace that brings believing Gentiles into one body with believing Jews.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. Without Christ

John 15:5 — **"Without me ye can do nothing."**
1 John 5:12 — **"He that hath not the Son of God hath not life."**
John 3:36 — **"He that believeth not the Son shall not see life."**
Ephesians 2:13 — **"But now in Christ Jesus."**

2. Israel's Distinct Privileges

Romans 9:4 — **“To whom pertaineth… the covenants.”**
Romans 3:2 — **“Unto them were committed the oracles of God.”**
Deuteronomy 7:6 — **“A special people unto himself.”**
Psalm 147:20 — **“He hath not dealt so with any nation.”**

3. The Covenants And Promises

Genesis 17:7 — **“I will establish my covenant.”**
2 Samuel 7:16 — **“Thy throne shall be established for ever.”**
Romans 15:8 — **“To confirm the promises made unto the fathers.”**
Romans 9:4 — **“The covenants… and the promises.”**

4. Gentiles Brought Into Blessing

Galatians 3:14 — **“The blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles.”**
Romans 15:9 — **“The Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy.”**
Acts 13:47 — **“I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles.”**
Ephesians 3:6 — **“The Gentiles should be fellowheirs.”**

5. No Hope Without Christ

1 Thessalonians 4:13 — **“Others which have no hope.”**
Proverbs 14:32 — **“The righteous hath hope in his death.”**
Colossians 1:27 — **“Christ in you, the hope of glory.”**
Titus 2:13 — **“Looking for that blessed hope.”**

6. The True God Versus Idols

Psalm 96:5 — **“All the gods of the nations are idols.”**
1 Corinthians 8:6 — **“To us there is but one God.”**
Acts 17:23 — **“Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship.”**
Jeremiah 10:10 — **“The LORD is the true God.”**

7. Brought Near By Christ

Ephesians 2:13 — **“Made nigh by the blood of Christ.”**
Romans 5:10 — **“Reconciled to God by the death of his Son.”**
Colossians 1:20 — **“Having made peace through the blood of his cross.”**
1 Peter 3:18 — **“That he might bring us to God.”**

8. Gentiles Must Not Replace Israel

Romans 11:18 — **“Boast not against the branches.”**
Romans 11:25 — **“Blindness in part is happened to Israel.”**

Romans 11:26 — **“And so all Israel shall be saved.”**
Romans 11:29 — **“The gifts and calling of God are without repentance.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 2:12 is not the kind of verse modern religion naturally puts on a coffee mug. It tells lost man what he does not want to hear: apart from Christ, he possesses no saving relationship with God and no biblical hope beyond death. Gentiles may have civilization, learning, art, government, philosophy, technology, temples, and religious traditions, but Paul looks over the entire collection and says **“without Christ… having no hope, and without God in the world.”** That sounds negative only because the condition is negative. A physician who finds cancer does not improve the diagnosis by calling it personal growth. **The gospel becomes genuinely good news only after Scripture is allowed to tell the truth about how bad the old position was.**

This verse also guards the Bible against the arrogance of Gentile Christianity. We were aliens from Israel’s commonwealth and strangers from the covenants of promise. That does not make Israel spiritually superior in unbelief, for Romans says both Jew and Gentile are under sin, but it does mean God gave Israel privileges He did not give the nations. The Church has no warrant to erase that history, steal Israel’s national promises, and then boast that Israel has been permanently discarded. Romans 11 specifically forbids such boasting. God’s grace toward the Gentiles does not require unfaithfulness toward Israel. **The God who keeps His promise to us is not glorified by a theology that requires Him to break His promise to somebody else.**

The phrase **“having no hope”** deserves special attention in a world that manufactures optimism by the truckload. Biblical hope is not positive thinking, emotional resilience, or the determination to believe things will somehow improve. A lost man may be optimistic and still be hopeless in Paul’s sense because he possesses no revealed promise concerning eternal life in Christ. Christian hope has an object, a foundation, and a future. Christ died, rose, lives, intercedes, and will come again. The believer therefore has hope at the graveside because death did not defeat his Saviour. **Hope is not pretending the night is not dark; it is knowing exactly Who is coming when the morning breaks.**

Finally, **“without God in the world”** exposes the bankruptcy of religion without Christ. Men can have gods and still be without God. They can have ceremonies and still be unreconciled. They can have sincere spiritual experiences and still not possess eternal life. Scripture does not point sinners inward to discover some buried divine spark; it points them to Jesus Christ. And the very next verse will show the wonder: people who were far off are **“made nigh by the blood of Christ.”** That is the answer to every loss in verse 12. In

Christ the alien is brought near, the stranger receives a place, the hopeless man receives hope, and the man without God is reconciled to God. **Ephesians 2:12 tells us how far away we were so that verse 13 can show us exactly how far the blood reached.**

Ephesians 2:13 Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

"But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ."
Ephesians 2:13

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"But now in Christ Jesus"

Two words turn the whole passage around: **"But now."** Verse 12 left the Gentile in a condition bleak enough to bury every ounce of religious optimism: **"without Christ," "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel," "strangers from the covenants of promise," "having no hope,"** and **"without God in the world."** Then verse 13 opens the door: **"But now."** Something has changed. The Gentile's natural ancestry has not changed, but his spiritual position has. He has not acquired Abraham's genealogy, moved backward into Israel's national history, or become a physical descendant of Jacob. God has done something greater: He has placed the believing sinner **"in Christ Jesus."**

That phrase has been carrying the doctrine of Ephesians from the beginning. Ephesians 1:3 says believers are blessed **"with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."** Verse 6 says they are **"accepted in the beloved."** Verse 7 says, **"In whom we have redemption through his blood."** Verse 13 says they trusted **"in whom"** after hearing the gospel. Ephesians 2:6 says believers are seated **"in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."** Now verse 13 says **"But now in Christ Jesus."** Christianity is not merely learning improved religious ideas. The sinner is given a new spiritual location. **The gospel does not merely tell the man far off to behave better where he is; God puts him in Christ and changes where he stands.**

This is also why the Church must never be confused with national Israel. A Gentile does not need to become Israel to get near to God. He needs to be **in Christ Jesus**. First Corinthians 12:13 says, **"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles."** Jew and Gentile do not become each other; both are brought into something

neither possessed merely by natural birth—the one body of Christ. That preserves Israel's identity while magnifying the Church's heavenly position. **Grace did not redraw the Gentile's family tree; it gave him a new Head.**

"ye who sometimes were far off"

The expression **"sometimes were far off"** reaches directly back to verse 12. Gentiles were far off in relation to Israel's covenant privileges, far off from the revealed Messianic promises centered historically in Israel, and—most seriously—far off from God. They possessed religions, philosophies, temples, sacrifices, and gods in abundance, yet Paul had already described them as **"without God in the world."** Distance from God is not measured in miles. A man may stand in a cathedral, hold a Bible, sing hymns, and still be spiritually far off if he is without Christ.

Paul does not soften the former condition because grace becomes cheap when sin and alienation are minimized. Isaiah 57:20 says, **"the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest."** Romans 3:23 says, **"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."** Whether the sinner is openly wicked or respectably religious, he still comes short. One man may miss heaven by what society calls scandalous sin; another may miss it wearing a suit and carrying a hymnbook. Distance is distance. **A man fifty miles from shore and a man five hundred miles from shore are equally unable to walk home across the ocean.**

Yet notice that Paul says **"were far off."** That is past tense for the believer. Grace does not leave the saved man spiritually stranded at the old address. First Corinthians 6:11 says after listing grievous sins, **"And such were some of you."** Ephesians 5:8 says, **"For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord."** Scripture allows the believer to remember what he was without requiring him to keep living under the identity of what grace has changed. The past should produce gratitude, not permanent spiritual paralysis. **God wants the redeemed man to remember the ditch, not move back into it and start paying rent.**

"are made nigh"

The contrast could not be sharper: those who were **"far off"** are now **"made nigh."** They did not crawl nigh, work nigh, ritualize themselves nigh, or earn their way nigh. They **"are made nigh."** Somebody else performed the action. Ephesians has been saying that from the beginning. God quickened us. God raised us. God seated us. We are His workmanship. Now those once far away are **made nigh**. Salvation is God acting for sinners who could not establish their own acceptable approach.

Being made nigh means access to God through Christ. Verse 18 will explain, **"For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father."** Romans 5:1–2 says, **"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith."** The believer does not approach God through an earthly priesthood, departed saints, religious intermediaries, sacramental machinery, or human merit. First Timothy 2:5 says, **"For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."** If Christ brought you near, you do not need a religious travel agent selling tickets for the last twenty feet.

This nearness must also be understood correctly in relation to Israel. The Gentile is not said to be made nigh by becoming a member of national Israel. Verse 16 will say Christ reconciled **"both unto God in one body by the cross."** Verse 17 distinguishes those **"afar off"** from those **"that were nigh,"** and verse 18 says **"we both have access."** The destination is God; the means is Christ; the result is one body. Israel had historical covenant nearness, while Gentiles had been strangers. The cross now gives believing Jew and Gentile equal spiritual access in Christ. **The Church is not Gentiles moving into Israel's old house; it is believing Jew and Gentile being joined in a new body under one Head.**

"by the blood of Christ"

Here is the price of nearness: **"by the blood of Christ."** Paul does not say by Christ's example, teaching, morality, philosophy, or social influence. Those things matter in their proper place, but redemption is tied specifically to His blood. Ephesians 1:7 already said, **"In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins."** Romans 5:9 says, **"being now justified by his blood."** Colossians 1:20 speaks of **"having made peace through the blood of his cross."** God did not bring sinners near by ignoring sin. He dealt with sin at Calvary.

The blood matters because sin produces guilt before a holy God. Hebrews 9:22 says, **"without shedding of blood is no remission."** First Peter 1:18–19 says believers were not redeemed **"with corruptible things, as silver and gold,"** but **"with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."** Nothing produced by fallen man could pay that debt. Money cannot purchase forgiveness. Water cannot wash guilt from God's record. Tears cannot reverse transgression. Religious suffering cannot become atonement. **The sinner was too far off for human footsteps to solve the problem, so Christ crossed the distance with blood.**

That blood also kills every form of boasting. If we are made nigh **by the blood of Christ**, then our nearness is not based upon superior morality, denominational pedigree, covenant

theft, ceremonial achievement, or personal goodness. Revelation 5:9 says the Lamb **"hast redeemed us to God by thy blood."** The redeemed have one common reason for being there. The Jew who believes cannot boast in circumcision; the Gentile who believes cannot boast in being grafted into blessing; the religious man cannot boast in ritual; the moral man cannot boast in conduct. **At Calvary every saved man arrives through the same door, and that door is stained red.**

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 2:13 marks the great transition from **distance to nearness**. Verse 12 described the Gentile without Christ, outside Israel's covenant privileges, without revealed hope, and without God. Verse 13 answers that ruin with **"But now in Christ Jesus."** The change is positional and spiritual: the believing Gentile is brought near to God through union with Christ.

The verse also places the entire accomplishment upon **the blood of Christ**. Gentiles are not brought near by becoming national Israel, and Jews and Gentiles are not reconciled by pretending their former distinctions never existed. The cross brings both to God in one body. The blood removes guilt, establishes peace, provides redemption, and opens access to the Father.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. From Far Off To Near

Ephesians 2:17 — **"Peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh."**
Isaiah 57:19 — **"Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near."**
Acts 2:39 — **"To all that are afar off."**
Ephesians 2:18 — **"We both have access by one Spirit unto the Father."**

2. The Believer In Christ

2 Corinthians 5:17 — **"If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature."**
Romans 8:1 — **"No condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus."**
Ephesians 1:3 — **"All spiritual blessings… in Christ."**
Ephesians 2:6 — **"In heavenly places in Christ Jesus."**
1 Corinthians 1:30 — **"Of him are ye in Christ Jesus."**

3. Redemption Through The Blood

Ephesians 1:7 — **"Redemption through his blood."**
Colossians 1:14 — **"Redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins."**
1 Peter 1:19 — **"With the precious blood of Christ."**

Revelation 5:9 — **“Hast redeemed us to God by thy blood.”**
Hebrews 9:12 — **“By his own blood… obtained eternal redemption.”**

4. Justified And Cleansed By Blood

Romans 5:9 — **“Being now justified by his blood.”**
1 John 1:7 — **“The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.”**
Hebrews 9:14 — **“The blood of Christ… purge your conscience.”**
Revelation 1:5 — **“Washed us from our sins in his own blood.”**

5. Peace Through The Cross

Colossians 1:20 — **“Peace through the blood of his cross.”**
Romans 5:1 — **“We have peace with God.”**
Ephesians 2:14 — **“For he is our peace.”**
Ephesians 2:16 — **“Reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross.”**

6. Access To The Father

Ephesians 2:18 — **“Through him we both have access.”**
Romans 5:2 — **“By whom also we have access by faith.”**
Ephesians 3:12 — **“In whom we have boldness and access.”**
Hebrews 4:16 — **“Come boldly unto the throne of grace.”**
1 Timothy 2:5 — **“One mediator between God and men.”**

7. Jew And Gentile In One Body

1 Corinthians 12:13 — **“Whether we be Jews or Gentiles… into one body.”**
Ephesians 2:16 — **“Reconcile both unto God in one body.”**
Ephesians 3:6 — **“The Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body.”**
Galatians 3:28 — **“Ye are all one in Christ Jesus.”**

8. Israel And The Gentiles Rightly Distinguished

Romans 9:4 — **“Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth… the covenants.”**
Romans 11:18 — **“Boast not against the branches.”**
Romans 11:25 — **“Blindness in part is happened to Israel.”**
Romans 11:29 — **“The gifts and calling of God are without repentance.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 2:13 is one of those verses that becomes brighter the darker verse 12 is allowed to remain. The Gentile was without Christ, outside Israel’s covenant standing, without hope, and without God in the world. Then Scripture says, **“But now.”** Those two words are

not religious decoration; they mark a complete change of spiritual position. Christianity is not God helping a sinner become slightly less distant. The sinner who believes is placed **"in Christ Jesus"** and brought near to God. That means the gospel does not begin by telling lost men to improve their manners, repair their ancestry, imitate Israel, join the correct institution, or gather enough religious merit to make God notice them. It points them to Christ. **When God brings a sinner near, He does not shorten the road—He puts the sinner in the One who already crossed it.**

The verse also destroys the notion that all religious approaches eventually arrive at the same God. Paul had just described Gentiles surrounded by religion as **"without God in the world."** Their sincerity did not erase their distance. Their temples did not close it. Their sacrifices did not purchase access. The same principle remains true. A man can be deeply religious and still be far off because nearness is not measured by ceremony but by relationship to Jesus Christ. First Timothy 2:5 gives **"one mediator between God and men."** If there is one Mediator, then multiplying mediators does not make the approach safer; it makes the route less biblical. **The blood of Christ did not open one lane among many roads to God—it opened the way God Himself provided.**

Right division keeps the glory of this verse intact. Gentiles were historically strangers from Israel's covenants, and salvation does not retroactively turn them into national Israel. The Church receives something magnificent without having to confiscate Israel's identity: believing Jews and Gentiles are reconciled **unto God in one body**. That preserves the plain language of Romans 11 while honoring the plain language of Ephesians 2. Israel still has promises rooted in God's faithfulness, while the Church has a heavenly position in Christ. There is no need to erase one in order to enjoy the other. Grace is rich enough to bless the Church without making God a covenant breaker toward Israel. **A theology that must make God unfaithful to somebody else before He can be gracious to you has misunderstood both faithfulness and grace.**

Most importantly, the verse tells us exactly what made nearness possible: **"the blood of Christ."** That phrase should settle every argument about human merit. We are not made nigh by baptismal water, church membership, law-keeping, endurance, charitable works, emotional experiences, or religious sincerity. Those things may have proper places after salvation, but none of them supplied the price of redemption. Christ did. The blood means our sin was serious enough to require death, but it also means His sacrifice was sufficient enough to bring the guilty sinner all the way home. That gives the believer assurance and humility at the same time. We cannot boast because we did not purchase the access, and we need not despair because Christ already purchased it. **The distance was ours, the blood was His, and the nearness is now ours because we are in Him.**

Ephesians 2:14 Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

"For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us;"
Ephesians 2:14

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"For he is our peace"

The verse does not merely say that Jesus Christ **gives** peace. It says, **"For he is our peace."** That is stronger. Peace with God is not finally an emotion, an atmosphere, a church program, a treaty drafted by religious committees, or a temporary ceasefire between hostile parties. Peace is embodied in a Person. Romans 5:1 says, **"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."** Colossians 1:20 says Christ made **"peace through the blood of his cross."** The peace of Ephesians 2:14 is therefore not sentimental harmony floating above sin; it is peace purchased by blood and grounded in reconciliation. God does not solve hostility by pretending nothing was wrong. He solves it by dealing with sin at the cross.

The context makes the statement even richer. Verse 12 described Gentiles as **"without Christ," "having no hope,"** and **"without God in the world."** Verse 13 said those who were far off are **"made nigh by the blood of Christ."** Now verse 14 explains why: **"For he is our peace."** Christ Himself stands at the center of the reconciliation. The Gentile does not get peace by becoming a Jew, and the Jew does not get peace by becoming a Gentile. Both need Christ. Romans 3:9 says both Jews and Gentiles are **"all under sin."** The cross does not flatter either side. It puts both at the same door and tells both to enter through the same Saviour.

That destroys religious boasting as thoroughly as Ephesians 2:9 destroyed works-boasting. Israel had covenant privilege, Scripture, promises, and national nearness; Gentiles had been outside that arrangement. But neither covenant privilege nor Gentile philosophy could remove sin. Christ had to become peace for both. First Corinthians 1:30 says Christ Jesus **"of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."** Ephesians adds peace to the picture. **Peace is not something Christ hands you while remaining outside the matter; peace is what you possess because you possess Christ.**

"who hath made both one"

The word **“both”** must be allowed to mean what the context says. It refers to Jew and Gentile. Verse 11 distinguished Gentiles in the flesh from **“the Circumcision.”** Verse 12 explained the Gentile’s former alienation from Israel’s commonwealth and covenants. Verse 13 brought the far-off Gentile near by Christ’s blood. Now verse 14 says Christ **“hath made both one.”** This is not a vague lesson about everybody in the world naturally belonging to one spiritual family. It is the specific New Testament truth that believing Jew and believing Gentile are united in Christ.

Verse 16 will define the unity precisely: Christ reconciles **“both unto God in one body by the cross.”** First Corinthians 12:13 says, **“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles.”** That is the unity. Jew and Gentile are not melted into some indistinct religious soup where biblical history disappears. They are joined spiritually in one body under one Head. Galatians 3:28 says, **“ye are all one in Christ Jesus.”** The unity is **in Christ**, not in human culture, political agreement, racial sameness, or the erasure of every distinction God ever made.

This verse therefore does not teach that the Church has replaced Israel. Christ making Jew and Gentile one in His body does not mean the word **Israel** has been redefined to mean the Church. Romans 11 continues to speak distinctly about Israel after the Church is already functioning. Romans 11:25 says, **“blindness in part is happened to Israel,”** and verse 26 says, **“And so all Israel shall be saved.”** Paul did not lose track of his nouns halfway through his ministry. God can create one body in Christ and still keep national promises made to Israel. **Unity in Christ is not accomplished by stealing Israel’s name; it is accomplished by giving Jew and Gentile a new Head.**

Practically, the phrase destroys fleshly superiority in the Church. A saved Jew cannot boast over a saved Gentile because both are in Christ by grace. A saved Gentile cannot boast against Israel because Romans 11 specifically says, **“Boast not against the branches.”** Ethnic pride, religious pedigree, social rank, educational status, and national background have no place as grounds of spiritual superiority in Christ’s body. The cross makes everybody enter low enough to fit through the same door. **At Calvary nobody gets a private entrance marked “Preferred Customers.”**

“and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us”

The phrase **“middle wall of partition”** describes the barrier standing between Jew and Gentile in the former arrangement. Verse 15 immediately explains the doctrinal substance of that barrier by speaking of **“the law of commandments contained in ordinances.”** Israel had received laws, ordinances, circumcision, dietary distinctions, ceremonial regulations, holy days, priestly arrangements, and national covenant requirements that

distinguished that nation from the surrounding Gentiles. Leviticus 20:26 says, **“I the LORD am holy, and have severed you from other people, that ye should be mine.”** The separation was not an accident. God established it for His purposes under that administration.

But Christ **“hath broken down”** the partition with respect to the creation of the one body. The verb is accomplished. The Church is not waiting for a Jewish believer and Gentile believer to negotiate an acceptable compromise. Christ has already dealt with the barrier at the cross. Acts 15 shows how serious the issue became when some attempted to require Gentile believers to be circumcised and keep the law of Moses. Peter answered that God purified Gentile hearts **“by faith”** and warned against putting a yoke upon them. Paul later says in Galatians 5:1, **“Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free.”** Once Christ broke the wall down, religion immediately started collecting bricks to rebuild it.

The breaking down of the partition does not mean the Old Testament was wrong, defective, or sinful. Romans 7:12 says, **“the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.”** The issue is not that God made a mistake under Moses and Christ came to correct Him. The issue is dispensational purpose. God gave Israel a distinct legal and covenant arrangement for a specific people and time. Christ fulfilled the law, shed His blood, and now God is forming one body in which believing Jews and Gentiles possess equal access to the Father. **Right division does not accuse God of changing His mind; it recognizes when God changes the administration.**

That is why dragging the Church back under Israel’s national ordinances creates confusion. Colossians 2:16 says, **“Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday.”** Romans 6:14 says, **“ye are not under the law, but under grace.”** The believer does not need circumcision of the flesh to become spiritually complete; Colossians 2:10 says, **“ye are complete in him.”** The partition has been broken down in Christ. **Religion loves rebuilding walls Christ died to remove, usually charging admission while the masonry goes up.**

The practical side is equally important. If Christ destroyed the God-ordained historical barrier separating Jew and Gentile in order to create one body, Christians have no business constructing petty barriers out of class, nationality, personality, education, income, or denominational vanity. Doctrine must still be defended, sin must still be judged, and biblical separation from error remains necessary; unity is never a license to abandon truth. But the unity Christ created must not be despised by fleshly pride. **The cross did not abolish truth to make peace; it established peace by dealing truthfully with the problem.**

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 2:14 presents Christ as both the **source and substance of peace**. He does not merely negotiate between Jew and Gentile; through His cross He removes the hostility, brings both to God, and creates one spiritual body. Peace therefore rests in Christ's person and finished work rather than human cooperation, law-keeping, or religious diplomacy.

The verse also establishes a crucial rightly divided distinction. Jew and Gentile become one **in Christ**, but this does not erase Israel's national identity or cancel God's future promises to Israel. The former legal partition separating Jew and Gentile is removed for the formation of the Church, while Scripture continues to distinguish Israel's prophetic future from the Church's heavenly position.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. Christ Is Our Peace

Romans 5:1 — **"We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."**
Colossians 1:20 — **"Peace through the blood of his cross."**
Isaiah 9:6 — **"The Prince of Peace."**
John 14:27 — **"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you."**
Ephesians 2:17 — **"Came and preached peace."**

2. Reconciled By The Cross

Ephesians 2:16 — **"Reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross."**
Romans 5:10 — **"Reconciled to God by the death of his Son."**
Colossians 1:21 — **"Yet now hath he reconciled."**
2 Corinthians 5:18 — **"God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ."**
2 Corinthians 5:19 — **"God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself."**

3. Jew And Gentile Made One

1 Corinthians 12:13 — **"Whether we be Jews or Gentiles… into one body."**
Galatians 3:28 — **"Ye are all one in Christ Jesus."**
Ephesians 3:6 — **"The Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body."**
Colossians 3:11 — **"Where there is neither Greek nor Jew."**
Ephesians 2:16 — **"Both unto God in one body."**

4. The Former Separation

Leviticus 20:26 — **"I… have severed you from other people."**
Deuteronomy 7:6 — **"A special people unto himself."**
Romans 9:4 — **"To whom pertaineth… the covenants."**

Psalm 147:20 — **“He hath not dealt so with any nation.”**
Ephesians 2:12 — **“Aliens from the commonwealth of Israel.”**

5. The Law And Ordinances

Ephesians 2:15 — **“The law of commandments contained in ordinances.”**
Colossians 2:14 — **“Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances.”**
Romans 7:12 — **“The law is holy.”**
Galatians 3:24 — **“The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ.”**
Romans 6:14 — **“Ye are not under the law, but under grace.”**

6. Liberty From Ceremonial Bondage

Acts 15:10 — **“A yoke upon the neck of the disciples.”**
Galatians 5:1 — **“Stand fast therefore in the liberty.”**
Colossians 2:16 — **“Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink.”**
Galatians 5:6 — **“Neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision.”**
Colossians 2:10 — **“Ye are complete in him.”**

7. Israel Still Distinguished

Romans 11:1 — **“Hath God cast away his people? God forbid.”**
Romans 11:25 — **“Blindness in part is happened to Israel.”**
Romans 11:26 — **“And so all Israel shall be saved.”**
Romans 11:28 — **“Beloved for the fathers' sakes.”**
Romans 11:29 — **“The gifts and calling of God are without repentance.”**

8. One Access To The Father

Ephesians 2:18 — **“We both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.”**
Romans 5:2 — **“By whom also we have access by faith.”**
Ephesians 3:12 — **“In whom we have boldness and access.”**
Hebrews 10:19 — **“Boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.”**
1 Timothy 2:5 — **“One mediator between God and men.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 2:14 begins by putting peace where God put it: **in Jesus Christ**. Men continually search for peace in circumstances, institutions, movements, negotiations, ceremonies, and emotional experiences, but Scripture says, **“he is our peace.”** That statement reaches deeper than a peaceful feeling because feelings can disappear before breakfast. Christ does not disappear. The believer’s peace with God rests on justification, reconciliation, and blood already shed, not on whether today feels calm. That is why a Christian can

experience trouble in the world and still possess peace with God. **The storm may shake the cabin, but it cannot rewrite the title deed.**

The Jew-Gentile unity in this verse also exposes one of religion's favorite habits: making fleshly distinctions more important than spiritual position. The Jew had genuine covenant privileges, and the Gentile genuinely stood outside them, but neither side possessed a saving advantage once the question became personal reconciliation to God. Both needed the cross. Christ **"made both one,"** not by declaring their histories imaginary but by creating something new in Himself. That is the Church—the one body of Christ. This is why replacement theology gets the picture backward. Gentiles are not blessed because God discarded Israel and handed them Israel's old identification card; Gentiles are blessed because Christ brought believing Jew and Gentile into one body while God remains faithful to every promise He made. **Grace never needs God to break yesterday's promise in order to keep today's.**

The **"middle wall of partition"** is equally important because it teaches us to recognize dispensational change without criticizing what God formerly established. Israel's law, ordinances, covenant signs, dietary distinctions, priesthood, sacrifices, and national separation served divine purposes. They were not mistakes. But the cross changed the relationship of believing Jew and Gentile by removing the legal barrier that stood between them and forming one body. That is why forcing Church-age believers back under Israel's ceremonial structure is not deeper spirituality; it is doctrinal confusion. Christians can study the law, learn from the law, see Christ pictured throughout the law, and believe every word God gave Israel without pretending the Church is under that covenant administration. **The Bible becomes confusing only when men insist on living in somebody else's dispensation while ignoring the mail addressed to them.**

Finally, the verse carries a practical rebuke. If Christ paid with His blood to create one body, believers should be very careful about constructing fleshly partitions where He removed them. This does not mean compromising doctrine, fellowshipping with apostasy, or pretending error is harmless. Biblical unity is always unity **in Christ**, never unity at the expense of Christ's words. But pride over nationality, education, money, background, social class, personality, or denominational prestige has no place among people who came through the same blood. The cross levels pride without flattening truth. Jew and Gentile, rich and poor, educated and uneducated, strong and weak—all who are saved stand complete in the same Christ. **He is our peace, He made both one, and any wall the flesh builds higher than the cross deserves to come down.**

Ephesians 2:15 Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

"Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace;" Ephesians 2:15

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"Having abolished in his flesh the enmity"

Verse 14 declared that Christ **"is our peace,"** that He **"hath made both one,"** and that He **"hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us."** Verse 15 now explains how that barrier was dealt with: **"Having abolished in his flesh the enmity."** The answer was not diplomacy between Jew and Gentile. It was not a conference table, a revised covenant negotiated by men, or a cultural compromise where everybody surrendered half his convictions and congratulated himself for being broad-minded. Christ dealt with the barrier **"in his flesh."** Colossians 1:22 says reconciliation came **"in the body of his flesh through death."** Hebrews 10:20 speaks of the new and living way **"through the veil, that is to say, his flesh."** The peace of Ephesians 2 was purchased in an actual body through an actual death.

The word **"enmity"** belongs to the separation that stood between Jew and Gentile under the former legal arrangement, but it ultimately reaches the deeper problem of estrangement from God. Romans 5:10 says, **"when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son."** The cross therefore works vertically before its consequences are enjoyed horizontally. Christ does not merely persuade hostile groups to tolerate each other; He reconciles sinners to God, and those reconciled sinners can then stand together in Him. Modern religion loves to talk about peace while sidestepping blood, sin, guilt, wrath, and reconciliation. God does not. **Biblical peace is not achieved by pretending there was no enmity; it is achieved because Christ went to the cross and dealt with it.**

The phrase **"in his flesh"** must also be taken seriously. The Son of God actually came in human flesh and bore the judgment connected with sin. John 1:14 says, **"the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us."** First Peter 2:24 says He **"his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree."** The flesh in which men sinned became the realm in which the spotless Son of God bore sin's penalty without possessing sin Himself. Religion offers man's flesh trying harder; the gospel presents Christ's flesh crucified. **God did not improve Adam enough to make peace—He sent the last Adam to the cross.**

“even the law of commandments contained in ordinances”

Paul now identifies the barrier more specifically: **“even the law of commandments contained in ordinances.”** Israel had received a national legal system from God containing commandments, ordinances, dietary restrictions, circumcision, sacrifices, priestly regulations, sabbaths, holy days, ceremonial distinctions, and other requirements that marked Israel off from surrounding nations. Leviticus 20:26 says, **“I have severed you from other people, that ye should be mine.”** The distinction was intentional. God did not accidentally create a separation that Christ later discovered and had to repair. The law served its appointed purpose in God’s program with Israel.

Colossians 2:14 closely parallels the verse: **“Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.”** That does not mean God abolished righteousness, holiness, truth, or moral responsibility. Romans 7:12 still says, **“Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.”** What changed is the believer’s relationship to that legal covenant administration. Romans 6:14 says plainly, **“ye are not under the law, but under grace.”** The Church is not spiritual Israel sitting under Moses with a Christian label pasted over the door. Christ accomplished something new.

That distinction rescues the Christian from two opposite errors. One error says that because believers are not under the Mosaic law, holiness no longer matters. Scripture answers that nonsense before it gets out of the driveway. Grace teaches believers to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts (Titus 2:11–12), and Ephesians 2:10 says we are created **“unto good works.”** The opposite error drags the believer back under Israel’s covenant ordinances as though Calvary merely renovated Sinai. Paul says the handwriting of ordinances was taken **“out of the way.” Grace does not abolish holiness; it abolishes the idea that Israel’s covenant code is the Church’s ladder to acceptance with God.**

“for to make in himself of twain one new man”

Here is the purpose: **“for to make in himself of twain one new man.”** The word **“twain”** means the two groups under discussion—Jew and Gentile. Christ does not simply declare that their differences were imaginary. He takes those who were genuinely distinguished in the flesh and makes something new **“in himself.”** The location matters again. The unity is not built in Abraham, Moses, nationality, culture, political philosophy, or religious institution. It is **in Christ**.

The phrase **“one new man”** is one of the clearest descriptions of the body of Christ in this section. Verse 16 immediately calls it **“one body.”** Ephesians 3:6 says the mystery revealed concerning the Gentiles is that they should be **“fellowheirs, and of the same body, and**

partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel." First Corinthians 12:13 says, **"by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles."** The Church is not Gentiles becoming Jews, nor Jews becoming Gentiles. It is both being joined spiritually into something new under Christ the Head. **God did not solve the Jew-Gentile question by choosing one side; He created a body neither side possessed before the cross.**

That is why replacement theology misses the force of the wording. If the Church were simply Israel under a new name, why call the result **"one new man"**? New means new. Romans 11 still speaks of Israel as Israel and warns Gentiles not to boast against the natural branches. Ephesians 2 speaks of the Church as one body formed from believing Jews and Gentiles. Both truths stand without contradiction when Scripture is rightly divided. Israel retains national promises rooted in God's faithfulness, while the Church possesses its own heavenly calling in Christ. **You do not honor the new man by pretending one of the two men never existed.**

The practical consequence is enormous. Fleshly pedigree cannot create spiritual rank inside Christ's body. Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision provides saving superiority. Galatians 6:15 says, **"For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature."** A saved Jew is not more saved because he is Jewish; a saved Gentile is not more enlightened because he is Gentile. Both stand in Christ by grace. **At the cross, ancestry may explain your history, but it cannot improve your standing.**

"so making peace"

The verse closes with the result: **"so making peace."** Peace is not manufactured by ignoring truth; it is produced by Christ removing the legal barrier and reconciling both parties to God in Himself. Verse 14 said **"he is our peace."** Verse 15 says He made **"one new man, so making peace."** Verse 17 will say He **"came and preached peace."** The entire section is saturated with peace because the cross settled what flesh could never settle.

Colossians 1:20 says Christ made **"peace through the blood of his cross."** Romans 5:1 says, **"being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."** That order is indispensable. Peace with God comes before the believer can properly understand peace with other believers. Religious unity built without reconciliation to God is only organized separation from God. Men can hold hands around error, sing about brotherhood, and still be dead in trespasses and sins. **God's peace is not a group photograph; it is the result of a cross.**

This peace also never requires doctrinal surrender. Paul, the same apostle teaching one body, condemned false gospels in Galatians 1 and commanded separation from disorderly brethren in 2 Thessalonians 3. Biblical unity is therefore not universal fellowship without boundaries. Peace exists **in Christ**, under truth, through the cross. The wall separating Jew and Gentile in the legal economy was removed, but God did not remove the wall between truth and error. **Christ broke down the partition He intended to remove; men should be careful not to knock down fences God still tells them to keep.**

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 2:15 explains how Christ created peace between believing Jew and Gentile. Through His death **"in his flesh,"** He dealt with the legal barrier associated with **"the law of commandments contained in ordinances"** and opened the way for both groups to be joined **in Himself** as **"one new man."** The Church is therefore not a Gentile takeover of Israel, nor Israel merely renamed. It is the one body of Christ composed of saved Jews and Gentiles.

The verse also establishes the distinction between the Mosaic legal administration and the believer's standing under grace. Christ's removal of the ordinances does not abolish holiness or Christian obedience; it removes the Mosaic covenant structure as the means by which God distinguishes and governs His present body. Grace produces holy living from a position already secured in Christ.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. Christ's Flesh And Reconciliation

Colossians 1:22 — **"In the body of his flesh through death."**
1 Peter 2:24 — **"Bare our sins in his own body on the tree."**
Hebrews 10:20 — **"Through the veil, that is to say, his flesh."**
Romans 5:10 — **"Reconciled to God by the death of his Son."**
John 1:14 — **"The Word was made flesh."**

2. The Ordinances Taken Away

Colossians 2:14 — **"Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances."**
Colossians 2:16 — **"Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink."**
Ephesians 2:14 — **"Broken down the middle wall of partition."**
Hebrews 7:12 — **"There is made of necessity a change also of the law."**
Romans 6:14 — **"Ye are not under the law, but under grace."**

3. The Law Had A Purpose

Romans 7:12 — **“The law is holy.”**
Galatians 3:19 — **“It was added because of transgressions.”**
Galatians 3:24 — **“The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ.”**
Romans 3:20 — **“By the law is the knowledge of sin.”**
1 Timothy 1:8 — **“The law is good, if a man use it lawfully.”**

4. One New Man

Ephesians 4:24 — **“Put on the new man.”**
2 Corinthians 5:17 — **“If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.”**
Galatians 6:15 — **“But a new creature.”**
Colossians 3:10 — **“Put on the new man.”**
Ephesians 2:16 — **“Both unto God in one body.”**

5. Jew And Gentile In One Body

1 Corinthians 12:13 — **“Whether we be Jews or Gentiles… into one body.”**
Ephesians 3:6 — **“Fellowheirs, and of the same body.”**
Galatians 3:28 — **“Ye are all one in Christ Jesus.”**
Colossians 3:11 — **“Neither Greek nor Jew.”**
Ephesians 4:4 — **“There is one body.”**

6. Peace Through Christ

Ephesians 2:14 — **“He is our peace.”**
Ephesians 2:17 — **“Came and preached peace.”**
Colossians 1:20 — **“Peace through the blood of his cross.”**
Romans 5:1 — **“We have peace with God.”**
John 14:27 — **“My peace I give unto you.”**

7. Grace Does Not Cancel Holy Living

Titus 2:11–12 — **“Teaching us that, denying ungodliness… we should live soberly.”**
Ephesians 2:10 — **“Created in Christ Jesus unto good works.”**
Romans 6:1–2 — **“Shall we continue in sin…? God forbid.”**
Galatians 5:13 — **“Use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh.”**
Ephesians 4:1 — **“Walk worthy of the vocation.”**

8. Israel Still Has A Distinct Future

Romans 11:1 — **“Hath God cast away his people? God forbid.”**
Romans 11:25 — **“Blindness in part is happened to Israel.”**
Romans 11:26 — **“And so all Israel shall be saved.”**

Romans 11:28 — **“Beloved for the fathers' sakes.”**
Romans 11:29 — **“The gifts and calling of God are without repentance.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 2:15 is one of those verses that clears an enormous amount of doctrinal fog if its words are allowed to stand where God put them. Christ **“abolished in his flesh the enmity,”** and the cross is therefore the turning point, not human religious development. Men did not gradually become enlightened enough to discover that Jew and Gentile should get along. God acted in Christ. The Son of God took flesh, died, dealt with sin, removed the legal barrier connected with Israel’s ordinances, and opened the way for believing Jew and Gentile to exist together in one body. That is why Christianity is not Judaism improved, paganism civilized, or religion modernized. **The cross did not renovate the old arrangement; it made possible something God calls new.**

That newness is exactly where much confusion begins. Some read **“one new man”** and immediately try to turn the new man back into old Israel. Others go to the opposite extreme and treat Israel as though God has permanently discarded the nation and transferred every promise to the Church. Neither move is necessary. Romans 11 still recognizes Israel and guarantees a future connected with the fathers, while Ephesians reveals one body in Christ where believing Jew and Gentile share equal spiritual standing. Right division allows both passages to speak without forcing one to swallow the other. The Church does not need Israel’s national identity to possess heavenly riches in Christ, and Israel does not need the Church erased for God to fulfill His prophetic promises. **God owns enough future to keep every promise He ever made without borrowing somebody else’s inheritance.**

The phrase **“law of commandments contained in ordinances”** also protects grace from legalistic confusion. The law was good, holy, and given by God, but it had a purpose within Israel’s covenant administration. When men drag Christians back beneath those ordinances as conditions of acceptance, they rebuild what Christ removed. Yet freedom from that covenant is never freedom to sin. Paul can say believers are not under the law and, in the same body of doctrine, demand holiness, honesty, charity, sexual purity, forgiveness, faithfulness, and self-control. Grace actually raises the practical standard by putting the Holy Ghost within the believer and calling him to walk worthy of Christ. **The Christian is not lawless because Moses is not his covenant; he is responsible because Christ is his Lord.**

Finally, **“so making peace”** shows what genuine biblical peace costs and where it lives. It costs the death of Christ, and it lives in Christ. That means peace cannot be produced by watering down doctrine until nobody has enough truth left to argue about. Christians

should pursue peace, reject fleshly pride, and refuse to build social partitions inside Christ's body that He never authorized. But unity cannot require agreement with false gospels, denial of Scripture, or fellowship with open rebellion against God's word. Christ made peace without compromising one truth, because the cross satisfied truth rather than evading it. Jew and Gentile are one because both are reconciled to the same God by the same Christ through the same cross and placed in the same body by the same Spirit. **The one new man was not born from compromise; he was born from Calvary.**

Ephesians 2:16 Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

"And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:"
Ephesians 2:16

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"And that he might reconcile both unto God"

The word **"both"** reaches directly backward to the Jew and the Gentile of the preceding verses. Ephesians 2:11–12 described the Gentile as **"Uncircumcision,"** alien from Israel's commonwealth, stranger from the covenants of promise, without hope, and without God. Verse 14 then said Christ **"hath made both one,"** and verse 15 spoke of making **"of twain one new man."** Now verse 16 states the ultimate purpose: **"that he might reconcile both unto God."** The destination is not merely reconciliation between two races; it is reconciliation **unto God**. Jew and Gentile both had a deeper problem than hostility toward each other. Both were sinners before a holy God.

Romans 3:9 says, **"we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin."** Israel possessed tremendous covenant privileges, but privilege was never a substitute for personal salvation. Gentiles lacked those privileges, but their disadvantage did not make Israel automatically righteous. Romans 3:23 settles the matter: **"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."** Christ therefore does not take a righteous Jew and an unrighteous Gentile and teach them to coexist. He takes believing sinners from both groups and reconciles them to God. **The cross does not give one sinner a better seat than another; it tells both men they needed the same Saviour.**

Reconciliation means that the estrangement caused by sin has been dealt with through Christ. Romans 5:10 says, **“when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son.”** Second Corinthians 5:18 says God **“hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ.”** Notice again who performs the work. Man does not reconcile God to himself through rituals, reform, penance, religion, or human righteousness. God provides reconciliation through His Son. The sinner receives what Christ accomplished.

This also protects the doctrine from sentimental misuse. Biblical reconciliation is not merely people deciding to become nicer to each other. Men can shake hands, sign agreements, and still remain enemies of God through unbelief. The reconciliation of Ephesians 2:16 is theological before it is social. Peace between believing Jew and Gentile grows out of both having been brought to the same God through the same Christ. **The gospel does not first teach enemies to sit at the same table; it gives them the same Father.**

“in one body by the cross”

The reconciliation takes place **“in one body.”** That phrase identifies the new spiritual organism introduced in the previous verse as **“one new man.”** Ephesians 4:4 states plainly, **“There is one body.”** First Corinthians 12:13 explains how believers enter it: **“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles.”** The Church is therefore not two spiritual bodies sharing temporary fellowship. There is not a Jewish body and a Gentile body meeting occasionally for religious cooperation. There is **one body**, with Jesus Christ as its Head.

That one body is not national Israel renamed. Ephesians did not say the Gentile became an Israelite. It said Jew and Gentile were reconciled **in one body**. Ephesians 3:6 later calls the Gentiles **“fellowheirs, and of the same body.”** Romans 11 still speaks distinctly of Israel and warns Gentile believers, **“Boast not against the branches.”** God does not have to cancel Israel’s national future in order to create the Church’s spiritual unity. **The body of Christ is not Israel wearing a Gentile coat; it is a new man created in Christ.**

And the instrument is unmistakable: **“by the cross.”** The one body exists because Calvary removed what stood between sinners and God and what divided Jew and Gentile under the former legal arrangement. Colossians 1:20 says Christ made **“peace through the blood of his cross.”** Galatians 6:14 says, **“God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.”** The Church was not produced by religious evolution. It rests on a crucified and risen Christ.

That makes every attempt to attach saving merit to ceremonies look rather small beside Calvary. The verse does not say reconciled by circumcision, water baptism, law-keeping,

sacraments, or human endurance. It says **“by the cross.”** Ordinances have their proper places, and obedience matters after salvation, but none can occupy Christ’s place in reconciliation. **When God says the cross reconciled us, religion should resist the urge to bring a toolbox and offer improvements.**

“having slain the enmity thereby”

The final phrase is violent because the problem required death: **“having slain the enmity thereby.”** Christ did not negotiate with the enmity. He slew it. Verse 15 connected that enmity with **“the law of commandments contained in ordinances,”** the legal barrier that marked Israel’s separation from Gentiles. At the cross Christ dealt decisively with that barrier so that believing Jew and Gentile could stand together in one body.

Colossians 2:14 uses similarly strong language: Christ was **“blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us”** and **“nailing it to his cross.”** The cross therefore marks the end of the Mosaic covenant’s authority as the governing legal system for the body of Christ. That does not mean righteousness was crucified or holiness abolished. Romans 7:12 still says, **“the law is holy.”** The change concerns administration and standing. Christians are **“not under the law, but under grace”** (Romans 6:14).

The enmity slain also reaches beyond the Jew-Gentile partition to man’s hostility toward God through sin. Colossians 1:21 describes sinners as **“alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works,”** then says, **“yet now hath he reconciled.”** The cross deals with guilt, alienation, judgment, and hostility. God does not declare peace by pretending sin never happened. He declares peace because Christ bore the judgment sin deserved.

That should destroy both spiritual pride and religious hostility inside Christ’s body. If Christ had to die to bring us together, we have little room to boast over one another. Jew and Gentile, rich and poor, educated and uneducated, strong and weak all enter the body through the same crucified Saviour. Doctrine still matters and error must still be opposed, but fleshly superiority has no biblical foundation. **The cross killed the enmity; Christians ought to think twice before trying to resurrect it.**

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 2:16 reveals that the deepest purpose of Christ’s work was **reconciliation unto God**. Jew and Gentile possessed different historical privileges, but both were sinners needing the same Saviour. Through the cross, believers from both groups are reconciled to God and joined into **one body**, the Church.

The verse also establishes an essential dispensational distinction. The one body does not erase Israel’s national identity or future promises, nor does it place the Church back under

Israel's covenant ordinances. Christ removed the legal barrier that separated Jew and Gentile under the former administration and created a new spiritual unity in Himself. The result is peace grounded not in compromise but in Calvary.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. Reconciled Unto God

Romans 5:10 — **"Reconciled to God by the death of his Son."**
2 Corinthians 5:18 — **"Reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ."**
2 Corinthians 5:20 — **"Be ye reconciled to God."**
Colossians 1:21 — **"Yet now hath he reconciled."**
1 Peter 3:18 — **"That he might bring us to God."**

2. Jew And Gentile Both Under Sin

Romans 3:9 — **"Both Jews and Gentiles… are all under sin."**
Romans 3:23 — **"For all have sinned."**
Romans 10:12 — **"There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek."**
Galatians 3:22 — **"The scripture hath concluded all under sin."**
Romans 11:32 — **"God hath concluded them all in unbelief."**

3. One Body In Christ

1 Corinthians 12:13 — **"By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body."**
Ephesians 4:4 — **"There is one body."**
Ephesians 3:6 — **"Fellowheirs, and of the same body."**
Colossians 1:18 — **"He is the head of the body, the church."**
Romans 12:5 — **"We, being many, are one body in Christ."**

4. The Cross Accomplished Reconciliation

Colossians 1:20 — **"Peace through the blood of his cross."**
Romans 5:9 — **"Being now justified by his blood."**
Galatians 6:14 — **"Glory… in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."**
1 Peter 2:24 — **"Bare our sins in his own body on the tree."**
Hebrews 12:2 — **"Endured the cross."**

5. The Enmity Removed

Ephesians 2:14 — **"Broken down the middle wall of partition."**
Ephesians 2:15 — **"Having abolished in his flesh the enmity."**
Colossians 2:14 — **"Nailing it to his cross."**

Romans 5:10 — **“When we were enemies.”**
Colossians 1:21 — **“Alienated and enemies in your mind.”**

6. Not Under The Mosaic Law

Romans 6:14 — **“Ye are not under the law, but under grace.”**
Romans 7:4 — **“Ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ.”**
Galatians 3:24–25 — **“After that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.”**
Colossians 2:16 — **“Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink.”**
Galatians 5:18 — **“If ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.”**

7. Israel Remains Distinct

Romans 11:1 — **“Hath God cast away his people? God forbid.”**
Romans 11:25 — **“Blindness in part is happened to Israel.”**
Romans 11:26 — **“And so all Israel shall be saved.”**
Romans 11:28 — **“Beloved for the fathers' sakes.”**
Romans 11:29 — **“The gifts and calling of God are without repentance.”**

8. Peace Through Christ

Ephesians 2:14 — **“For he is our peace.”**
Ephesians 2:17 — **“Came and preached peace.”**
Romans 5:1 — **“We have peace with God.”**
Colossians 3:15 — **“Let the peace of God rule in your hearts.”**
John 14:27 — **“My peace I give unto you.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 2:16 puts reconciliation where the Bible always puts it: at the cross. Human religion prefers reconciliation by improvement because improvement leaves man something to admire about himself. God says the problem went deeper than manners, culture, ceremonies, or education. Jew and Gentile alike needed reconciliation **unto God** because sin had placed both under condemnation. Israel possessed enormous advantages, but advantage is not justification. Gentiles stood far off, but distance did not create a different gospel for them. Both groups finally meet at the same cross, because **Calvary is where privilege stops boasting and rebellion stops making excuses**.

The words **“in one body”** are equally important because they describe what God is doing now without erasing what He promised before. The Church is not a temporary alliance between Israel and the nations, and it is not Israel with a new label pasted over the old name. It is one body in Christ, composed of believing Jews and Gentiles who have been spiritually joined to the same Head. Romans 11 can therefore continue speaking about

national Israel while Ephesians speaks about the Church as one body without the slightest contradiction. Confusion only begins when men insist that every group in Scripture must be squeezed into one doctrinal container. **Right division does not tear the Bible apart; it keeps men from gluing together what God distinguished.**

The phrase **"by the cross"** also destroys every religious attempt to add saving machinery between the sinner and God. Reconciliation was not accomplished by baptismal water, ceremonial observance, circumcision, church membership, law-keeping, or personal endurance. Those things either belong to another administration or have proper places after salvation, but none can improve the cross. Christ bore sin in His body, shed His blood, died, and rose again. The believing sinner stands reconciled because of what Christ did, not because religion managed to attach a few accessories afterward. The more clearly the cross is understood, the smaller human merit becomes. **A finished cross leaves no unfinished corner for religious pride to decorate.**

Finally, **"having slain the enmity thereby"** should affect the believer's conduct. Christ did not die merely to produce doctrinal charts about unity while His people continue feeding petty pride, racial superiority, class envy, bitterness, and denominational arrogance. Truth must never be sacrificed for false peace, and Scripture never commands fellowship with apostasy or error. But among those genuinely in Christ, fleshly superiority has no standing. Every saved person came in guilty, came in needy, and came in through the same blood. The cross gives us firm doctrine without fleshly boasting and real unity without doctrinal surrender. **Christ slew the enmity at Calvary; the Church should not spend its time digging up the corpse and teaching it to walk again.**

Ephesians 2:17 Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

"And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh."
Ephesians 2:17

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"And came and preached peace"

The **"And"** ties verse 17 directly to the cross-work of verses 14–16. Christ is our peace. Christ made both one. Christ broke down the middle wall of partition. Christ abolished the

enmity in His flesh. Christ made of twain one new man. Christ reconciled both unto God in one body by the cross. **Then He "came and preached peace."** The preaching rests upon an accomplished work. Christ did not announce peace before Calvary as though sin could be ignored; He preached peace on the basis of blood already shed and enmity already slain. Colossians 1:20 says He made **"peace through the blood of his cross."** Romans 5:1 says, **"being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."** Biblical peace is not God becoming less holy. It is God's holiness being satisfied through Christ.

The wording also shows Christ continuing His ministry through the proclamation of His gospel. The risen Lord did not physically travel throughout every Gentile city personally preaching after Calvary, yet Paul says He **"came and preached."** Scripture often speaks of Christ working through His messengers. Second Corinthians 5:20 says, **"Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us."** When the gospel of Christ is faithfully preached, the message is not merely the preacher's opinion; Christ's peace is being announced through the word He commissioned. Romans 10:15 says, **"How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace."** The preacher carries the message, but the message belongs to Christ. **A faithful gospel preacher is not inventing peace; he is delivering news from the One who purchased it.**

This is why preaching matters. Men often want peace without preaching because preaching contains propositions, truth, sin, judgment, blood, repentance, faith, and Christ. Modern religion would rather produce an atmosphere and call the atmosphere spiritual. Scripture says Christ **"preached peace."** Peace has content. It tells the sinner why he is alienated, what Christ accomplished, and how he may be reconciled. Isaiah 52:7 joins the ideas of preaching, peace, and good tidings. God's peace is announced through truth. **If the message has no cross, no blood, no sin, and no Saviour, it may be soothing, but it is not the peace Christ preached.**

"to you which were afar off"

The first audience identified is **"you which were afar off."** In the immediate context that refers to the Gentiles. Verse 11 called them **"Gentiles in the flesh."** Verse 12 said they were **"without Christ," "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel," "strangers from the covenants of promise," "having no hope,"** and **"without God in the world."** Verse 13 then said, **"ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ."** The distance was real. Gentiles did not naturally possess Israel's covenant position, national promises, circumcision, law, priesthood, temple worship, or Messianic expectation in the way Israel did.

Yet the gospel went to those who had been far off. Acts 13:46 records Paul and Barnabas saying, **"It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you… lo, we turn to the Gentiles."** Verse 47 continues, **"I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles."** Romans 15:9 says **"the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy."** That word **mercy** matters. Gentiles did not earn entrance into blessing by superior spirituality. They were brought near through Christ. A man who was once standing outside the gate ought to be careful about strutting through the house as though he drew the blueprints.

The phrase **"afar off"** also gives a powerful picture of every sinner's condition apart from Christ. Distance from God is not geographical. A man can sit ten feet from a pulpit and remain far off. He can own Bibles, sing hymns, know religious vocabulary, and still be without Christ. Isaiah 59:2 says, **"your iniquities have separated between you and your God."** Sin creates the real distance. Ephesians 2:13 gives the only sufficient bridge: **"the blood of Christ."** Religion tries to measure how many good deeds are required to walk back to God; the gospel announces that Christ crossed the distance Himself. **The far-off sinner does not need a longer ladder; he needs a better Mediator.**

That ought to destroy contempt toward lost people. Saved Gentiles were once the ones far off. Titus 3:3 reminds believers, **"For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived."** The right memory of the old condition produces urgency without arrogance. We preach firmly because men are lost, but humbly because grace found us in the same ruined race. The gospel does not say, "Look how much better we are." It says, "Look how far the blood reached."

"and to them that were nigh"

The second group is **"them that were nigh,"** referring contextually to the Jews. Israel possessed a nearness the Gentile nations did not. Romans 9:4 says to Israelites pertained **"the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises."** Romans 3:2 says, **"unto them were committed the oracles of God."** Psalm 147:19 says, **"He sheweth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel."** Israel was near in privilege, revelation, covenant, worship, and historical relationship to God.

But **nigh was not the same as saved**. That distinction must never be missed. John 1:11 says of Christ, **"He came unto his own, and his own received him not."** Romans 9:6 says, **"For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel."** A Jewish man could possess circumcision, Scripture, temple, sacrifices, and Abrahamic ancestry and still reject his Messiah. Covenant nearness did not erase the need for personal faith. That is why Christ

preached peace not merely to those afar off but also **“to them that were nigh.”** If national privilege itself saved, the near group would not need the message.

This destroys another form of religious presumption. A man can grow up near truth and still die without Christ. He may have godly parents, a Bible-believing church, years of preaching, Christian schooling, and enough doctrinal vocabulary to pass an examination, yet none of those things can believe the gospel for him. Nearness to light increases privilege, but privilege without faith can increase accountability. Jesus told religious Jews in John 5:39, **“Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.”** They possessed the Scriptures yet missed the Person to whom the Scriptures pointed. **You can stand beside the well and still die thirsty if you refuse to drink.**

The beauty of Ephesians 2 is that Christ gives the same peace to both. The Gentile does not need to become Jewish before coming to Christ, and the Jew does not get to bypass Christ because he descended from Abraham. Verse 18 will state the result perfectly: **“For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.”** The far-off and the near meet at the same Saviour. Their histories differ; their access does not. **Privilege may determine how near a man once stood to the promises, but only Christ determines whether he reaches the Father.**

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 2:17 presents Christ as the **preacher of the peace He purchased**. The cross comes first; the proclamation follows. Peace is therefore not mere emotional calm or social harmony but reconciliation with God made possible through Christ’s blood and announced through the gospel.

The verse also preserves the historical distinction between **Gentile distance and Jewish nearness** while showing that both groups still need Christ. Gentiles were afar off from Israel’s covenant privileges; Jews were nigh through those privileges. Yet neither position could substitute for salvation. Both must hear the message of peace, and verse 18 will show both receiving access to the Father through Christ.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. Christ Preaches Peace

Isaiah 52:7 — **“That publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good.”**
Luke 4:18 — **“He hath anointed me to preach the gospel.”**
Acts 10:36 — **“Preaching peace by Jesus Christ.”**

Romans 10:15 — **“Them that preach the gospel of peace.”**
Ephesians 6:15 — **“The preparation of the gospel of peace.”**

2. Peace Through The Cross

Colossians 1:20 — **“Peace through the blood of his cross.”**
Romans 5:1 — **“We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”**
Ephesians 2:14 — **“For he is our peace.”**
Ephesians 2:16 — **“Reconcile both unto God… by the cross.”**
Isaiah 53:5 — **“The chastisement of our peace was upon him.”**

3. Gentiles Were Afar Off

Ephesians 2:12 — **“Without Christ… having no hope, and without God.”**
Ephesians 2:13 — **“Ye who sometimes were far off.”**
Acts 13:47 — **“A light of the Gentiles.”**
Romans 15:9 — **“The Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy.”**
Acts 28:28 — **“The salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles.”**

4. Israel Was Nigh In Privilege

Romans 9:4 — **“To whom pertaineth… the covenants.”**
Romans 3:2 — **“Unto them were committed the oracles of God.”**
Psalm 147:19 — **“He sheweth his word unto Jacob.”**
Deuteronomy 4:7 — **“What nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them?”**
Romans 9:5 — **“Of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came.”**

5. Privilege Does Not Equal Salvation

John 1:11 — **“He came unto his own, and his own received him not.”**
Romans 9:6 — **“They are not all Israel, which are of Israel.”**
John 5:39 — **“They are they which testify of me.”**
Romans 2:28 — **“He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly.”**
Matthew 3:9 — **“Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father.”**

6. The Gospel Goes To Both

Romans 1:16 — **“To the Jew first, and also to the Greek.”**
Romans 10:12 — **“There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek.”**
Acts 20:21 — **“Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks.”**
1 Corinthians 1:24 — **“Both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God.”**
Romans 3:29 — **“Is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also.”**

7. One Access Through Christ

Ephesians 2:18 — **“Through him we both have access.”**
John 14:6 — **“No man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”**
Romans 5:2 — **“By whom also we have access by faith.”**
Ephesians 3:12 — **“In whom we have boldness and access.”**
1 Timothy 2:5 — **“One mediator between God and men.”**

8. The Message Carried By Ambassadors

2 Corinthians 5:20 — **“We are ambassadors for Christ.”**
Romans 10:14 — **“How shall they hear without a preacher?”**
1 Corinthians 1:21 — **“By the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.”**
2 Timothy 4:2 — **“Preach the word.”**
1 Thessalonians 2:13 — **“The word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 2:17 reminds us that biblical peace is something that must be **preached** because men do not discover it naturally. The world has plenty of philosophies about inner peace, social peace, political peace, and peace with oneself, but the gospel begins with peace **with God**. That peace required the cross because sin created real alienation. Christ did not come merely to calm anxious people; He came to reconcile guilty people. Once Calvary had slain the enmity, the message could go out declaring that peace had been made through His blood. That is why gospel preaching must never be reduced to motivational advice. **A preacher sent by Christ does not tell drowning men how to feel calmer about the water; he points them to the rescue already provided.**

The phrase **“to you which were afar off”** should make Gentile believers profoundly grateful. We were not the covenant nation to whom the law, promises, and oracles had been entrusted. We were strangers from those covenants and without God in the world, yet the gospel crossed that distance. The blood reached people who had no natural claim upon Israel’s historical privileges and brought them near in Christ. That grace leaves no room for Gentile boasting against Israel. Romans 11 warns against exactly that spirit because grace forgotten quickly turns into pride. The correct response to being brought near is not, “God must have preferred us after all.” It is, “What mercy that Christ came for those who were far off.” **Nobody rescued from the ditch has grounds for bragging because somebody else stumbled near the road.**

At the same time, **“them that were nigh”** warns religious people that proximity to truth is not possession of salvation. Israel had Scripture, covenants, prophets, temple worship, and Messianic promises, yet individual Jews still needed the gospel of peace. The same

principle reaches every person raised around Christianity. Growing up hearing the Bible is a privilege, not a new birth. Having Christian parents is a blessing, not justification. Knowing the language of salvation is not the same as trusting the Saviour. Men have sat under preaching for decades while remaining spiritually untouched because they learned how to recognize every phrase without ever resting personally in Christ. **A seat near the pulpit is still infinitely far from God if the heart has never come through the cross.**

Finally, the verse should shape how Christians preach and live. Christ preached peace to both groups, so the Church should never turn the gospel into a badge of ethnic, social, or denominational superiority. We preach the same Christ to the respectable man and the ruined man, to the religious and irreligious, to Jew and Gentile, because every sinner finally needs the same reconciliation. Yet biblical peace does not mean watering down truth to keep everyone comfortable. Christ made peace through blood, not through compromise. The message that reconciles is the message that tells the truth about sin, judgment, grace, the cross, resurrection, and faith. **The far-off man and the near man may begin from different places, but both must finally hear the same announcement: peace is found in Jesus Christ.**

Ephesians 2:18 Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

"For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father."
Ephesians 2:18

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"For through him"

The verse begins with **"For,"** tying everything directly to what Christ has just accomplished in verses 13–17. Gentiles who were far off have been made nigh **"by the blood of Christ."** Christ is our peace. He made both Jew and Gentile one. He broke down the middle wall of partition. He abolished the enmity in His flesh. He reconciled both unto God in one body by the cross. He preached peace to those afar off and to those who were nigh. Now Paul explains the access that results from all of that: **"For through him."** The access is not through law, ancestry, priesthood, ritual, merit, ceremony, denomination, or human mediator. It is through Jesus Christ.

John 14:6 could hardly be plainer: **“I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”** First Timothy 2:5 says, **“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”** Hebrews 7:25 says Christ **“is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him.”** That phrase **“by him”** is the same road Ephesians 2:18 travels. Christianity is not one spiritual lane among many equally valid roads. Christ is not an optional bridge over the final twenty feet. **If access is “through him,” every route that bypasses Him ends somewhere other than the Father.**

This also destroys the need for a human religious middleman to improve the believer’s approach to God. A Christian may receive help, counsel, teaching, and prayer from other believers, but none of them becomes the door into the Father’s presence. Hebrews 4:16 says, **“Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace.”** It does not say, “Come timidly through an earthly priest who possesses special access you lack.” Christ is the High Priest. Christ is the Mediator. Christ is the way. **Religion builds waiting rooms between the believer and God; the blood of Christ tore the door open.**

“we both have access”

The pronoun **“we”** and the word **“both”** carry the Jew-Gentile argument forward. Paul is not speaking vaguely about humanity in general. The context has already identified the two groups. The Gentiles were afar off; the Jews were nigh. The Gentiles were strangers from Israel’s covenants; the Jews possessed covenant privilege. Yet after the cross, **“we both have access.”** The Jew does not have a deluxe entrance while the Gentile comes through the service door. Both approach God through the same Son.

That is one of the great equalizing truths of the body of Christ. Romans 10:12 says, **“For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.”** First Corinthians 12:13 says, **“by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles.”** Ephesians 3:6 says the Gentiles are **“fellowheirs, and of the same body.”** There is no spiritual second class inside Christ. Different histories remain real, but access is equal.

The word **“access”** is stronger than mere permission to stand somewhere nearby. Romans 5:2 says, **“By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand.”** Ephesians 3:12 says, **“In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.”** Access means the believer has a God-given right of approach grounded in Christ. That does not make the Christian casual or irreverent; it makes him accepted. **Bold access is not arrogance when God Himself handed you the invitation.**

This access also belongs to the believer's present standing, not merely his future hope. We do not wait until death to have access to the Father. We pray now. We worship now. We receive help now. Hebrews 10:19 speaks of **"boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus."** The Christian lives on earth but enjoys a heavenly relationship already secured in Christ. The throne is not geographically near, but spiritually the believer has access that kings, priests, philosophers, and religious institutions cannot improve.

"by one Spirit"

The access through Christ is **"by one Spirit."** This is the Holy Spirit, and the wording shows the unity of the body of Christ. There are not separate Spirits for Jew and Gentile, separate channels of salvation, or separate spiritual classes. Ephesians 4:4 will say, **"There is one body, and one Spirit."** First Corinthians 12:13 says the same Spirit places believers into the same body. The unity of the Church is therefore spiritual before it is organizational.

The Holy Spirit is not a vague influence or religious atmosphere. He is the divine Person who seals the believer, indwells him, places him into Christ's body, guides him in truth, helps him in prayer, and produces spiritual fruit. Ephesians 1:13 says believers are **"sealed with that holy Spirit of promise."** Romans 8:26 says, **"the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities."** Galatians 5:22 identifies **"the fruit of the Spirit."** Access to the Father is therefore not self-generated spiritual energy. It is Trinitarian grace in operation.

The phrase also destroys spiritual elitism. No believer receives a superior Holy Spirit because he belongs to a particular ethnicity, denomination, ministry, or social class. Paul says **"one Spirit."** Some Christians may be more mature, obedient, knowledgeable, yielded, or useful than others, but no saved believer receives a different Spirit of God. The distinction is not between those who possess a better Spirit and those who possess a lesser Spirit. **The problem with many Christians is not that God gave them too little Spirit, but that they give the Spirit too little room.**

Right division also matters here because the Spirit's present ministry in the body of Christ must not be confused with every manifestation of the Spirit in every dispensation. The Spirit worked in the Old Testament, empowered individuals, inspired Scripture, and operated according to God's purposes. But the Pauline revelation emphasizes the believer's sealing, indwelling, and incorporation into one body. We should not run backward into Israel's signs and arrangements when Ephesians has already told us what the Spirit is doing with the Church.

"unto the Father"

The destination of the access is **"the Father."** The verse does not end at spiritual experience. Through the Son, by the Spirit, believers come **unto the Father**. The entire

Godhead is present in one short sentence. The Son provides the way, the Spirit provides the spiritual access, and the Father is the One approached. This is not three gods cooperating loosely; it is the unified work of the one true God revealed as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Jesus taught believers to pray, **"Our Father which art in heaven"** (Matthew 6:9). Romans 8:15 says believers have received **"the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father."** Galatians 4:6 says, **"God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father."** The relationship is personal, not merely judicial. God is Judge, Lord, Creator, and King, but for those in Christ He is also Father.

That does not mean God is the saving Father of all humanity. Scripture distinguishes creation from spiritual sonship. John 1:12 says, **"as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God."** Galatians 3:26 says, **"For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus."** The relationship is entered through Christ. Universal human brotherhood may sound pleasant, but the Bible ties saving sonship to faith in the Son. **You do not become part of God's family by being born once; you must be born again.**

The practical comfort is tremendous. The believer does not approach an unknown cosmic force. He approaches the Father through the Son by the Spirit. That means prayer is not shouting into an empty universe hoping somebody answers. The believer comes to One who knows, hears, cares, disciplines, provides, and loves according to His wisdom. **Christian access is not merely permission to enter heaven's courtroom; it is the privilege of entering the Father's house.**

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 2:18 presents one of the clearest summaries of Christian access to God: **through the Son, by one Spirit, unto the Father**. The verse follows the reconciliation of Jew and Gentile and shows the practical result of the cross. Both groups now enjoy equal access to God because both stand in the same Christ and share the same Spirit.

The verse also reveals the Trinitarian shape of salvation without confusing the Persons. Christ is the Mediator, the Spirit gives access and unites believers in one body, and the Father is approached. This access is present, confident, spiritual, and entirely grounded in grace rather than ancestry, ritual, priesthood, or human merit.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. Access Through Christ

John 14:6 — **"No man cometh unto the Father, but by me."**
1 Timothy 2:5 — **"One mediator between God and men."**

Hebrews 7:25 — **“Them that come unto God by him.”**
Romans 5:2 — **“By whom also we have access by faith.”**
Ephesians 3:12 — **“In whom we have boldness and access.”**

2. One Spirit

Ephesians 4:4 — **“There is one body, and one Spirit.”**
1 Corinthians 12:13 — **“By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body.”**
Ephesians 1:13 — **“Sealed with that holy Spirit of promise.”**
Romans 8:9 — **“If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.”**
Galatians 5:25 — **“If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.”**

3. Jew And Gentile Equal In Christ

Romans 10:12 — **“There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek.”**
Galatians 3:28 — **“Ye are all one in Christ Jesus.”**
1 Corinthians 12:13 — **“Whether we be Jews or Gentiles.”**
Ephesians 3:6 — **“Fellowheirs, and of the same body.”**
Romans 3:29 — **“Is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also.”**

4. Bold Access To God

Hebrews 4:16 — **“Come boldly unto the throne of grace.”**
Hebrews 10:19 — **“Boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.”**
Ephesians 3:12 — **“Boldness and access with confidence.”**
Romans 5:2 — **“Access by faith into this grace.”**
1 John 5:14 — **“This is the confidence that we have in him.”**

5. God As Father

Romans 8:15 — **“Whereby we cry, Abba, Father.”**
Galatians 4:6 — **“Crying, Abba, Father.”**
Matthew 6:9 — **“Our Father which art in heaven.”**
Ephesians 1:3 — **“The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”**
2 Corinthians 6:18 — **“I will be a Father unto you.”**

6. Sonship Through Faith

John 1:12 — **“To them gave he power to become the sons of God.”**
Galatians 3:26 — **“Children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.”**
Romans 8:14 — **“They are the sons of God.”**
1 John 3:1 — **“That we should be called the sons of God.”**
John 3:3 — **“Except a man be born again.”**

7. The Spirit Helps The Believer

Romans 8:26 — **“The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities.”**
Romans 8:16 — **“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit.”**
Galatians 5:22 — **“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace.”**
Ephesians 5:18 — **“Be filled with the Spirit.”**
Ephesians 4:30 — **“Grieve not the holy Spirit of God.”**

8. Peace Produces Access

Ephesians 2:14 — **“For he is our peace.”**
Ephesians 2:16 — **“Reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross.”**
Ephesians 2:17 — **“Preached peace to you which were afar off.”**
Romans 5:1 — **“We have peace with God.”**
Colossians 1:20 — **“Peace through the blood of his cross.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 2:18 is only one sentence, but it contains enough doctrine to straighten out a room full of confused religion. **“Through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.”** There is the Son, the Spirit, and the Father in one verse, each Person working without confusion and without competition. The Son is the Mediator, the Spirit is the means of spiritual access, and the Father is the One approached. That leaves very little room for religion to insert additional mediators, sacramental gatekeepers, departed saints, human priests, spiritual elites, or denominational toll collectors. The believer’s access was purchased by Christ and made real through the Spirit. **When God already opened the door through His Son, adding another doorman is not reverence—it is interference.**

The words **“we both”** also preserve the entire Jew-Gentile argument of the chapter. The Gentile had been afar off, and the Jew had been nigh in covenant privilege, but neither one gained access to the Father apart from Christ. The Jew could not arrive carrying circumcision, Moses, temple worship, or Abrahamic ancestry as sufficient grounds of approach. The Gentile could not arrive through philosophy, sincerity, morality, or religious imagination. Both come through the same Christ. That is why one-body truth destroys boasting without erasing history. Israel still has a distinct prophetic and national identity in Scripture, but inside the body of Christ believing Jew and Gentile share equal spiritual access. **History may explain where you came from; only Christ explains how you got to the Father.**

The phrase **“by one Spirit”** should also correct much of the spiritual competition found among Christians. There is one Spirit, not a premium edition for a preferred class of believers and a basic edition for everybody else. Every genuine believer is sealed by the

Holy Spirit and belongs to Christ. That does not mean every Christian is equally mature, equally obedient, equally useful, or equally yielded. Some grieve the Spirit while others walk in the Spirit. But the answer to carnality is not hunting for another Spirit; it is yielding to the One already given. **The Christian life is not improved by seeking a different Holy Ghost but by stopping resistance to the Holy Ghost Scripture says already indwells the believer.**

Finally, the destination is **"the Father,"** and that gives the verse its warmth. Salvation does not merely move a sinner from a guilty category into a forgiven category, though it certainly does that. It brings him into a family relationship. Romans 8 says we cry, **"Abba, Father."** Galatians says the Spirit of God's Son is in our hearts crying the same thing. The believer can therefore pray with confidence, worship with gratitude, seek help with boldness, and endure chastening without imagining he has ceased being a son. Access rests in Christ, not fluctuating performance. The door does not open wider when we have a strong week and slam shut when we stumble. Fellowship can suffer, obedience can fail, chastening can come, and reward can be lost, but the basis of access remains Jesus Christ. **Through Him, by one Spirit, unto the Father—that is not merely a doctrine to memorize; it is the believer's standing invitation into the presence of God.**

Ephesians 2:19 Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

"Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God;"
Ephesians 2:19

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners"

The opening words **"Now therefore"** gather up everything Paul has established since verse 11. The Gentiles had been **"strangers from the covenants of promise,"** without Christ, without hope, and without God in the world. They had been **"far off,"** but verse 13 said they were **"made nigh by the blood of Christ."** Christ became their peace, broke down the partition, created one new man, reconciled Jew and Gentile unto God in one body by the cross, preached peace to those afar off and those that were nigh, and gave both access by one Spirit unto the Father. Therefore, Paul says, **"ye are no more strangers and**

foreigners." That is a change of standing. Grace did not merely give the stranger improved visiting privileges; it ended his status as a stranger.

A stranger may enter a place without belonging to it, and a foreigner may live in a country without possessing its citizenship. That accurately pictures the former Gentile condition. They stood outside Israel's covenant commonwealth and possessed no natural claim upon Israel's national privileges. But Paul does not say the Gentile has now become a natural Israelite. He says something new has happened through Christ. The believing Gentile no longer stands outside God's present spiritual household. Ephesians 2 has moved him from **far off** to **made nigh**, from **stranger** to **fellowcitizen**, and from **without God** to the **household of God**. **Grace does not leave the rescued sinner sleeping on heaven's porch; it gives him a place in the family.**

That distinction matters when Scripture is rightly divided. Gentiles were once **"aliens from the commonwealth of Israel,"** but verse 19 does not say they are now members of national Israel. Paul is describing the new body created in Christ, not erasing Israel's prophetic identity. Romans 11 still distinguishes Israel from Gentiles and warns Gentiles, **"Boast not against the branches."** The Church does not gain its blessings by confiscating Israel's name. It receives something greater for this present calling: union in Christ, one Spirit, access to the Father, heavenly citizenship, and membership in God's household. **God did not solve Gentile alienation by changing Gentiles into Jews; He solved it by putting believing Jews and Gentiles into Christ.**

"but fellowcitizens with the saints"

The word **"but"** introduces the contrast. No longer strangers; **"but fellowcitizens."** Citizenship speaks of belonging, recognized standing, shared rights, common allegiance, and an established government. Philippians 3:20 says, **"For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ."** The Christian may live physically under an earthly government, but his highest spiritual citizenship is above. Colossians 3:1 tells believers to **"seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God."** A man who has been seated spiritually with Christ ought not live as though this present world owns his final allegiance.

Paul says these Gentiles are **"fellowcitizens with the saints."** The word **"fellow"** is important. They are not tolerated resident aliens at the edge of God's people. They share spiritual standing with other believers. Ephesians 3:6 will say Gentiles are **"fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel."** There is no back row of salvation reserved for Gentiles. First Corinthians 12:13 says whether Jews or Gentiles, believers are baptized **"into one body."** Romans 10:12 says, **"there is no**

difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him." The cross does not create first-class and second-class Christians.

The **"saints"** are not a special class of dead religious heroes promoted after centuries of ecclesiastical paperwork. Paul routinely calls living believers saints. Ephesians 1:1 is addressed **"to the saints which are at Ephesus."** First Corinthians 1:2 calls the Corinthian believers **"called to be saints,"** despite the mountain of carnality Paul had to correct in that assembly. A saint in Pauline doctrine is a believer set apart in Christ, not a religious celebrity who accumulated enough posthumous votes. That does not mean every saint lives saintly every day; Scripture spends considerable time telling saints how they ought to behave. **Sainthood is a standing received in Christ before it becomes a conduct displayed before men.**

This fellowship of citizenship therefore destroys spiritual caste systems. The believer with little education and the believer with advanced training stand in the same Christ. The poor saint and the wealthy saint approach the same Father. The Jew and the Gentile share the same Spirit. The new convert and the mature believer differ greatly in growth but not in the basis of acceptance. God does not issue deluxe justification to some and economy salvation to others. **There are differences of maturity, service, gift, and reward, but there is only one citizenship desk at Calvary.**

"and of the household of God"

Paul moves from political imagery to family imagery: **"and of the household of God."** A citizen belongs to a commonwealth; a household member belongs to a family. Salvation gives the believer both. Galatians 3:26 says, **"For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus."** John 1:12 says, **"as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God."** Romans 8:15 says believers have received **"the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father."** God is not merely the Christian's distant ruler. Through Christ, He becomes Father.

The household language must not be confused with a physical church building. A brick structure with stained glass is not the household of God merely because a congregation meets there. The household is made up of redeemed people. First Timothy 3:15 identifies **"the house of God, which is the church of the living God."** First Peter 2:5 calls believers **"lively stones"** who **"are built up a spiritual house."** Ephesians 2:20–22 will immediately continue that building imagery, showing believers being built together for **"an habitation of God through the Spirit."** God's present temple is not defined by lumber, brick, carpet, pews, or a steeple. **You can burn the church building to the foundation and still have the Church standing in the parking lot.**

Being in God's household also carries responsibility. A son has privileges a stranger does not possess, but sonship is not permission to disgrace the Father's name. Ephesians 4:1 will say, **"walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called."** Ephesians 5:1 says, **"Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children."** Hebrews 12 teaches that the Father chastens His sons. Grace therefore gives security without producing irresponsibility. The believer's failures can damage fellowship, testimony, usefulness, and reward, but Christian discipline occurs within the relationship of sonship. **God does not discipline His children because they are strangers; He disciplines them precisely because they belong to His house.**

The household also implies a new family relationship among believers. Ephesians 4:32 commands, **"be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another."** Galatians 6:10 speaks of **"the household of faith."** Christians may differ in personality, nationality, social position, background, and maturity, but those in Christ belong to the same spiritual family. That does not erase doctrine, authorize fellowship with false gospels, or make truth negotiable. A healthy household still has rules, order, discipline, and a Father whose word governs the home. **The family of God is not held together by pretending truth does not matter; it is held together because every genuine member came through the same Son.**

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 2:19 describes the dramatic change in the Gentile believer's standing. Those who were once strangers, foreigners, far off, and without God are now **fellowcitizens with the saints** and members of **the household of God**. The transformation comes entirely through Christ's blood, cross, reconciliation, and the one Spirit described in the preceding verses.

The verse also guards important dispensational distinctions. Gentile believers do not become national Israel; they become members of the one body of Christ. Their citizenship is spiritual and heavenly, and their household relationship is based upon faith in Christ. Israel's national identity remains distinct, while believing Jew and Gentile share equal standing in the Church.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. No Longer Strangers

Ephesians 2:12 — **"Strangers from the covenants of promise."**
Ephesians 2:13 — **"Ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh."**
Colossians 1:21 — **"You, that were sometime alienated."**

1 Peter 2:10 — **“Which in time past were not a people.”**
Ephesians 2:18 — **“We both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.”**

2. Heavenly Citizenship

Philippians 3:20 — **“For our conversation is in heaven.”**
Colossians 3:1 — **“Seek those things which are above.”**
Ephesians 2:6 — **“Made us sit together in heavenly places.”**
Hebrews 13:14 — **“Here have we no continuing city.”**
Hebrews 11:16 — **“They desire a better country, that is, an heavenly.”**

3. Fellowcitizens With The Saints

Ephesians 3:6 — **“Fellowheirs, and of the same body.”**
Romans 10:12 — **“There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek.”**
1 Corinthians 12:13 — **“Whether we be Jews or Gentiles… into one body.”**
Galatians 3:28 — **“Ye are all one in Christ Jesus.”**
Romans 12:5 — **“We, being many, are one body in Christ.”**

4. Believers Are Saints

Ephesians 1:1 — **“To the saints which are at Ephesus.”**
1 Corinthians 1:2 — **“Called to be saints.”**
Romans 1:7 — **“Called to be saints.”**
Philippians 1:1 — **“To all the saints in Christ Jesus.”**
Colossians 1:2 — **“To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ.”**

5. Children In God’s Household

Galatians 3:26 — **“Children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.”**
John 1:12 — **“Power to become the sons of God.”**
Romans 8:15 — **“Whereby we cry, Abba, Father.”**
Galatians 4:6 — **“The Spirit of his Son into your hearts.”**
1 John 3:1 — **“That we should be called the sons of God.”**

6. The Church As God’s House

1 Timothy 3:15 — **“The house of God, which is the church of the living God.”**
1 Peter 2:5 — **“Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house.”**
Ephesians 2:21 — **“Groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord.”**
Ephesians 2:22 — **“An habitation of God through the Spirit.”**
Hebrews 3:6 — **“Whose house are we.”**

7. Family Privilege And Responsibility

Ephesians 5:1 — **“Followers of God, as dear children.”**
Ephesians 4:1 — **“Walk worthy of the vocation.”**
Hebrews 12:6 — **“Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth.”**
Galatians 6:10 — **“Them who are of the household of faith.”**
Ephesians 4:32 — **“Be ye kind one to another.”**

8. Israel And The Church Distinguished

1 Corinthians 10:32 — **“The Jews… the Gentiles… the church of God.”**
Romans 11:1 — **“Hath God cast away his people? God forbid.”**
Romans 11:25 — **“Blindness in part is happened to Israel.”**
Romans 11:29 — **“The gifts and calling of God are without repentance.”**
Ephesians 3:6 — **“The Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 2:19 shows what grace does with outsiders. It does not merely move them a little closer to the gate and issue temporary visitor badges. Those who were strangers and foreigners are now **“fellowcitizens with the saints.”** That change rests on everything Christ accomplished in the preceding verses: His blood brought the far-off near, His cross slew the enmity, His work created one new man, and through Him both Jew and Gentile have access to the Father. Christianity is therefore not a religion of permanent probation in which the believer spends his entire life wondering whether heaven will finally decide to keep him. God gives him standing, citizenship, and family relationship in Christ. That does not produce pride because none of it was earned. **The former stranger cannot boast about becoming a citizen when the King Himself paid the immigration cost.**

The verse also keeps the Church from stealing Israel’s identity. Paul had already said Gentiles were once **“aliens from the commonwealth of Israel,”** but he does not correct that alienation by saying they have now become Israel. Instead, he introduces the language of the one body, fellowcitizenship, saints, and God’s household. That is the new relationship created in Christ. Romans 11 continues to recognize national Israel and guarantees God’s faithfulness to the fathers. The Church therefore gains nothing by erasing Israel, and Israel’s future does not diminish the Church’s present riches. Believers already possess heavenly blessings, access to the Father, union with Christ, the indwelling Spirit, and membership in God’s family. **A man living in a palace does not need to steal his neighbor’s deed to prove he has been blessed.**

The phrase **“household of God”** also corrects our thinking about what the Church actually is. Christianity can become so attached to buildings, programs, property, signs, budgets, stages, and institutions that people begin talking as though the drywall were redeemed.

Scripture says the household is people. The Church can meet in an ornate building, a rented room, a home, a school gymnasium, or beneath a tree and remain the Church because its identity rests in Christ rather than architecture. That does not make meeting places unimportant or excuse neglect of local assemblies; Hebrews 10:25 still warns against **"forsaking the assembling of ourselves together."** But the building serves the Church; the building is not the Church. **God never died for the carpet, never sealed the pews with the Spirit, and never called the steeple His son.**

Finally, belonging to God's household should change how believers live. Family privilege carries family responsibility. A Christian can fail, stumble, grieve the Spirit, damage testimony, and require chastening, but those realities do not turn sonship back into strangerhood. Instead, they explain why God deals seriously with His children. The saved man should live like someone carrying the Father's name. He should love truth, forgive brethren, reject fleshly superiority, serve faithfully, and walk worthy of his calling. The Church should never become a collection of spiritual strangers who happen to occupy the same room once a week. We are fellowcitizens, saints, and members of one household because Christ brought us there. **The gospel did not merely give the outsider a better neighborhood; it gave him citizenship, a family, and a Father.**

Ephesians 2:20 Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

"And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;"
Ephesians 2:20

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets"

The word **"And"** carries the building illustration directly out of verse 19. Believers are no longer **"strangers and foreigners,"** but **"fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God."** Now Paul changes the picture from citizenship and family to architecture. The same redeemed people who belong to God's household are also described as part of a structure God is building. They **"are built."** Once again, God is the Builder before the believer becomes the worker. Ephesians 2:10 said, **"we are his workmanship."** Verse 20 now says we **"are built."** Christianity is not sinners collecting

religious bricks and constructing a staircase to God. God takes saved people and places them into the structure He designed.

The phrase **“the foundation of the apostles and prophets”** must be understood in harmony with the rest of Ephesians. Ephesians 3:5 speaks of the mystery **“now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.”** Ephesians 4:11 likewise lists **“some, apostles; and some, prophets.”** The immediate emphasis is therefore upon the foundational revelatory ministry through which God established New Testament truth concerning Christ and His body. The apostles did not invent Christianity; they received and proclaimed what Christ revealed. Paul says in Galatians 1:11–12 that the gospel he preached was **“not after man”** and that he received it **“by the revelation of Jesus Christ.”** The foundation is apostolic because God chose those men as authoritative witnesses and channels of revelation, not because their personalities became objects of faith.

That foundational ministry was unique. A foundation is laid at the beginning of a building, not repeatedly poured on every floor. First Corinthians 12:28 says, **“God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets.”** The word **“first”** fits the foundational nature of their work. Acts 2:42 says the early believers **“continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine.”** Once apostolic revelation was given and preserved in Scripture, the Church did not need generations of men claiming equal authority to add new doctrine to the foundation. A builder who keeps pouring new foundations after the building is already standing is not expanding the house; he is burying the first floor in concrete. **The apostles established revealed doctrine; they did not create an endless office for religious men to issue new Scripture whenever convenient.**

This also protects believers from modern claims of self-appointed apostles and prophets who demand authority beyond the written word. The test is not whether somebody speaks loudly, produces crowds, tells dramatic stories, or prints “Apostle” on a business card. Isaiah 8:20 gives the enduring principle: **“To the law and to the testimony.”** Acts 17:11 praises those who **“searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.”** Paul himself expected his preaching to be measured against revealed truth. If a man claims spiritual authority but contradicts the Book, the problem is not that the Church failed to recognize his gift. The problem is that he failed the test. **A title can be printed in gold ink and still be counterfeit.**

The phrase does not diminish the Old Testament. Moses and the prophets laid enormous revelatory groundwork concerning God’s holiness, Israel, sacrifice, Messiah, kingdom, sin, judgment, and redemption. Romans 15:4 says, **“whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning.”** But the specific mystery of Jew and Gentile in one body was not made fully known in earlier ages as it was revealed in the New

Testament. Ephesians 3:5 says it **“was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed.”** Right division honors both truths: the Old Testament is inspired and essential, yet the revelation of the one body belongs particularly to the apostolic unveiling of the Church.

“Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone”

Paul immediately prevents any misunderstanding about the ultimate foundation by saying, **“Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.”** The apostles and prophets are foundational in their God-given revelatory role, but Jesus Christ is the decisive Stone governing the whole structure. First Corinthians 3:11 says, **“For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”** There is no contradiction. Christ is the foundation in the absolute sense; the apostles and prophets form the doctrinal foundation because they testified authoritatively concerning Him. Remove Christ from apostolic doctrine and nothing remains but religious masonry without a building.

The wording **“Jesus Christ himself”** deserves emphasis. Not a church organization. Not Peter isolated from Christ. Not Paul isolated from Christ. Not a creed detached from Scripture. Not a denomination, council, institution, tradition, or famous preacher. **Jesus Christ himself.** Colossians 1:18 says, **“he is the head of the body, the church.”** Ephesians 1:22 says God **“gave him to be the head over all things to the church.”** Everything in the building takes its measurement from Him. If Christ is displaced, the structure may continue to attract crowds, accumulate money, purchase property, and produce impressive programs, but spiritually the cornerstone has been removed. **A church can own ten acres of ground and still have no foundation in heaven.**

The **“chief corner stone”** was the controlling stone by which the building’s lines were established. The imagery fits Christ perfectly. Isaiah 28:16 foretold, **“Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation.”** Psalm 118:22 declared, **“The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner.”** Jesus applied that passage in Matthew 21:42. The One rejected by Israel’s leadership became the essential Stone in God’s redemptive purpose. Men inspected Him and rejected Him; God raised Him from the dead and made Him the standard by which everything else is measured. **Human builders threw away the Stone heaven had already marked indispensable.**

Christ as the corner stone also explains the unity of the building. Jew and Gentile are not held together by identical ancestry, culture, ceremonial history, or political interest. They are aligned to the same Christ. Verse 14 said, **“he is our peace.”** Verse 16 said both are reconciled **“unto God in one body by the cross.”** Verse 18 said both have access **“by one**

Spirit unto the Father." Now verse 20 shows the entire structure aligned around Christ. True Christian unity is therefore never achieved by shaving doctrine down until every wall leans in the same direction. **Unity comes when every stone takes its line from the Corner Stone.**

This has immediate practical force. A believer cannot build a sound Christian life while treating Christ's words as optional. A church cannot remain sound while placing popularity above Scripture. A ministry cannot stand straight if it measures success by culture rather than Christ. Second Timothy 3:16 says, **"All scripture is given by inspiration of God."** John 8:31 says, **"If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed."** Christ governs His Church through His truth. **When the Corner Stone is square, every crooked wall is exposed sooner or later.**

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 2:20 teaches that the Church rests upon a **once-laid apostolic and prophetic doctrinal foundation**, with **Jesus Christ Himself as the chief corner stone**. The apostles and prophets were divinely appointed channels through whom foundational New Testament revelation was given, particularly concerning Christ and the mystery of the one body. Their authority was derivative; Christ's authority is absolute.

The verse also shows why biblical Christianity must remain Christ-centered and Scripture-governed. Christ determines the alignment, identity, doctrine, and unity of the whole structure. No denomination, religious personality, continuing revelation, or ecclesiastical institution can replace the Corner Stone without distorting the building.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. Christ The Foundation

1 Corinthians 3:11 — **"Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."**
Isaiah 28:16 — **"A precious corner stone, a sure foundation."**
Psalm 118:22 — **"The stone which the builders refused."**
Matthew 21:42 — **"The same is become the head of the corner."**
1 Peter 2:6 — **"A chief corner stone, elect, precious."**

2. The Apostolic Foundation

Acts 2:42 — **"They continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine."**
1 Corinthians 12:28 — **"God hath set some in the church, first apostles."**
Ephesians 3:5 — **"Revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit."**

Ephesians 4:11 — **“He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets.”**
Galatians 1:12 — **“By the revelation of Jesus Christ.”**

3. Christ The Head Of The Church

Ephesians 1:22 — **“Head over all things to the church.”**
Colossians 1:18 — **“He is the head of the body, the church.”**
Ephesians 5:23 — **“Christ is the head of the church.”**
Colossians 2:10 — **“Ye are complete in him.”**
Colossians 2:19 — **“Holding the Head.”**

4. Christ The Rejected Stone

Psalm 118:22 — **“The stone which the builders refused.”**
Matthew 21:42 — **“The stone which the builders rejected.”**
Acts 4:11 — **“This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders.”**
1 Peter 2:7 — **“The stone which the builders disallowed.”**
Luke 20:17 — **“The stone which the builders rejected.”**

5. Scripture As The Doctrinal Standard

2 Timothy 3:16 — **“All scripture is given by inspiration of God.”**
Isaiah 8:20 — **“To the law and to the testimony.”**
Acts 17:11 — **“Searched the scriptures daily.”**
John 17:17 — **“Thy word is truth.”**
Psalm 119:160 — **“Thy word is true from the beginning.”**

6. The Mystery Revealed

Ephesians 3:5 — **“As it is now revealed.”**
Ephesians 3:6 — **“The Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body.”**
Romans 16:25 — **“According to the revelation of the mystery.”**
Colossians 1:26 — **“The mystery which hath been hid from ages.”**
Colossians 1:27 — **“Christ in you, the hope of glory.”**

7. Believers As A Spiritual Building

1 Peter 2:5 — **“Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house.”**
Ephesians 2:21 — **“All the building fitly framed together groweth.”**
Ephesians 2:22 — **“Ye also are builded together.”**
1 Corinthians 3:9 — **“Ye are God's building.”**
Hebrews 3:6 — **“Whose house are we.”**

8. Christ Governs The Alignment

John 8:31 — **“If ye continue in my word.”**
Colossians 2:6 — **“As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.”**
Ephesians 4:15 — **“Grow up into him in all things.”**
1 Corinthians 11:1 — **“Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.”**
Colossians 3:17 — **“Do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 2:20 tells us that Christianity has a foundation, and that fact immediately makes modern religious experimentation look rather foolish. Buildings cannot survive by continually redesigning their foundations, and churches cannot remain doctrinally stable while treating apostolic truth as an outdated starting suggestion. God established the foundation through the apostles and prophets and preserved that revelation in Scripture. The Church is not commissioned to improve the foundation, update the gospel, soften the doctrine, or discover a twenty-first-century version of Christianity more acceptable to the culture. It is commanded to build faithfully on what God already laid. **A generation that thinks it has outgrown the foundation has usually just forgotten how gravity works.**

That is especially important when people claim new apostolic or prophetic authority. Ephesians calls apostles and prophets foundational, and foundations belong to the beginning of the building. Scripture never presents the Church as needing a fresh generation of men whose revelations stand beside the inspired word. The apostolic doctrine was received from Christ, preached by men specially commissioned for that work, and handed down in the Scriptures. Teachers, pastors, evangelists, and believers today are not called to manufacture new revelation but to preach, teach, defend, and obey what God gave. Spiritual excitement is no substitute for biblical authority. **The Holy Ghost who inspired the Book is not going to contradict Himself through somebody holding a microphone.**

But even the apostles are not the final object of faith. Paul immediately points beyond them to **“Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.”** That wording keeps Christianity from becoming personality worship. Peter cannot replace Christ. Paul cannot replace Christ. No pastor, teacher, denomination, school, ministry, movement, or theological system can replace Christ. Faithful ministers are valuable precisely to the degree that they direct people toward the Corner Stone and keep their teaching aligned with His word. When believers become more loyal to a personality than to Scripture, the wall has begun leaning even if everybody inside the building is applauding the architecture. **A true servant of Christ does not want men measuring Christ by him; he wants them measuring him by Christ.**

Finally, the Corner Stone determines unity. Ephesians 2 has already taken Jew and Gentile, people with radically different covenant histories, and joined believing members of both into one body. They do not become one by erasing doctrine or pretending history never happened. They become one because both are aligned to Jesus Christ. That principle still governs Christian unity. We do not achieve unity by moving the Corner Stone until every crooked wall can call itself straight. We bring ourselves back into alignment with Christ and His word. That permits strong doctrine and real fellowship to exist together because both rest on the same authority. **The safest Church is not the one that changes its foundation to fit the age; it is the one that lets the unchanging Corner Stone expose everything in the age that has gone crooked.**

Ephesians 2:21 Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

"In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:"
Ephesians 2:21

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"In whom all the building"

The verse begins where the previous verse ended—with Jesus Christ. Ephesians 2:20 declared that believers **"are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone."** Verse 21 immediately says, **"In whom."** The building exists in Christ, takes its alignment from Christ, derives its unity from Christ, and cannot be understood apart from Christ. The Church is not primarily in a denomination, organization, building, movement, nationality, or religious tradition. Its spiritual location is **in Him**. Ephesians has been repeating that truth from the opening chapter: spiritual blessings are **"in Christ"** (Ephesians 1:3), believers are accepted **"in the beloved"** (1:6), redemption is **"in whom"** (1:7), and saved people are seated **"in heavenly places in Christ Jesus"** (2:6). The whole structure stands because it stands in Christ.

Paul calls it **"all the building."** He is not describing one local church building made of brick, lumber, steel, pews, carpet, and stained glass. Verse 22 will say believers **"are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."** First Peter 2:5 calls Christians **"lively stones"** who are **"built up a spiritual house."** First Corinthians 3:9 says, **"ye are God's building."** The material is people—redeemed people joined to Jesus Christ.

A congregation may meet in an impressive sanctuary or in a rented room and still be equally part of Christ's spiritual building. God is not impressed by square footage. **A cathedral without Christ is expensive masonry; a handful of saved saints gathered around His word possesses something marble cannot manufacture.**

This also distinguishes the Church from Israel's physical temple system. Israel had a literal temple in Jerusalem connected with priesthood, sacrifice, ordinances, and national worship. Ephesians is speaking of a spiritual building composed of believers. That does not mean Israel's temple history was meaningless or that every Old Testament promise about Israel's worship should be transferred to the Church. It means God is doing something distinct in this present body. The Church does not need to become Israel's temple because God says believers themselves are being built into **"an holy temple in the Lord."** Right division allows the literal temple to remain literal where Scripture places it and the spiritual temple to remain spiritual where Paul reveals it.

"fitly framed together"

The phrase **"fitly framed together"** presents deliberate construction. God is not dumping a pile of stones onto a field and calling the heap a temple. The pieces are fitted. The design is intelligent. The Corner Stone establishes alignment, the foundation is already laid, and every redeemed member has a place within the larger structure. Ephesians 4:16 uses similar language concerning the body, **"from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth."** Whether Paul describes a building or a body, the lesson is the same: Christ creates ordered unity rather than random religious association.

That unity begins with salvation, not personality compatibility. Ephesians 2 has already shown Jew and Gentile, once divided by covenantal and historical barriers, reconciled **"unto God in one body by the cross"** (2:16). Verse 18 says, **"through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father."** Those people are now being **"fitly framed together."** They do not have identical backgrounds, customs, temperaments, education, incomes, or histories. What holds them together is not sameness of flesh but union with Christ. **The Church is not a room full of identical stones; it is different stones cut to the measurement of one Corner Stone.**

The phrase also rebukes both isolation and forced ecumenism. A believer is not designed to live as though he were the entire building by himself. God joins believers together for worship, teaching, fellowship, ministry, correction, prayer, and service. Yet biblical togetherness is not achieved by discarding doctrine so everybody can fit comfortably. The pieces are **fitly framed**, not carelessly piled. Ephesians 4:3 commands believers to keep

“the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace,” while verse 14 warns against being carried about **“with every wind of doctrine.”** Biblical unity and doctrinal stability belong together. **If unity requires throwing away the blueprint, somebody is building a different house.**

This gives every believer both dignity and responsibility. No stone is the whole building, and no stone is useless merely because it is not prominent. First Corinthians 12:18 says, **“But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.”** Ministry is not a talent show where only visible people matter. Prayer, giving, teaching, encouraging, serving, witnessing, helping, and faithful everyday obedience all have places in God’s work. The stone hidden deep in the wall may never receive applause, but the Builder knows exactly where He placed it. **Heaven measures usefulness by faithfulness, not by whether the stone got its photograph on the scaffolding.**

“groweth unto an holy temple”

The building **“groweth.”** This is one of the remarkable features of Paul’s picture. Ordinary stone buildings do not grow because their materials are dead. God’s building grows because its stones are alive. First Peter 2:5 deliberately calls believers **“lively stones.”** Colossians 2:19 speaks of the body **“increaseth with the increase of God.”** Acts repeatedly shows the word spreading and believers being added. The Church is a living spiritual structure because its life comes from the risen Christ.

Growth, however, must be defined biblically. Bigger is not automatically better. Crowds are not automatically growth. Revenue is not automatically growth. Buildings, programs, platforms, impressions, and popularity may increase while spiritual health decreases. Ephesians says the building grows **“unto an holy temple.”** God’s objective tells us what proper growth looks like. It is growth toward holiness, spiritual maturity, doctrinal stability, Christlikeness, service, and the glory of God. Ephesians 4:15 says believers should **“grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.” If numbers increase while holiness disappears, the crowd may be growing while the temple is shrinking.**

The word **“holy”** cannot be dismissed as decorative language. God’s dwelling is holy because God is holy. First Corinthians 3:16 says, **“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?”** First Corinthians 6:19 applies temple language to the individual believer’s body: **“your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you.”** Grace does not save sinners so they can rename corruption Christian liberty. Titus 2:11–12 says grace teaches us that, **“denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly.”** The same grace that saves also teaches the stones how they ought to look in God’s temple.

Holiness does not mean sinless perfection in the believer's present state. Scripture plainly records believers failing, requiring correction, confession, chastening, and restoration. Standing and state must remain distinct. In Christ the believer is accepted and secure; in daily practice he is commanded to walk worthy of that calling. Ephesians 4:1 says, **"walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called."** God does not threaten to turn every stumbling stone back into quarry rubble, but He certainly intends His stones to reflect the character of His house.

"in the Lord"

The verse closes where it began: **"in the Lord."** The building is in Christ, grows through Christ, and becomes a holy temple **in the Lord**. Nothing in the verse allows the Church to become independent of its Head. Christian doctrine is in the Lord. Christian unity is in the Lord. Christian growth is in the Lord. Christian holiness is in the Lord. Remove Him, and the entire structure loses both identity and purpose.

The phrase also places limits on what Christians may call spiritual growth. Anything that moves the Church away from Christ's word is not growth **"in the Lord."** Colossians 2:6–7 says, **"As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him."** John 15:5 says, **"without me ye can do nothing."** A church may become more fashionable, accepted, wealthy, sophisticated, or culturally influential while becoming less biblical. Men may applaud the remodeling, but Christ still measures the building by Himself.

And this is why the Church's future is secure. The building belongs to the Lord, the Corner Stone is Christ, the foundation has been laid, and the Spirit inhabits it. Matthew 16:18 records Christ saying, **"I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."** Men can attack local congregations, corrupt institutions, abandon truth, and ruin ministries, but Christ's true body will reach the purpose God appointed. **The Builder has never lost a blueprint, the Corner Stone has never shifted, and the final temple will not be delivered crooked.**

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 2:21 presents the Church as a **living spiritual building in Christ**. Jesus Christ is the chief Corner Stone, believers are the living material, and God fits the entire structure together according to His design. The unity of the Church therefore comes from common union with Christ rather than ethnic sameness, institutional control, or doctrinal compromise.

The goal of the building is equally important: it **"groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord."** Biblical growth is therefore measured not merely numerically but spiritually—by holiness,

maturity, doctrinal stability, usefulness, and conformity to Christ. The Church is distinct from Israel's physical temple system and represents God's present spiritual habitation through redeemed people.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. Believers As God's Building

1 Corinthians 3:9 — **"Ye are God's building."**
1 Peter 2:5 — **"Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house."**
Ephesians 2:22 — **"Ye also are builded together."**
Hebrews 3:6 — **"Whose house are we."**
1 Timothy 3:15 — **"The house of God, which is the church of the living God."**

2. Christ Holds The Building Together

Ephesians 2:20 — **"Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone."**
1 Corinthians 3:11 — **"Other foundation can no man lay… which is Jesus Christ."**
Colossians 2:7 — **"Rooted and built up in him."**
1 Peter 2:6 — **"A chief corner stone, elect, precious."**
Matthew 16:18 — **"I will build my church."**

3. Fitly Joined Together

Ephesians 4:16 — **"The whole body fitly joined together."**
1 Corinthians 12:18 — **"God set the members every one of them in the body."**
Romans 12:5 — **"We, being many, are one body in Christ."**
1 Corinthians 12:27 — **"Ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular."**
Ephesians 4:4 — **"There is one body."**

4. Spiritual Growth

Ephesians 4:15 — **"Grow up into him in all things."**
2 Peter 3:18 — **"Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord."**
Colossians 2:19 — **"Increaseth with the increase of God."**
1 Peter 2:2 — **"Desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby."**
2 Thessalonians 1:3 — **"Your faith groweth exceedingly."**

5. God's Holy Temple

1 Corinthians 3:16 — **"Ye are the temple of God."**
1 Corinthians 6:19 — **"Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost."**
2 Corinthians 6:16 — **"Ye are the temple of the living God."**

Ephesians 2:22 — **“An habitation of God through the Spirit.”**
1 Peter 2:5 — **“A spiritual house, an holy priesthood.”**

6. Holiness In Christian Living

1 Peter 1:15 — **“Be ye holy in all manner of conversation.”**
Titus 2:12 — **“Live soberly, righteously, and godly.”**
Ephesians 4:1 — **“Walk worthy of the vocation.”**
2 Corinthians 7:1 — **“Perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”**
1 Thessalonians 4:3 — **“This is the will of God, even your sanctification.”**

7. Unity Without Doctrinal Compromise

Ephesians 4:3 — **“Keep the unity of the Spirit.”**
Ephesians 4:13 — **“The unity of the faith.”**
Ephesians 4:14 — **“Carried about with every wind of doctrine.”**
Romans 16:17 — **“Mark them which cause divisions… contrary to the doctrine.”**
Jude 3 — **“Earnestly contend for the faith.”**

8. Everything In The Lord

Colossians 2:6 — **“So walk ye in him.”**
John 15:5 — **“Without me ye can do nothing.”**
Philippians 4:13 — **“I can do all things through Christ.”**
Ephesians 6:10 — **“Be strong in the Lord.”**
Colossians 3:17 — **“Do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 2:21 gives us a picture of the Church that is far richer than the common idea of a religious institution occupying property on Sunday morning. God calls it a **building**, but the stones are alive. He calls it a **temple**, but the walls are redeemed people. He says it is **fitly framed together**, which means every saved believer belongs to something larger than his individual Christian experience. The entire structure rests upon Christ and grows in Christ. That should cure both institutional pride and individualistic Christianity. A building is not one stone pretending it does not need the others, and it is not a pile of stones congratulating themselves because they occupy the same field. **God builds living stones together around Jesus Christ.**

The phrase **“fitly framed together”** should especially correct the modern idea that unity is achieved by reducing doctrine until nobody has anything definite left to believe. God does not create unity by tossing stones randomly into a heap. He fits them according to His design. The same Ephesians that commands unity warns against **“every wind of**

doctrine." Truth and unity are not enemies because genuine unity grows out of common submission to Christ. Believers may differ in personality, background, nationality, social status, and maturity, but the Corner Stone remains the same. The solution to disagreement is not moving Christ so crooked stones can remain comfortable. **The Church becomes straighter when every stone lets the Corner Stone correct its angle.**

The statement that the building **"groweth unto an holy temple"** also provides a needed correction to the obsession with numerical growth. Numbers matter because souls matter, and Acts certainly rejoices when people are saved and added. But Scripture never allows size alone to define spiritual success. A congregation can add people while losing doctrine, enlarge facilities while shrinking in holiness, gain influence while losing biblical conviction, and increase entertainment while decreasing spiritual maturity. God's intended destination is **"an holy temple."** That means preaching should produce more than attendance; it should produce believers who know Scripture, resist sin, love Christ, serve faithfully, forgive one another, and walk worthy of their calling. **A ministry that grows everywhere except toward holiness is expanding in the wrong direction.**

Finally, everything happens **"in the Lord."** That phrase is the safeguard around the entire verse. The Church belongs to Christ, grows through Christ, is aligned by Christ, and exists for Christ. Human personalities come and go. Ministries rise and disappear. Buildings are constructed and eventually crumble. Generations praise their own innovations and then pass into history while the next generation wonders why anybody thought those innovations were impressive. Christ remains. His word remains. His body remains. And God continues fitting living stones into a structure that will perfectly accomplish His purpose. **The Church does not survive because every generation produces brilliant builders; it survives because the Lord of the building has never surrendered the construction site.**

Ephesians 2:22 Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

"In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." Ephesians 2:22

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"In whom ye also are builded together"

The verse begins exactly where verse 21 began: **“In whom.”** Everything in this spiritual building depends upon Jesus Christ. Verse 20 called Him **“the chief corner stone.”** Verse 21 said **“all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord.”** Now verse 22 turns directly toward these Ephesian Gentile believers and says, **“ye also are builded together.”** That **“also”** matters. Gentiles who had once been **“strangers and foreigners”** are not standing outside admiring a Jewish structure from a distance. Through Christ they have been brought into the building itself. They are not guests in the lobby. They are living material in the structure God is making.

The expression **“builded together”** carries the Jew-Gentile unity of the entire chapter. Verse 14 said Christ **“hath made both one.”** Verse 15 said He made **“of twain one new man.”** Verse 16 said He reconciled **“both unto God in one body by the cross.”** Verse 18 said **“we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.”** Now both are being built together. The Church is not Gentiles becoming Israel, and it is not Jews being absorbed into Gentile religion. It is something new in Christ. First Corinthians 12:13 says, **“by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles.”** The same truth is now pictured architecturally instead of anatomically.

That destroys both racial pride and spiritual isolation. No believer is the whole building. First Peter 2:5 says, **“Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house.”** A stone lying by itself in a field may boast about how independent it is, but it is not functioning as a wall. God saves individuals, but He does not design Christianity as permanent spiritual solitary confinement. Believers need sound local assemblies, biblical fellowship, teaching, prayer, correction, encouragement, and opportunities to serve. Yet togetherness must remain **in Christ**. A pile of stones is not a temple merely because the stones are touching. **Biblical unity is not closeness without structure; it is redeemed people aligned to the same Corner Stone.**

“for an habitation of God”

Paul now states the purpose of the building: **“for an habitation of God.”** A habitation is a dwelling place. God is not building merely to display religious architecture; He intends to dwell in what He builds. Under Israel’s Old Testament system, God manifested His presence in connection with the tabernacle and later the temple. Exodus 40:34 says, **“Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.”** First Kings 8:10–11 records the glory filling Solomon’s temple. Those were literal places connected with Israel’s covenant worship. Ephesians 2 reveals something distinct: God’s present spiritual habitation is made of redeemed people in Christ.

That distinction should stop Christians from casually calling a church building **“God’s house”** as though brick, steel, drywall, and carpet possess spiritual life. First Timothy 3:15 calls **“the church of the living God”** the **“house of God,”** and the Church is people. First Corinthians 3:16 says, **“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?”** Ephesians 2:22 says believers themselves are being built for God’s habitation. A meeting place may be dedicated to biblical worship and treated respectfully, but God is not trapped inside the sanctuary after everybody drives home. **The church building may have an address; the Church has indwelling life.**

The phrase also magnifies the believer’s privilege. Ephesians 2:12 said Gentiles were once **“without God in the world.”** Ten verses later they are part of **“an habitation of God.”** That is not a minor change. The people who once stood far off are now part of the place where God dwells spiritually. The people without God are now indwelt by God. The strangers are household members. The foreigners are fellowcitizens. The dead have been quickened. Grace has carried them from spiritual homelessness all the way into God’s own dwelling. **Only grace could take a man who had no place with God and make him part of the place where God lives.**

Yet habitation brings responsibility. First Corinthians 6:19 asks, **“What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you?”** Verse 20 concludes, **“therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.”** If God dwells in the believer, conduct matters. The Christian cannot sensibly argue that grace makes holiness optional when grace has made him God’s dwelling place. You do not turn the temple into a garbage dump and then call the mess liberty. **The indwelling Spirit is not heaven’s permission slip for carnality; He is heaven’s claim upon the life He inhabits.**

“through the Spirit”

The final phrase tells us how this habitation exists: **“through the Spirit.”** The Holy Spirit is not an optional addition to Christianity, nor merely an emotional feeling experienced during exciting worship. He is the divine Person through whom believers are sealed, united, indwelt, strengthened, taught, and incorporated into Christ’s body. Ephesians 1:13 says believers are **“sealed with that holy Spirit of promise.”** Ephesians 2:18 says both Jew and Gentile have access **“by one Spirit unto the Father.”** Ephesians 4:4 says, **“There is one body, and one Spirit.”** The same Spirit who unites the body inhabits the temple.

This makes the Church fundamentally spiritual rather than merely institutional. An organization can possess property, membership rolls, budgets, officers, constitutions, programs, websites, and legal recognition without possessing spiritual life. Revelation 3:1 speaks of an assembly that had **“a name that thou livest, and art dead.”** Religious

machinery can keep moving long after spiritual power has disappeared. The Holy Spirit does not authenticate something simply because the word “church” is printed above the entrance. **A corpse can wear a choir robe, but music does not make it alive.**

The indwelling Spirit also belongs to every genuine believer. Romans 8:9 says, **“if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.”** The Spirit is not reserved for a religious elite who have achieved some second-class promotion beyond ordinary salvation. First Corinthians 12:13 says **“by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body.”** Ephesians 1:13 connects sealing with believing the gospel. Christians can be more or less yielded to the Spirit, can grieve Him, and can be commanded to **“be filled with the Spirit”** (Ephesians 5:18), but the believer does not become Christ’s property by hunting for a later spiritual membership upgrade. He belongs to Christ because the Spirit of God has sealed and indwelt him.

And because the habitation is **“through the Spirit,”** Christian growth cannot be manufactured by fleshly methods. Galatians 3:3 asks, **“having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?”** Programs have uses, organization has uses, education has uses, and discipline has uses, but none can substitute for the Spirit working through the word of God in yielded believers. **The Church is not a machine waiting for better marketing; it is a living habitation that requires the Spirit of the living God.**

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 2:22 completes Paul’s magnificent building picture. Believing Jews and Gentiles are **“builded together”** in Christ, not as national Israel renamed but as members of the one body. Jesus Christ is the Corner Stone, apostolic and prophetic revelation forms the foundation, and redeemed believers are living stones fitted into one spiritual structure.

The purpose is equally clear: the Church is **“an habitation of God through the Spirit.”** God’s present spiritual dwelling is not fundamentally a physical religious building but His redeemed people, individually indwelt and corporately united by the Holy Spirit. That privilege demands holiness, humility, fellowship, and dependence upon God rather than fleshly religious machinery.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. Believers Built Together

1 Peter 2:5 — **“Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house.”**
Ephesians 2:21 — **“All the building fitly framed together groweth.”**
1 Corinthians 3:9 — **“Ye are God's building.”**

Ephesians 4:16 — **“The whole body fitly joined together.”**
Romans 12:5 — **“We, being many, are one body in Christ.”**

2. One Body Of Jew And Gentile

1 Corinthians 12:13 — **“Whether we be Jews or Gentiles… into one body.”**
Ephesians 2:16 — **“Reconcile both unto God in one body.”**
Ephesians 3:6 — **“Fellowheirs, and of the same body.”**
Galatians 3:28 — **“Ye are all one in Christ Jesus.”**
Ephesians 4:4 — **“There is one body.”**

3. God Dwells In His People

1 Corinthians 3:16 — **“Ye are the temple of God.”**
2 Corinthians 6:16 — **“Ye are the temple of the living God.”**
1 Corinthians 6:19 — **“Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost.”**
1 Peter 2:5 — **“A spiritual house.”**
Hebrews 3:6 — **“Whose house are we.”**

4. The Spirit Indwells Believers

Romans 8:9 — **“The Spirit of God dwell in you.”**
1 Corinthians 6:19 — **“The Holy Ghost which is in you.”**
2 Timothy 1:14 — **“The Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us.”**
Romans 8:11 — **“His Spirit that dwelleth in you.”**
Galatians 4:6 — **“The Spirit of his Son into your hearts.”**

5. Sealed By The Spirit

Ephesians 1:13 — **“Sealed with that holy Spirit of promise.”**
Ephesians 4:30 — **“Sealed unto the day of redemption.”**
2 Corinthians 1:22 — **“Who hath also sealed us.”**
2 Corinthians 5:5 — **“Given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.”**
Ephesians 1:14 — **“The earnest of our inheritance.”**

6. Holiness Befits God’s Temple

1 Corinthians 3:17 — **“The temple of God is holy.”**
1 Peter 1:16 — **“Be ye holy; for I am holy.”**
2 Corinthians 7:1 — **“Perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”**
1 Thessalonians 4:3 — **“This is the will of God, even your sanctification.”**
Ephesians 4:1 — **“Walk worthy of the vocation.”**

7. The Spirit Gives Spiritual Life

John 6:63 — **“It is the spirit that quickeneth.”**
Romans 8:10 — **“The Spirit is life because of righteousness.”**
2 Corinthians 3:6 — **“The spirit giveth life.”**
Galatians 5:25 — **“If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.”**
Romans 8:14 — **“As many as are led by the Spirit of God.”**

8. Dependence Upon The Spirit

Ephesians 5:18 — **“Be filled with the Spirit.”**
Galatians 3:3 — **“Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?”**
Galatians 5:16 — **“Walk in the Spirit.”**
Ephesians 6:18 — **“Praying always… in the Spirit.”**
Philippians 3:3 — **“Worship God in the spirit.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 2:22 ends the chapter by taking believers somewhere no Gentile in verse 12 could have imagined: from being **“without God in the world”** to becoming part of **“an habitation of God through the Spirit.”** That is the distance grace traveled. The sinner was not merely lonely and in need of community; he was spiritually alienated and needed reconciliation. He was not merely uninformed; he was dead in trespasses and sins and needed quickening. He was not merely standing outside a religious institution; he was far off from God and needed the blood of Christ. Yet God did not simply permit him to visit. Through Christ He brought him near, placed him into one body, made him a fellowcitizen, brought him into the household, set him on a sure foundation, fitted him into the building, and made him part of His dwelling. **Grace does not hand the outsider a visitor pass; it makes him living material in the house of God.**

That truth should permanently correct the careless way Christians sometimes speak about physical church buildings. A building can be useful, beautiful, costly, dedicated to worship, and worth maintaining, but drywall has never been born again. Carpet has never been sealed by the Holy Ghost. A steeple has never been baptized by one Spirit into the body of Christ. The Church is composed of redeemed people. This does not diminish the importance of assembling; it increases it, because when believers gather, the significance rests in who they are in Christ rather than in the architecture around them. A congregation meeting in a simple room may possess more genuine spiritual life than a religious institution occupying ten million dollars of stone and glass. **God measures His house by indwelling life, not by property value.**

The words **“builded together”** also challenge the lonely, consumer-driven version of Christianity in which believers treat churches like restaurants and fellow Christians like

optional table companions. God is building people together. That does not mean joining hands with false doctrine, tolerating apostasy, or sacrificing biblical conviction for organizational unity. The same Bible that teaches one body commands believers to mark error and contend for the faith. But among genuine believers standing upon sound doctrine, pride, jealousy, bitterness, and constant unnecessary division make little sense. We are stones in the same structure, members of the same body, children in the same household, and recipients of the same grace. **The stone that spends all its time attacking the wall beside it may eventually discover it has forgotten what the Builder put both stones there to support.**

Finally, **"through the Spirit"** reminds us that none of this spiritual life can be manufactured by religious flesh. Churches can manufacture excitement, atmosphere, publicity, organization, programs, emotional response, and impressive statistics. They cannot manufacture the Holy Ghost. The Spirit indwells every believer, seals him unto the day of redemption, gives spiritual life, produces fruit, empowers service, and glorifies Christ. The answer is therefore not less biblical structure but deeper dependence upon the God who inhabits His people. We need the word, prayer, holiness, sound doctrine, yielded lives, faithful fellowship, and obedient service—not because these purchase the Spirit, but because those indwelt by Him ought to walk accordingly. **The great wonder of Ephesians 2 is not that men finally built God an impressive house; it is that God took dead sinners, made them alive in Christ, and chose to make them His habitation.**

Why God Builds People Together

Key Passage: Ephesians 2:22

"In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." — Ephesians 2:22

Ephesians 2 does not end with a saved man sitting alone under a tree congratulating himself that he and Jesus have worked out a private arrangement. It ends with believers **"builded together."** That matters. The same chapter that teaches individual salvation by grace through faith also teaches corporate relationship in the body of Christ. God quickens individuals, saves individuals, seals individuals, and holds individuals personally responsible, but He does not design the Christian life as spiritual solitary confinement. The man who was once dead in sins is made alive with Christ; the Gentile who was once far off is made nigh by the blood; Jew and Gentile are reconciled in one body; strangers become fellowcitizens; outsiders become household members; and then the stones are **"builded**

together." Grace does not merely rescue stones from the quarry and leave them scattered across the hillside. God fits them into something larger than themselves. **Salvation is personal, but God never intended Christianity to remain private.**

That truth corrects two opposite religious errors. On one side stands institutional religion, which acts as though salvation consists of attaching your name to the correct organization, occupying the correct pew, signing the correct membership form, and supporting the machinery. Scripture knows nothing about salvation by ecclesiastical paperwork. Ephesians 2:8–9 already settled that: **"For by grace are ye saved through faith… Not of works, lest any man should boast."** A local church cannot regenerate a dead sinner. On the other side stands the modern independent spirit that says, "I do not need anybody. I have my Bible, I have God, and I can do Christianity alone." That sounds rugged until you notice God repeatedly describes believers as a **body**, a **household**, a **building**, and a **temple**. A hand detached from the body is not independent; it is amputated. A brick refusing every other brick is not a courageous individualist; it is landscaping material. **The Bible saves us from institutional bondage without baptizing spiritual isolation.**

Ephesians 2:22 gives the reason believers are built together: **"for an habitation of God through the Spirit."** God is doing more than creating a support network for lonely people. Christian fellowship is not merely companionship with Bible verses added to the conversation. God is constructing a spiritual habitation out of redeemed people, with Jesus Christ as the chief Corner Stone and the Holy Spirit dwelling in the building. That makes fellowship doctrinal before it becomes social. The question is not merely whether Christians enjoy each other's company, share interests, like the same music, vote the same way, have similar personalities, or come from the same background. The question is whether they are in Christ, under His word, indwelt by His Spirit, and being fitted into His purpose. **God does not build His house out of people who naturally match; He makes people fit because they all meet at the same Corner Stone.**

1. God Saves Individuals But Builds A People

The gospel addresses individuals personally. Romans 10:13 says, **"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."** Acts 16:31 says, **"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."** Nobody can believe for somebody else. A child cannot inherit salvation from Christian parents, a husband cannot trust Christ for his wife, and a congregation cannot vote an unbeliever into eternal life. Every sinner must personally come to Christ. But once saved, that individual immediately belongs to something larger than himself. First Corinthians 12:27 says, **"Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular."** Notice both truths in one verse: individual members, one body.

Ephesians has already described the same reality from several directions. We are **"fellowcitizens with the saints"** in Ephesians 2:19. We are **"of the household of God."** We are built upon a common foundation in verse 20. We are **"fitly framed together"** in verse 21. Now we are **"builded together."** God keeps stacking one corporate picture upon another because apparently He knew Christians would eventually invent a version of Christianity where a man could claim devotion to Christ while treating every other believer as an unnecessary accessory. The New Testament knows nothing of a Christianity where the sheep permanently resigns from the flock, the hand resigns from the body, the son resigns from the household, and the stone resigns from the wall—all while claiming increased spiritual maturity.

That does not mean every local congregation is healthy or that believers must remain under corrupt leadership, doctrinal apostasy, manipulation, or abuse. Scripture commands believers to **"mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine"** and **"avoid them"** (Romans 16:17). Second Corinthians 6:17 says, **"come out from among them, and be ye separate."** Separation can be biblical. But separating from error is not the same as separating from the entire idea of Christian fellowship. A believer may need to leave the wrong assembly precisely because he should seek sound fellowship with the right one. **God never commanded His sheep to remain in a poisoned pasture, but neither did He design sheep to spend their lives pretending wolves are safer than a flock.**

2. Living Stones Need Other Living Stones

First Peter 2:5 calls believers **"lively stones"** who **"are built up a spiritual house."** That is an unusual picture because stones normally are not alive. God deliberately combines the solidity of stone with the vitality of life. The Church is not a dead monument. Its members possess spiritual life through Christ. Yet each living stone is still being built **with** other stones. One stone may be genuine, strong, valuable, and properly cut, but by itself it cannot constitute the house. The Builder has a larger design.

This is one reason fellowship exposes us in ways isolation cannot. Alone, a Christian can imagine he is remarkably patient because nobody has tested his patience. He can imagine himself forgiving because nobody has offended him. He can imagine himself humble because nobody has disagreed with him. Put him beside other redeemed sinners, however, and suddenly sanctification gets practical. Colossians 3:13 says, **"Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any."** You cannot forbear an imaginary person. Ephesians 4:2 says, **"forbearing one another in love."** Christian fellowship produces opportunities to exercise virtues that isolation lets us merely admire.

That is not a flaw in God's design; it is part of the design. Proverbs 27:17 says, **"Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend."** Sharpening involves friction. Sometimes Christians want fellowship with all the encouragement and none of the friction, all the comfort and none of the correction, all the belonging and none of the responsibility. That arrangement exists only in brochures. Real fellowship brings different personalities, varying levels of maturity, misunderstandings, burdens, opportunities to forgive, chances to serve, and occasions to grow. **God sometimes uses the stone beside you as sandpaper because He loves you too much to leave every rough edge untouched.**

3. Fellowship Is Built Around Truth

Christian fellowship is not simply Christianized sociability. First John 1:3 says, **"truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."** Fellowship among believers grows out of a prior fellowship with God through Christ. That means doctrine matters. Acts 2:42 says the early believers **"continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."** Notice the order. Doctrine and fellowship were not enemies. The doctrine defined the fellowship.

That is why biblical unity cannot be manufactured by shaving doctrine down until everybody fits beneath a vague religious umbrella. Ephesians 4:3 commands believers to keep **"the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace,"** but Ephesians 4:13 speaks of **"the unity of the faith,"** and verse 14 warns against **"every wind of doctrine."** God is not asking Christians to choose between truth and unity. Genuine Christian unity exists because believers share truth concerning Christ. The same Christ saves them. The same Spirit indwells them. The same gospel brought them life. The same Book governs their doctrine. **If the price of fellowship is pretending error does not matter, the fellowship has already become more important than the Lord around whom it supposedly gathers.**

This balance matters because some Christians turn "separation" into an excuse for perpetual warfare, while others turn "unity" into an excuse for doctrinal surrender. Both can become fleshly. Jude 3 says to **"earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."** Romans 14 also teaches believers not to destroy one another over matters where Scripture allows liberty. Wisdom knows the difference between defending doctrine and defending personal preference. Not every disagreement is apostasy, and not every call for unity is biblical. **The mature believer knows when to draw a line in concrete and when to stop drawing lines in sand.**

4. God Uses Fellowship To Supply What One Member Lacks

First Corinthians 12 demolishes the fantasy of self-sufficient Christianity. Verse 21 says, **"the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee."** That is God's answer to every believer who believes he has spiritually outgrown the need for other Christians. The eye may see better than the hand, but it cannot grasp. The hand may work effectively, but it cannot hear. Different members possess different functions, strengths, experiences, and opportunities, and God designed the body so that no member legitimately possesses everything.

Ephesians 4:16 says the body is **"fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth."** Every joint supplies something. That does not mean every believer stands behind a pulpit, leads a ministry, writes a book, or becomes publicly known. Much of the body's most important work happens unseen. Somebody prays. Somebody encourages. Somebody gives quietly. Somebody visits the sick. Somebody teaches children. Somebody notices the lonely person everyone else walked past. Somebody repairs what broke. Somebody speaks a needed word at the right moment. **Heaven has never confused visibility with usefulness, although religious celebrity culture frequently does.**

Fellowship therefore teaches both humility and responsibility. Humility says, "I need what God has put in others." Responsibility says, "Others may need what God has placed in me." Romans 12:6 says we have **"gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us."** A man who refuses all fellowship may deprive himself of what others could supply, but he may also withhold from others what God intended him to supply. Spiritual isolation can disguise selfishness as independence. **Sometimes the question is not merely, "What am I missing by staying away?" but "Who is missing what God intended me to bring?"**

5. Fellowship Carries Burdens No Stone Should Carry Alone

Galatians 6:2 says, **"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."** Life brings burdens whether anybody schedules them or not. Sickness arrives. Death arrives. Financial pressure arrives. Family trouble arrives. Temptation arrives. Discouragement arrives. Spiritual exhaustion arrives. God certainly sustains His people personally, but He repeatedly chooses to use other believers as part of that sustaining care. Second Corinthians 1:4 says God comforts us **"that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble."** God gives comfort that can travel.

This is why shallow fellowship fails when life becomes heavy. If Christian relationships consist only of small talk before a service, polite smiles in a hallway, and a quick departure afterward, nobody knows where the load is. Romans 12:15 says, **"Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep."** That requires enough genuine relationship to

know who is rejoicing and who is weeping. James 5:16 says, **“pray one for another.”** Fellowship becomes strong when Christians stop treating every difficulty as an embarrassing interruption and start understanding burden-bearing as ordinary body life.

Of course, burden-bearing must not become dependence upon people instead of God. Psalm 55:22 says, **“Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee.”** Christ remains the ultimate strength. But the Lord who sustains can send another Christian with a meal, a prayer, a Scripture, an encouraging word, financial help, practical assistance, or simply faithful presence. Refusing all help can sometimes be pride wearing work boots. **God may answer your prayer by sending a person, and it is poor theology to reject the answer because you expected lightning.**

6. Fellowship Provides Correction Before The Wall Leans Too Far

Proverbs 27:6 says, **“Faithful are the wounds of a friend.”** That is not a popular verse in an age that confuses affirmation with love. A faithful Christian friend does not spend every conversation applauding us. There are moments when love says, “That attitude is wrong,” “That doctrine is drifting,” “You need to make this right,” or “You are heading toward trouble.” Galatians 6:1 tells spiritual believers to restore one overtaken in a fault **“in the spirit of meekness.”** Correction is part of fellowship when administered biblically.

Isolation removes many of those safeguards. A believer accountable only to himself can eventually become theologian, jury, and appeals court in every dispute. Nobody can question him because every challenge becomes persecution. Nobody can correct him because every correction becomes control. Proverbs 18:1 warns, **“Through desire a man, having separated himself, seeketh and intermeddleth with all wisdom.”** There is a dangerous kind of separation that does not protect truth; it protects ego. **A man who refuses every mirror should not be surprised when he stops noticing dirt on his face.**

Biblical correction must remain under Scripture, not become authoritarian control. First Peter 5:3 warns leaders against being **“lords over God's heritage.”** Second Corinthians 1:24 says, **“Not for that we have dominion over your faith.”** Fellowship is not spiritual surveillance. Pastors are not dictators, and mature believers are not licensed to run everyone else’s life. Correction works properly when the Bible governs everyone involved. **The safest accountability is not one man controlling another; it is both men standing where the Book can correct them.**

7. God Builds People Together Because He Intends To Dwell Among Them

Ephesians 2:22 finally gives the purpose: believers are built together **“for an habitation of God through the Spirit.”** Fellowship is not the final goal; God is. The building exists for the One who inhabits it. First Corinthians 3:16 says, **“Know ye not that ye are the temple of**

God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" The glory of Christian fellowship is not merely that people find friendship. It is that redeemed people together display the life and presence of God through His Spirit.

That explains why holiness matters inside fellowship. Second Corinthians 6:16 says, **"ye are the temple of the living God."** If God inhabits His people, then bitterness, gossip, division, sexual sin, dishonesty, envy, pride, and doctrinal corruption are not trivial housekeeping matters. Ephesians 4:30 says, **"grieve not the holy Spirit of God."** The Spirit who builds believers together can be grieved by the way they treat one another. The Church should never become a place where men sing loudly about God while quietly shredding each other in the hallway. **A congregation cannot honor the Guest while trashing the house He inhabits.**

And notice again: the habitation is **"through the Spirit."** Human technique cannot manufacture it. You can manufacture a crowd with entertainment. You can manufacture excitement with atmosphere. You can manufacture loyalty with charisma. You can manufacture organizational efficiency with excellent management. But you cannot manufacture the Holy Ghost. Galatians 3:3 asks, **"having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?"** The Church desperately needs sound organization, but organization must remain a servant of spiritual life rather than its substitute. **A perfectly organized cemetery is still full of dead people; God's house requires life from the Spirit.**

Conclusion

God builds people together because Christianity is larger than individual survival. He saves the sinner personally, but then He places that believer into relationships that teach him, sharpen him, support him, correct him, challenge him, and give him opportunities to serve. The body needs its members, the household needs its family, and the building requires its living stones. None of this means tolerating corruption, surrendering doctrine, or remaining trapped under harmful religious control. Scripture allows and sometimes commands separation. But biblical separation from error is very different from a permanent refusal of Christian fellowship. **God may call you out of the wrong crowd, but He never called you to become the entire body by yourself.**

The answer is not institutional religion on one side or spiritual isolation on the other. The answer is biblical fellowship in Christ. Find believers who love the Book, preach the gospel, rightly divide the word, honor Jesus Christ, reject religious manipulation, and understand grace. Pray together. Study together. Carry burdens. Give encouragement. Receive correction. Serve where God gives opportunity. Forgive when flesh inevitably creates

friction. Do not expect perfect Christians, because if a perfect congregation ever existed, our arrival would create an immediate personnel problem. **Christian fellowship is not perfect people admiring one another; it is redeemed sinners learning to walk together under a perfect Saviour.**

Ephesians 2 began with dead people walking according to the course of this world and ends with living people built together as God's habitation. That is the architecture of grace. God took what was dead and made it alive. He took what was far off and brought it near. He took Jew and Gentile and reconciled them in one body. He took strangers and made them family. He took scattered stones and made them a temple. And He did not build that temple merely so Christians would feel less lonely; He built it **"for an habitation of God through the Spirit." The great purpose of Christian fellowship is not simply that we have each other—it is that God is building us together into something that belongs to Him.**

Chapter 3

Ephesians 3:1 Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

"For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles,"
Ephesians 3:1

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"For this cause"

Ephesians 3 begins with **"For this cause,"** which forces the reader backward before moving forward. Paul is not beginning an unrelated subject. The "cause" grows out of everything revealed in chapter 2: Gentiles who had been **"without Christ," "strangers from the covenants of promise,"** and **"without God in the world"** have now been **"made nigh by the blood of Christ"** (Ephesians 2:12–13). Christ has made believing Jew and Gentile one, broken down the middle wall of partition, created **"one new man,"** reconciled both unto God **"in one body by the cross,"** and given both access **"by one Spirit unto the Father"** (Ephesians 2:14–18). Gentile believers are now fellowcitizens, members of God's

household, and living stones in a spiritual habitation. **For this cause** Paul is about to explain the special revelation and stewardship connected with that astonishing change.

The phrase also shows how doctrine drives ministry. Paul does not labor for Gentiles because missionary work happens to suit his personality. He serves because God has revealed what He is doing. Sound service grows out of sound doctrine. Romans 15:16 says Paul was **"the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles."** Acts 9:15 records the Lord saying of him, **"he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles."** Paul's ministry is not random religious enthusiasm; it rests upon a divine commission. When men separate ministry from doctrine, ministry eventually becomes activity searching for a reason to exist. **The Bible never teaches us to stay busy for God until we accidentally discover what God said He was doing.**

There is also a structural feature worth noticing. Paul begins **"For this cause"** in verse 1, then pauses to explain the mystery and his stewardship through much of the chapter, before returning in verse 14 with **"For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father."** The interruption is not confusion. The subject is so tremendous that Paul stops to explain why his Gentile ministry exists before finishing the prayer he began to introduce. The revelation of the one body is not a decorative doctrine tucked into the margin. It explains Paul's calling, Gentile blessing, Church unity, and the nature of the present dispensation.

"I Paul"

Paul identifies himself personally: **"I Paul."** That matters because the next verses will speak of **"the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward"** and of the mystery made known to him by revelation. Paul does not claim to have invented the mystery. He claims to have received revelation concerning it. Galatians 1:11–12 says the gospel he preached was **"not after man"** and that he received it **"by the revelation of Jesus Christ."** Romans 11:13 says, **"I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles."** God chose a particular vessel for a particular ministry.

That does not make Paul the Saviour, the Head of the Church, or the object of faith. Jesus Christ remains all of those things Scripture assigns to Him alone. First Corinthians 3:11 says, **"other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."** Yet refusing Paul's distinctive ministry because one fears giving him too much importance is not humility; it is refusing to read what the Holy Ghost wrote. Paul repeatedly commands believers to follow him insofar as he follows Christ. First Corinthians 11:1 says, **"Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ."** The correct balance is simple: worship Christ, believe Christ, glory in Christ—and receive the doctrine Christ chose to reveal through His apostle.

Right division especially requires paying attention to Paul's ministry. Second Timothy 2:15 commands, **"rightly dividing the word of truth."** All Scripture is inspired, but not every command in Scripture is addressed to the same people under the same administration. Noah was told to build an ark; Christians are not. Israel received dietary ordinances; the body of Christ is not under Israel's Mosaic covenant. Paul's epistles explain with particular clarity the believer's standing under grace, the one body, the sealing of the Spirit, heavenly position, and the mystery concerning Jew and Gentile. **Ignoring the apostle God sent to the Gentiles while claiming to understand Gentile doctrine is like throwing away the map because you dislike the cartographer.**

"the prisoner of Jesus Christ"

Paul was literally a prisoner when he wrote, yet he does not describe himself primarily as Rome's prisoner. He calls himself **"the prisoner of Jesus Christ."** That is faith looking through visible circumstances to divine sovereignty. Men could chain Paul, guard Paul, restrict Paul, and place him behind walls, but Paul understood that no earthly authority had finally taken control of his life away from Christ. Philippians 1:12 says, **"the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel."** Rome thought it had confined a preacher; God turned the prison into another pulpit.

That does not mean imprisonment was pleasant or that Christians should pretend suffering does not hurt. Paul experienced hunger, weariness, beatings, danger, rejection, and loneliness. Second Corinthians 11 records enough trouble to cure anybody of the idea that faithful ministry guarantees comfortable circumstances. Yet Paul's interpretation of suffering was governed by Christ rather than by self-pity. Second Timothy 2:9 says, **"Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound."** Chains could restrict his wrists without restricting the word. **The empire could tell Paul where to sleep, but it could not tell God where the gospel was allowed to go.**

Calling himself Christ's prisoner also reflects surrender. Paul's life belonged to the One who saved and commissioned him. Acts 20:24 says, **"neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy."** That is not fatalism; it is yielded stewardship. Paul did not claim that every painful circumstance was pleasant, but he recognized that God could work through circumstances he would never have chosen. Romans 8:28 says, **"all things work together for good to them that love God."** Mature faith does not call evil good; it knows God is greater than the evil. **A surrendered man may be in chains and still be freer than the man outside the prison who is enslaved to his own plans.**

"for you Gentiles"

The final words explain why Paul's imprisonment had such significance: **"for you Gentiles."** His suffering was connected with the commission God had given him concerning the nations. Acts 22 records that when Paul testified about the Lord sending him **"far hence unto the Gentiles,"** his Jewish audience erupted in fury. Acts 26:17–18 records Christ sending Paul to the Gentiles **"to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light."** Paul's Gentile ministry was not a footnote. It stood at the heart of the special stewardship he is about to explain.

The wording also magnifies the grace revealed in chapter 2. These Gentiles had once been **"far off."** They had been strangers from Israel's covenants and without God in the world. Yet God raised up an apostle specifically commissioned to carry the gospel and doctrinal revelation concerning their place in Christ. Ephesians 3:6 will explain that Gentiles are **"fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel."** That does not mean Gentiles became national Israel or inherited every covenant promise addressed to Jacob. It means believing Jews and Gentiles share equal spiritual standing in the one body. **Grace did not turn Gentiles into Israel; it placed Gentiles in Christ.**

Paul's phrase **"for you Gentiles"** also reveals the cost of ministry. Genuine ministry is not merely possessing correct doctrine; it is spending oneself so others can receive truth. Second Corinthians 12:15 says, **"I will very gladly spend and be spent for you."** Paul did not merely discuss sacrifice in a comfortable classroom. His chains hung from the doctrine he preached and the people he served. That should shame the modern idea that Christian service is legitimate only while convenient. **Paul carried the Gentile message far enough that eventually the messenger wore chains—but he never mistook chains for evidence that the message had failed.**

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 3:1 introduces Paul's explanation of the **mystery and stewardship connected with the Gentiles and the one body**. The phrase **"For this cause"** ties the chapter directly to the reconciliation and spiritual unity revealed in Ephesians 2. Paul's ministry is not self-appointed; Christ specifically commissioned him as an apostle to the Gentiles and entrusted revelation to him concerning their place in the body of Christ.

The verse also gives a remarkable view of suffering and sovereignty. Though imprisoned by earthly authority, Paul calls himself **"the prisoner of Jesus Christ."** His chains are interpreted through his calling rather than his calling being interpreted through his chains. His imprisonment does not cancel the ministry; it becomes part of the means by which that ministry advances.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. Paul's Gentile Commission

Acts 9:15 — **"A chosen vessel unto me… before the Gentiles."**
Romans 11:13 — **"I am the apostle of the Gentiles."**
Acts 22:21 — **"I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles."**
Acts 26:17 — **"Unto the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee."**
Galatians 2:8 — **"The apostleship of the Gentiles."**

2. Revelation Given To Paul

Galatians 1:12 — **"By the revelation of Jesus Christ."**
Ephesians 3:3 — **"By revelation he made known unto me the mystery."**
Romans 16:25 — **"According to the revelation of the mystery."**
1 Corinthians 2:10 — **"God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit."**
Colossians 1:25 — **"According to the dispensation of God which is given to me."**

3. The One Body Of Jew And Gentile

Ephesians 2:16 — **"Both unto God in one body."**
Ephesians 3:6 — **"Fellowheirs, and of the same body."**
1 Corinthians 12:13 — **"Whether we be Jews or Gentiles… into one body."**
Galatians 3:28 — **"Ye are all one in Christ Jesus."**
Ephesians 4:4 — **"There is one body."**

4. Paul As Christ's Prisoner

Ephesians 4:1 — **"I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord."**
Philemon 1:1 — **"Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ."**
2 Timothy 1:8 — **"Me his prisoner."**
Acts 28:20 — **"For the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain."**
2 Timothy 2:9 — **"Even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound."**

5. Suffering For Gospel Ministry

2 Corinthians 11:23 — **"In prisons more frequent."**
Acts 20:24 — **"Neither count I my life dear unto myself."**
Philippians 1:12 — **"Fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel."**
Colossians 1:24 — **"Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you."**
2 Timothy 2:10 — **"Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes."**

6. God Working Through Circumstances

Romans 8:28 — **“All things work together for good.”**
Philippians 1:13 — **“My bonds in Christ are manifest.”**
Genesis 50:20 — **“God meant it unto good.”**
2 Corinthians 4:17 — **“Our light affliction… worketh for us.”**
Philippians 1:20 — **“Christ shall be magnified in my body.”**

7. Gentiles Brought Near

Ephesians 2:12 — **“Without Christ… without God in the world.”**
Ephesians 2:13 — **“Made nigh by the blood of Christ.”**
Romans 15:9 — **“The Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy.”**
Acts 13:47 — **“A light of the Gentiles.”**
Ephesians 3:6 — **“Partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel.”**

8. Ministry As Sacrificial Service

2 Corinthians 12:15 — **“I will very gladly spend and be spent for you.”**
1 Thessalonians 2:8 — **“We were willing to have imparted unto you… our own souls.”**
Philippians 2:17 — **“If I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith.”**
2 Timothy 4:6 — **“I am now ready to be offered.”**
1 Corinthians 9:22 — **“I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 3:1 is a remarkable doorway into the chapter because Paul introduces himself not by title, achievement, education, reputation, or even by the injustice of his imprisonment, but as **“the prisoner of Jesus Christ.”** That is a man whose theology has reached his circumstances. It is easy to preach sovereignty while events cooperate with our plans. It is another matter to look at chains, confinement, lost freedom, delayed plans, and hostile authorities and still say, in effect, “I belong to Christ here too.” Paul did not deny the Roman prison existed; he simply refused to let Rome become the highest explanation of why he was there. Faith sees earthly causes without forgetting the heavenly Lord who remains above them. **The Christian who knows whose prisoner he is cannot be completely imprisoned by the people holding the keys.**

The verse also reminds us why Paul’s ministry deserves careful attention in rightly dividing Scripture. He says his imprisonment is **“for you Gentiles,”** and the verses immediately following speak of a stewardship of grace and a mystery revealed to him. That does not mean Paul competes with Christ. It means Christ chose Paul as the instrument through whom particular truth concerning Gentile inclusion in the one body was especially revealed and explained. Refusing that distinction does not exalt Jesus; it merely ignores

Jesus' choice of messenger. All Scripture remains profitable, but Scripture itself recognizes different peoples, covenants, callings, and administrations. **Right division is not cutting verses out of the Bible; it is refusing to deliver Noah's ark instructions to somebody living in Ephesus.**

There is also something deeply corrective in the words **"for you Gentiles."** Paul's chains were connected with serving people who once had been far off. Ministry therefore cannot be measured merely by personal comfort. The gospel has always cost somebody something. Paul could have saved himself considerable trouble by remaining silent about truths that provoked opposition, but silence would have betrayed his stewardship. Christian service is not the art of discovering how much obedience can be accomplished without inconvenience. Sometimes fidelity costs time, money, reputation, opportunity, comfort, friendship, and in Paul's case freedom. Yet suffering does not automatically prove a ministry is right any more than comfort proves it is wrong; the question remains whether the suffering came through faithfulness to God's word. **A chain worn for foolishness is still a chain, but a chain worn for Christ becomes part of the testimony.**

Finally, Ephesians 3:1 teaches us to interpret our lives through calling rather than circumstances alone. Paul could have said, "Rome has stopped me." Instead, his prison letters have instructed believers for centuries. Men saw confinement; God was producing Scripture. Men saw a prisoner; God saw an apostle still dispensing truth to Gentiles. We rarely know the full reach of what God may accomplish through circumstances we would never choose. That does not require pretending disappointment is pleasant or pain is imaginary. It requires believing that Jesus Christ remains Lord when the door closes as surely as when it opens. Paul's body could be confined while his doctrine crossed continents and centuries. **The man in Ephesians 3 was behind bars, but the message entrusted to him was already on its way around the world.**

Ephesians 3:2 Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

"If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward:"
Ephesians 3:2

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"If ye have heard"

Paul begins with the expression **“If ye have heard,”** not because he is uncertain whether God had given him the stewardship, but because he is addressing the Ephesians concerning something they should already have heard about his ministry. The wording introduces an explanation. Verse 1 identified him as **“the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles,”** and now verse 2 explains why his imprisonment and ministry are so closely connected with them. Paul is about to describe a divine stewardship concerning grace, revelation, and the mystery of believing Jew and Gentile being of the same body. The point is not, “Perhaps God gave me something; I am not quite sure.” The point is, “Surely you have heard what God entrusted to me for your benefit.”

This language also reminds us that Christian truth must be communicated. Men do not naturally discover Pauline doctrine by staring at sunsets or examining their feelings. Romans 10:17 says, **“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”** Ephesians 1:13 has already established the order: **“after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed.”** Truth is revealed by God, written in Scripture, preached by appointed messengers, heard by men, and believed. Christianity is not a mystical treasure hunt where everybody receives a private message that means whatever his imagination requires. **God did not hide His doctrine in somebody’s feelings and then command the Church to guess what He meant.**

The practical lesson is obvious. If believers are supposed to understand **“the dispensation of the grace of God,”** they must hear and study the words God actually gave. Second Timothy 2:15 says, **“Study to shew thyself approved unto God… rightly dividing the word of truth.”** Confusion concerning dispensations does not prove dispensational truth is confusing; often it proves somebody has tried to flatten the whole Bible into one undivided set of instructions. A man who cannot distinguish Noah from Moses, Moses from the Church, Israel from the body of Christ, or law from grace will eventually spend half his theology explaining away verses that would have been clear if he had first noticed to whom God was speaking. **When the addresses are ignored, the Bible gets blamed for mailroom mistakes men created themselves.**

“of the dispensation of the grace of God”

The central phrase is **“the dispensation of the grace of God.”** The word **“dispensation”** is not a mysterious theological invention imported into the Bible; it is sitting plainly in the King James text. It carries the idea of something entrusted, administered, or dispensed according to God’s arrangement. Paul is speaking of a stewardship involving **“the grace of God.”** In verse 7 he will say he was made a minister **“according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me.”** In Colossians 1:25 he says he was made a minister **“according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God.”** The

emphasis is upon divine trust and administration. God owns the grace; Paul is the steward through whom particular truth concerning that grace is made known.

That means a dispensation should not be reduced merely to a date range on a chart, although dispensational arrangements obviously operate within history. The biblical word emphasizes stewardship and administration. First Corinthians 9:17 says, **"a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me."** Paul is entrusted with something and expected to dispense it faithfully. A pharmacist does not manufacture the medicine because he dispenses it; he faithfully handles what was placed in his charge. Likewise, Paul did not invent grace. Grace was in the heart of God before Paul ever breathed, and sinners had experienced divine grace long before Acts 9. But God gave Paul a distinctive stewardship concerning the grace now being proclaimed and the mystery of Jew and Gentile in one body.

The phrase **"grace of God"** also keeps the emphasis where it belongs. Ephesians 2:8 has just said, **"For by grace are ye saved through faith."** Grace excludes human merit as the basis of salvation. Romans 11:6 says, **"if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace."** Paul's stewardship therefore does not send Gentiles back under Israel's Mosaic covenant as though salvation by grace were merely the entrance fee and Sinai became the maintenance contract afterward. Romans 6:14 says, **"ye are not under the law, but under grace."** Grace is not lawlessness, because Titus 2:11–12 says the grace of God teaches believers to deny ungodliness and live **"soberly, righteously, and godly."** But grace and law cannot be mixed as competing bases of justification.

This is where right division matters. Israel had a real covenant relationship under the law, with ordinances, priesthood, sacrifices, holy days, dietary restrictions, national promises, and earthly kingdom expectations. Ephesians 2:15 has just said Christ dealt with **"the law of commandments contained in ordinances"** in connection with creating the one new man. The body of Christ is not placed back under Israel's covenant system. Believing Jews and Gentiles are reconciled **"in one body by the cross"** and have access **"by one Spirit unto the Father." Grace is not Moses with the sharp edges filed down; it is a different divine administration centered in what Christ accomplished at Calvary.**

Yet grace must never be twisted into permission for sin. Romans 6:1 asks, **"Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?"** and answers, **"God forbid."** The same Paul who preached grace commanded holiness, purity, honesty, charity, forgiveness, service, discipline, and spiritual warfare. Grace changes the basis upon which God deals with the believer; it does not make conduct irrelevant. The man who uses grace as an excuse for carnality understands neither grace nor Calvary. **Grace does not teach a Christian that sin no longer matters; it teaches him that Christ mattered enough to die for it.**

“which is given me to you-ward”

Paul next says this dispensation **“is given me.”** He does not say he earned it, discovered it by superior intellect, or invented it through theological genius. It was **given**. That wording agrees with verse 3: **“by revelation he made known unto me the mystery.”** Galatians 1:12 says Paul received his message **“by the revelation of Jesus Christ.”** First Corinthians 15:10 says, **“by the grace of God I am what I am.”** Paul’s authority rested in divine commission, not self-appointment.

That is why Paul can speak forcefully while remaining humble. Authority and humility are not opposites when the authority comes from another. A mail carrier may confidently deliver a letter without claiming he wrote it. Paul could say, **“For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you”** (1 Corinthians 11:23). The pattern is receive and deliver. Revelation comes from Christ; stewardship is entrusted to Paul; doctrine is dispensed to the saints. **A faithful steward does not edit the Owner’s instructions because the servants voted for a more fashionable version.**

Then Paul adds **“to you-ward.”** What God gave Paul was intended for the benefit of the Gentiles he served. Romans 11:13 says, **“I am the apostle of the Gentiles.”** Acts 22:21 records Christ saying, **“Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.”** In Ephesians 3:6 Paul will explain that the Gentiles should be **“fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel.”** The stewardship was not a private revelation for Paul to admire in isolation. It was truth to be dispensed.

The expression also shows the selfless nature of genuine ministry. What was given **to Paul** was given **for others**. Second Corinthians 12:15 says, **“I will very gladly spend and be spent for you.”** Spiritual gifts, knowledge, opportunity, resources, and ministry are not merely decorations for the individual possessing them. First Corinthians 12:7 says, **“the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.”** Whatever God entrusts to a believer should eventually serve somebody besides the believer. **A steward who turns the pantry into a private trophy room has forgotten why the Master gave him the key.**

Finally, **“to you-ward”** guards against the idea that Gentiles somehow became Israel in order to receive God’s grace. Paul’s Gentile stewardship explains their blessings **in Christ**, not their conversion into national Israel. Ephesians 3:6 says they are of **“the same body.”** Romans 11 still identifies Israel separately and says **“the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.”** The Church receives its own glorious standing in Christ without requiring God to cancel Israel’s future. **God can dispense grace to Gentiles without stealing one acre from Abraham’s promised inheritance.**

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 3:2 introduces the **divine stewardship entrusted to Paul concerning the grace of God toward the Gentiles**. The dispensation is not something Paul invented; it was given to him by God and will be explained through revelation in the following verses. The emphasis is upon stewardship, administration, and the faithful dispensing of truth concerning God's present work in Christ.

The verse also demonstrates why right division matters. The Church is not simply Israel under a revised name, nor is grace merely the Mosaic law with reduced requirements. God has revealed through Paul the distinctive truth of believing Jew and Gentile sharing one body in Christ, saved by grace and brought into a heavenly relationship through the finished work of the cross.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. The Dispensation Entrusted To Paul

1 Corinthians 9:17 — **"A dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me."**
Colossians 1:25 — **"According to the dispensation of God which is given to me."**
Ephesians 3:7 — **"According to the gift of the grace of God given unto me."**
1 Timothy 1:11 — **"The glorious gospel… which was committed to my trust."**
Titus 1:3 — **"According to the commandment of God our Saviour."**

2. Revelation Given By Christ

Ephesians 3:3 — **"By revelation he made known unto me the mystery."**
Galatians 1:12 — **"By the revelation of Jesus Christ."**
Romans 16:25 — **"According to the revelation of the mystery."**
1 Corinthians 2:10 — **"God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit."**
Ephesians 3:5 — **"Now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets."**

3. Salvation By Grace

Ephesians 2:8 — **"By grace are ye saved through faith."**
Romans 3:24 — **"Being justified freely by his grace."**
Titus 3:7 — **"Being justified by his grace."**
Romans 11:6 — **"If by grace, then is it no more of works."**
2 Timothy 1:9 — **"According to his own purpose and grace."**

4. Not Under Law But Grace

Romans 6:14 — **"Ye are not under the law, but under grace."**
Romans 7:4 — **"Dead to the law by the body of Christ."**

Galatians 3:25 — **“We are no longer under a schoolmaster.”**
Colossians 2:14 — **“Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances.”**
Ephesians 2:15 — **“The law of commandments contained in ordinances.”**

5. Grace Produces Holy Living

Titus 2:11–12 — **“The grace of God… Teaching us… we should live soberly.”**
Romans 6:2 — **“God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?”**
Ephesians 2:10 — **“Created in Christ Jesus unto good works.”**
Galatians 5:13 — **“Use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh.”**
Ephesians 4:1 — **“Walk worthy of the vocation.”**

6. Paul Sent To The Gentiles

Romans 11:13 — **“I am the apostle of the Gentiles.”**
Acts 22:21 — **“I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.”**
Acts 26:17 — **“Unto the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee.”**
Galatians 2:8 — **“The apostleship of the Gentiles.”**
Romans 15:16 — **“The minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles.”**

7. Gentiles In The One Body

Ephesians 3:6 — **“Fellowheirs, and of the same body.”**
Ephesians 2:16 — **“Reconcile both unto God in one body.”**
1 Corinthians 12:13 — **“Whether we be Jews or Gentiles… into one body.”**
Galatians 3:28 — **“Ye are all one in Christ Jesus.”**
Ephesians 4:4 — **“There is one body.”**

8. Stewardship Requires Faithfulness

1 Corinthians 4:1 — **“Stewards of the mysteries of God.”**
1 Corinthians 4:2 — **“It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.”**
2 Timothy 2:2 — **“Commit thou to faithful men.”**
1 Corinthians 11:23 — **“I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered.”**
2 Timothy 1:14 — **“That good thing which was committed unto thee keep.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 3:2 is one of those verses that forces the reader to decide whether he will let the Bible define its own vocabulary. The word **“dispensation”** is sitting in the King James Bible whether modern theology likes the term or not. Paul says there is **“the dispensation of the grace of God,”** and he says that stewardship was **“given me to you-ward.”** That does not mean grace was invented when Paul was saved, nor does it mean nobody before him ever

received grace. It means God entrusted Paul with a particular administration and revelation concerning His grace toward Gentiles and their place in Christ. The right response is not to panic because somebody put dispensational truth on a chart. The right response is to read the verse. **You do not refute a biblical word by becoming uncomfortable when somebody notices it is there.**

The verse also teaches the difference between ownership and stewardship. Grace belongs to God. Revelation comes from Christ. Paul receives what God gives and dispenses it to those for whom it was intended. That pattern should govern every ministry. A preacher does not own truth, a denomination does not own truth, and a scholar does not possess authority to revise truth. First Corinthians 4:2 says, **"it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful."** Faithfulness is measured by how accurately the steward handles what belongs to the Master, not by how creatively he modifies it. **God does not reward the steward for improving the message; He requires him to deliver the message without stealing from the package.**

This verse also protects grace from two enemies: legalism and lawlessness. Legalism takes the believer whom God placed under grace and drags him backward under a covenant administration given to Israel. Lawlessness takes grace and pretends it means God no longer cares how Christians live. Paul destroys both errors. Romans 6:14 says we are not under the law but under grace, while Titus 2 says grace teaches holiness. Ephesians 2 says salvation is not of works, then immediately says we are created unto good works. Grace removes works from the foundation of salvation while placing good works exactly where they belong—as the fruit of a saved life. **Grace is not God lowering the bar so the flesh can step over it; grace is God saving a sinner who could never reach the bar and then teaching him how a saved man ought to walk.**

Finally, **"given me to you-ward"** turns doctrine into responsibility. Paul received truth so others could receive truth through him. That principle reaches every believer in some measure. Whatever God has taught us should make us better equipped to teach, encourage, warn, witness, serve, and strengthen somebody else. Biblical knowledge that never travels beyond self can become another form of religious pride. Paul received a stewardship and spent his life dispensing it, eventually writing these words from confinement because the message mattered more than his comfort. **Truth becomes stewardship the moment God places it in our hands, and the question is no longer merely what we know—it is whether we will faithfully give others what God gave us.**

Ephesians 3:4 Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

"Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)" Ephesians 3:4

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"Whereby, when ye read"

The word **"Whereby"** reaches directly back to verse 3, where Paul said God had **"by revelation… made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words."** Now he tells the Ephesians what those written words can accomplish: **"when ye read."** Revelation was given to Paul, but it was not intended to remain trapped inside Paul's head. God moved revealed truth from revelation to writing, and from writing to reading. The mystery was hidden in former ages, but once God revealed and recorded it, believers were expected to open the words and learn what He had made known. Christianity is therefore a revealed-book faith. God did not tell Christians to sit in darkness waiting for a private impression when He had already turned the light on in Scripture.

Those three words—**"when ye read"**—are a considerable rebuke to religious systems that make ordinary believers permanently dependent upon a special class of interpreters. Paul does not say, "When the clergy read for you," or, "When somebody with advanced credentials decodes my secret terminology." He says **"ye"** may read. Colossians 4:16 commands, **"when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans."** First Thessalonians 5:27 says, **"I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren."** God apparently expected common Christians to hear and read apostolic writing without first obtaining permission from a religious bureaucracy. **The Bible is deep enough to occupy a lifetime and plain enough to hold a believer responsible for reading it.**

That does not mean careless reading is enough. Second Timothy 2:15 says, **"Study to shew thyself approved unto God… rightly dividing the word of truth."** Reading is the doorway; study walks through it. Context matters, dispensational distinctions matter, words matter, grammar matters, comparison matters, and the Holy Ghost's own cross-references matter. But the answer to difficult Scripture is more Scripture, not abandoning Scripture. **A man who never opens the Book has no right to complain that God kept the truth hidden from him.**

"ye may understand my knowledge"

Paul says the result of reading is that **“ye may understand.”** That destroys the idea that biblical mystery must remain permanently incomprehensible. A mystery in Scripture is truth once hidden and then revealed. Romans 16:25 speaks of **“the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began,”** while verse 26 says it **“now is made manifest.”** Colossians 1:26 likewise speaks of **“the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints.”** Hidden then; revealed now. God did not unveil the mystery merely so theologians could hang a curtain back over it.

The object of their understanding is **“my knowledge.”** Paul is not boasting that he possesses superior natural intelligence. Verse 3 has already said the truth came **“by revelation.”** His knowledge exists because God made something known to him. Galatians 1:12 says, **“I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.”** First Corinthians 15:10 says, **“by the grace of God I am what I am.”** Paul’s knowledge is therefore stewardship knowledge—received from Christ, preserved in writing, and passed on to the saints.

That distinction keeps the reader from both dismissing Paul and worshipping Paul. He is not the source of the mystery; Christ is. But neither may somebody claim loyalty to Christ while discarding what Christ revealed through the apostle He commissioned. First Corinthians 11:1 says, **“Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.”** Romans 11:13 says, **“I am the apostle of the Gentiles.”** There is nothing spiritually humble about ignoring the messenger simply because God used a human pen. **If the King sends the letter through a servant, tearing up the letter is not devotion to the King.**

The statement **“ye may understand”** also places responsibility upon the reader. God has not promised that every believer will instantly understand everything without effort, but He has given a Book that can be understood. Psalm 119:130 says, **“The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple.”** Proverbs 2:6 says, **“For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.”** Confusion may come from ignorance, tradition, laziness, prejudice, or failure to rightly divide, but Scripture itself is not the enemy. **God is not playing doctrinal hide-and-seek after He tells you exactly where He put the answer.**

“in the mystery of Christ”

Paul identifies the subject of his knowledge as **“the mystery of Christ.”** The surrounding verses define it. Verse 5 says this mystery **“in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.”** Verse 6 then gives the content: **“That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the**

same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel." The mystery centers upon Christ and the one body formed in Him, where believing Jew and Gentile possess equal spiritual standing.

This must be distinguished carefully from the fact that the Old Testament already predicted Gentile blessing. Genesis 12:3 said to Abraham, **"in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."** Isaiah 49:6 spoke of salvation reaching **"unto the end of the earth."** Gentile blessing was not itself completely secret. What was not made known in former ages **as it is now revealed** was the specific one-body relationship: Gentiles becoming **"fellowheirs," "of the same body,"** and joint partakers **"in Christ by the gospel."** Ephesians 2 had already written the truth in few words: Christ made both one, created one new man, reconciled both unto God in one body, and built both together as God's habitation.

That preserves the distinction between Israel and the Church. The mystery does not announce that Gentiles have become national Israel or that Israel's covenant promises have vanished. Romans 11:25 still speaks of **"blindness in part"** happening to Israel, verse 26 says **"all Israel shall be saved,"** and verse 29 declares, **"the gifts and calling of God are without repentance."** Meanwhile Ephesians reveals a heavenly body in Christ composed of believing Jews and Gentiles. Both truths stand because God wrote both. **Right division does not force Israel and the Church apart where God joins them in salvation, nor join them where God keeps their callings distinct.**

The expression **"mystery of Christ"** finally keeps the emphasis where it belongs. The mystery is not chiefly about Paul, dispensational charts, theological terminology, or intellectual superiority. It is about Christ—His body, His cross, His grace, His purpose, His riches, and His headship. Colossians 1:27 speaks of **"Christ in you, the hope of glory."** Ephesians 1:22–23 calls the Church His body. **A man can memorize every dispensational boundary on a chart and still miss the point if Christ becomes smaller while the chart becomes larger.**

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 3:4 teaches that divine revelation was **written so believers could read and understand it**. The mystery was once hidden, but God made it known through revelation and preserved that revelation in apostolic writing. Scripture therefore invites diligent reading and rightly divided study rather than dependence upon private mystical impressions or inaccessible religious elites.

The verse also identifies Paul's subject as **"the mystery of Christ."** In context, this concerns believing Gentiles becoming fellowheirs and members of the same body with

believing Jews in Christ by the gospel. This one-body truth does not erase Israel's national identity or future; it reveals God's distinct present work in the body of Christ.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. Scripture Is Meant To Be Read

Colossians 4:16 — **"When this epistle is read among you."**
1 Thessalonians 5:27 — **"This epistle be read unto all the holy brethren."**
1 Timothy 4:13 — **"Give attendance to reading."**
Acts 15:21 — **"Being read in the synagogues every sabbath day."**
Revelation 1:3 — **"Blessed is he that readeth."**

2. Reading Produces Understanding

Psalm 119:130 — **"The entrance of thy words giveth light."**
Proverbs 2:6 — **"Out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding."**
Luke 24:45 — **"Opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures."**
2 Timothy 2:7 — **"The Lord give thee understanding in all things."**
Nehemiah 8:8 — **"Caused them to understand the reading."**

3. Study And Right Division

2 Timothy 2:15 — **"Rightly dividing the word of truth."**
Acts 17:11 — **"Searched the scriptures daily."**
John 5:39 — **"Search the scriptures."**
1 Corinthians 2:13 — **"Comparing spiritual things with spiritual."**
Psalm 119:18 — **"Open thou mine eyes."**

4. The Mystery Once Hidden

Romans 16:25 — **"The mystery, which was kept secret since the world began."**
Colossians 1:26 — **"The mystery which hath been hid from ages."**
Ephesians 3:5 — **"Which in other ages was not made known."**
1 Corinthians 2:7 — **"The wisdom of God in a mystery."**
Colossians 2:2 — **"The mystery of God."**

5. The Mystery Now Revealed

Romans 16:26 — **"But now is made manifest."**
Colossians 1:26 — **"But now is made manifest to his saints."**
Ephesians 3:5 — **"Now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets."**

Ephesians 3:9 — **“To make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery.”**
Colossians 4:3 — **“To speak the mystery of Christ.”**

6. The One Body Revealed

Ephesians 3:6 — **“Fellowheirs, and of the same body.”**
Ephesians 2:16 — **“Reconcile both unto God in one body.”**
1 Corinthians 12:13 — **“Whether we be Jews or Gentiles… into one body.”**
Ephesians 4:4 — **“There is one body.”**
Romans 12:5 — **“We, being many, are one body in Christ.”**

7. Gentile Blessing Foretold

Genesis 12:3 — **“In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.”**
Isaiah 49:6 — **“My salvation unto the end of the earth.”**
Romans 15:10 — **“Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people.”**
Romans 15:12 — **“In him shall the Gentiles trust.”**
Galatians 3:8 — **“In thee shall all nations be blessed.”**

8. Christ Remains The Center

Ephesians 1:22–23 — **“The church, Which is his body.”**
Colossians 1:18 — **“He is the head of the body, the church.”**
Colossians 1:27 — **“Christ in you, the hope of glory.”**
Ephesians 3:8 — **“The unsearchable riches of Christ.”**
1 Corinthians 3:11 — **“Which is Jesus Christ.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 3:4 contains one of the simplest remedies for a great deal of religious confusion: **“when ye read, ye may understand.”** God revealed truth, put that truth into written words, and expects His people to read those words. That does not make every passage equally easy or eliminate the need for study, prayer, context, and right division. It does mean the Bible was not designed as a private code accessible only to a religious caste. Paul expected ordinary believers at Ephesus to read what he had written and understand what he knew concerning the mystery. That should put a Bible into the hands of every Christian and remove every excuse for spiritual laziness. **A believer cannot live on secondhand Scripture forever and expect first-rate discernment.**

The verse also teaches humility about knowledge. Paul possessed remarkable understanding, but he did not obtain it by intellectual superiority. God revealed it. Therefore the man who understands Scripture has no reason to swagger over the man still learning it. Biblical knowledge should produce gratitude, responsibility, and reverence, not a larger ego

wearing theological vocabulary. First Corinthians 8:1 warns that **“knowledge puffeth up,”** while Paul’s own ministry shows knowledge being used to serve others. The right response to learning truth is not, “Look how much I know,” but, “How faithfully can I handle what God has shown me?” **Truth becomes dangerous in proud hands because a man can learn the right doctrine and still develop the wrong spirit.**

Understanding **“the mystery of Christ”** is especially important because it keeps the Bible’s great dispensational distinctions in order. Gentile blessing was foretold in the Old Testament, but the one-body relationship now revealed was not made known in former ages in the same way. Believing Jews and Gentiles become fellowheirs and members of the same body in Christ by the gospel. That does not convert Gentiles into national Israel, erase Israel’s future, or turn every promise made to Jacob into Church property. Romans 11 remains just as inspired as Ephesians 3. God can temporarily blind Israel in part, form the Church during this present work of grace, and still fulfill His promises to Israel because His gifts and calling are without repentance. **Right division allows God to keep every promise instead of forcing Him to rewrite yesterday in order to explain today.**

Finally, Paul calls it **“the mystery of Christ,”** and that phrase should govern how the doctrine is handled. Dispensational truth must make Christ clearer, not merely produce more diagrams. The mystery reveals His body, His grace, His cross, His headship, His riches, and His purpose for believing Jew and Gentile. If study produces endless argument while affection for Christ dries up, somebody has confused the scaffolding with the building. Doctrine matters because truth matters, and truth matters because Christ is the truth. Read the Book. Study the words. Compare Scripture with Scripture. Keep Israel and the Church where God puts them. Follow the revelation God gave through Paul. But through all of it, keep the chief subject where Paul kept Him: **Christ. The mystery was revealed so believers could understand it, and it was understood so the riches and glory of Jesus Christ would become greater, not smaller, before their eyes.**

Ephesians 3:5 Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

“Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;”
Ephesians 3:5

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

“Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men”

The word **“Which”** reaches backward to **“the mystery of Christ”** in verse 4. Paul is not suddenly introducing a different subject. Verse 3 said the mystery was made known to him **“by revelation,”** verse 4 said believers could understand his knowledge of that mystery by reading, and verse 5 now tells us something essential about its history: **“in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men.”** There were things God had revealed before. The Old Testament revealed creation, sin, sacrifice, Israel, covenants, Messiah, kingdom, resurrection, judgment, Gentile blessing, and countless other truths. But the particular mystery Paul is discussing had not been made known in those former ages. God had not forgotten to reveal it; He had deliberately reserved it until the proper time.

That distinction is indispensable to rightly dividing Scripture. Some people read the Bible as though everything God ever intended was fully revealed in Genesis and the rest of Scripture merely adds footnotes. Paul says otherwise. Romans 16:25 speaks of **“the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began.”** Colossians 1:26 speaks of **“the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations.”** A secret is not something everybody already knew under different terminology. God progressively revealed His purposes according to His own wisdom. **The Bible did not grow because God learned something new; it grew because God disclosed what He already knew when He chose to disclose it.**

This does not mean the Old Testament contained no hint that Gentiles would ever receive blessing. Genesis 12:3 said, **“in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.”** Isaiah 49:6 spoke of salvation reaching **“unto the end of the earth.”** The prophets clearly anticipated Gentile blessing. What they did not reveal was the specific one-body relationship defined in Ephesians 3:6: Gentiles becoming **“fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel.”** Gentile blessing was prophesied; Jew and Gentile occupying equal spiritual standing in one new body in Christ was the mystery. **If the mystery were merely that Gentiles could be blessed, Abraham knew the mystery before Paul’s great-grandfather was born.**

The phrase **“sons of men”** makes the concealment broad. Paul does not say a few scholars knew it but ordinary people did not. It was not made known to mankind in former ages as it is now revealed. Moses did not write about the body of Christ being seated in heavenly places. David did not explain believing Jews and Gentiles being baptized by one Spirit into one body. Isaiah did not teach the Church as Christ’s body with Christ as its heavenly Head. Those truths belong to revelation given later. The Old Testament is completely true without being the complete revelation of everything God would ever reveal.

Earlier truth was not false truth; it was truth given before God opened the next room in the house.

“as it is now revealed”

The words **“as it is now revealed”** establish a sharp contrast between former ages and the present revelation. There is an **other ages** and there is a **now**. Those are Bible words, not theological inventions. Ephesians 2 used the same kind of contrast when it said **“in time past”** and then **“But now in Christ Jesus.”** Scripture recognizes changes in divine administration and revelation. The God who never changes in character may change what He commands, reveals, or administers according to His purpose. Noah was commanded to build an ark; Israel was commanded to keep the Sabbath under the Mosaic covenant; the Church is told it is **“not under the law, but under grace”** (Romans 6:14). God remains God while His dealings with men unfold according to His plan.

The word **“revealed”** again removes human invention from the equation. Paul did not create the one body because he wanted a religion more appealing to Gentiles. God revealed it. That is why the doctrine must be received on God’s authority rather than adjusted to fit somebody’s theological system. When revelation collides with tradition, tradition is the thing that needs repair. Mark 7:13 warns about **“making the word of God of none effect through your tradition.”** Religious systems have an unfortunate habit of treating verses like unwanted furniture: if they do not fit the room, somebody tries to move them into storage. **Revelation does not exist to fit our system; our system is supposed to bow when God turns on the light.**

The contrast between hidden and revealed also proves that biblical mysteries are not intended to remain permanently incomprehensible. Verse 4 said, **“when ye read, ye may understand.”** What was hidden then is revealed now. God has taken the veil off the doctrine. There is therefore no spiritual virtue in keeping believers confused about the Church, Israel, grace, or the one body. Confusion is not depth. A fog bank is not an ocean merely because you cannot see through it. **God hid the mystery until His appointed time; theologians have no commission to hide it again after He revealed it.**

“unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit”

Paul says the mystery is **“now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets.”** This guards against the error of treating Paul as though he invented a private religion unknown to everyone else Christ commissioned. Paul has a distinctive stewardship, and the next verses emphasize his ministry, but verse 5 plainly says the revelation was made known to **apostles and prophets** by the Spirit. Ephesians 4:11 lists **“some, apostles; and some, prophets,”** showing the New Testament foundational ministry in view. Ephesians 2:20 had

already said believers are **“built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.”**

At the same time, Paul’s role remains distinctive. Ephesians 3:2 says the dispensation of God’s grace was **“given me to you-ward.”** Verse 3 says God made the mystery known **“unto me.”** Verse 8 says grace was given to Paul so that he might **“preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.”** Romans 11:13 calls him **“the apostle of the Gentiles.”** The balance is simple: Paul did not possess a rival gospel competing with Christ’s other apostles, but God especially entrusted him with explaining the mystery and its implications for Gentile believers. **A distinctive stewardship does not require an isolated revelation, and shared revelation does not erase a distinctive stewardship.**

The apostles and prophets are called **“holy,”** not because they were sinlessly perfect men, but because God set them apart for His service. They occupied a foundational role that cannot be endlessly duplicated. First Corinthians 12:28 says, **“God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets.”** Foundations are laid at the beginning. Their authoritative revelation has been preserved in Scripture. The Church today does not need a new apostle arriving every few months with another revelation that somehow requires a mailing list and a donation button. **When God has already laid the foundation, a man carrying another bucket of concrete should be asked why he is pouring it on the roof.**

Finally, the revelation came **“by the Spirit.”** The Holy Spirit is the divine Revealer. First Corinthians 2:10 says, **“God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit.”** Verse 13 speaks of words **“which the Holy Ghost teacheth.”** Second Peter 1:21 says holy men of God **“spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”** The doctrine of the mystery is therefore not human sociology dressed in biblical vocabulary. It is Spirit-revealed truth concerning Christ’s body. The same Holy Spirit who revealed it also inspired the words by which believers can understand it.

This means spiritual understanding must remain tied to the written word the Spirit inspired. The Spirit does not reveal one doctrine in Scripture and then privately whisper its opposite to somebody today. He is not divided against Himself. John 16:13 says, **“he will guide you into all truth,”** and John 17:17 says, **“thy word is truth.” The Holy Ghost never needs to correct the Holy Ghost’s Book.**

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 3:5 establishes the dispensational importance of **progressive revelation**. The mystery of Christ concerning believing Jew and Gentile sharing equal standing in one body was not made known in former ages as it is now revealed. Gentile blessing had been

prophesied, but the one-body relationship described in Ephesians 3:6 belonged to truth newly disclosed by God.

The verse also shows that this revelation was divine rather than human. God revealed it through the Holy Spirit to His foundational apostles and prophets, with Paul receiving a distinctive stewardship concerning its proclamation to Gentiles. This protects both the unity of apostolic revelation and Paul's special ministry without confusing Israel's prophetic program with the Church's present calling.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. The Mystery Was Hidden

Romans 16:25 — **"The mystery, which was kept secret since the world began."**
Colossians 1:26 — **"The mystery which hath been hid from ages."**
1 Corinthians 2:7 — **"The hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world."**
Ephesians 3:9 — **"The mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God."**
Colossians 2:2 — **"The mystery of God."**

2. The Mystery Is Now Revealed

Romans 16:26 — **"But now is made manifest."**
Colossians 1:26 — **"But now is made manifest to his saints."**
Ephesians 3:3 — **"By revelation he made known unto me the mystery."**
Ephesians 3:5 — **"As it is now revealed."**
Ephesians 3:9 — **"To make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery."**

3. Gentile Blessing Was Foretold

Genesis 12:3 — **"In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."**
Isaiah 49:6 — **"My salvation unto the end of the earth."**
Romans 15:10 — **"Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people."**
Romans 15:12 — **"In him shall the Gentiles trust."**
Galatians 3:8 — **"In thee shall all nations be blessed."**

4. The One Body Was Revealed

Ephesians 3:6 — **"Fellowheirs, and of the same body."**
Ephesians 2:16 — **"Reconcile both unto God in one body."**
1 Corinthians 12:13 — **"Whether we be Jews or Gentiles… into one body."**
Ephesians 4:4 — **"There is one body."**
Colossians 1:18 — **"He is the head of the body, the church."**

5. Revelation Through The Spirit

1 Corinthians 2:10 — **“God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit.”**
1 Corinthians 2:13 — **“Which the Holy Ghost teacheth.”**
2 Peter 1:21 — **“Moved by the Holy Ghost.”**
John 16:13 — **“He will guide you into all truth.”**
Ephesians 3:5 — **“By the Spirit.”**

6. Apostles And Prophets Were Foundational

Ephesians 2:20 — **“The foundation of the apostles and prophets.”**
1 Corinthians 12:28 — **“First apostles, secondarily prophets.”**
Ephesians 4:11 — **“Some, apostles; and some, prophets.”**
Acts 2:42 — **“Continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine.”**
2 Peter 3:2 — **“The commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour.”**

7. Paul’s Distinct Gentile Stewardship

Ephesians 3:2 — **“Given me to you-ward.”**
Ephesians 3:8 — **“Preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.”**
Romans 11:13 — **“I am the apostle of the Gentiles.”**
Acts 22:21 — **“I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.”**
Romans 15:16 — **“The minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles.”**

8. Israel Remains Distinct

Romans 11:1 — **“Hath God cast away his people? God forbid.”**
Romans 11:25 — **“Blindness in part is happened to Israel.”**
Romans 11:26 — **“And so all Israel shall be saved.”**
Romans 11:28 — **“Beloved for the fathers' sakes.”**
Romans 11:29 — **“The gifts and calling of God are without repentance.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 3:5 teaches us that God has the right to reveal His purposes according to His own timetable. Men often approach Scripture as though every doctrine must appear in identical form from Genesis through Revelation or else something has gone wrong. The Bible itself says otherwise. There were **“other ages”** in which the mystery was not made known, and there is a **“now”** in which it has been revealed. That does not mean God changed His character or discovered a new plan after an earlier plan failed. It means the eternal God progressively disclosed what He had purposed according to His own wisdom. **A curtain opening at the appointed moment does not mean the stage was invented when the audience finally saw it.**

This is particularly important concerning Gentile blessing and the Church. The prophets already knew Gentiles would be blessed, so the mystery cannot simply mean that God would show Gentiles mercy. Ephesians 3:6 tells us what is distinctive: believing Gentiles become fellowheirs and members **"of the same body"** in Christ by the gospel. That truth preserves Israel rather than replacing Israel. God can bring believing Jews and Gentiles into one body today while still keeping every national promise He made to Israel. Romans 11 makes Israel's continuing identity and future impossible to dismiss without doing violence to plain words. **The mystery is not God tearing Israel's name off one covenant envelope and writing "Church" over it; it is God revealing a body in Christ that earlier ages did not know.**

The verse also corrects the notion that Paul invented Christianity. Paul received revelation, but the verse says that truth is **"now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit."** The Holy Ghost stands behind the revelation. Paul's unique ministry to Gentiles remains important, but it does not turn him into the founder of a rival religion. Christ is the Head, the cross is the basis, the Spirit is the Revealer, and Paul is the commissioned steward. Christians should therefore neither ignore Paul nor worship Paul. We should receive what God revealed through him because we honor the Christ who chose him. **Rejecting the King's appointed messenger is a strange way to demonstrate loyalty to the King.**

Finally, **"by the Spirit"** reminds us where doctrinal certainty belongs. The Holy Ghost revealed the mystery and inspired Scripture so believers can know it. We do not need continuing revelations that contradict or supplement the doctrinal foundation already laid. We need to read, study, believe, and rightly divide what the Spirit wrote. New voices will always promise hidden insight, secret keys, fresh revelations, and spiritual upgrades unavailable to ordinary Bible readers. Ephesians points us back to something far safer: revealed truth preserved in words. The mystery was hidden once, but it is hidden no longer. **God turned on the light; our responsibility is not to invent another lamp but to stop closing our eyes.**

Ephesians 3:6 Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

"That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:"
Ephesians 3:6

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

“That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs”

Verse 6 finally states the content of the mystery Paul has been discussing. Verse 3 said God made the mystery known **“by revelation.”** Verse 5 said it **“in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed.”** Now the veil comes off: **“That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs.”** Gentiles had been described in Ephesians 2:12 as **“aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise.”** They were not naturally standing inside Israel’s covenant position. Yet through Christ they now become **fellowheirs**. Grace has taken people who once stood far off and given them an inheritance in Christ that ancestry could never purchase.

The word **“fellowheirs”** must not be twisted into “replacement heirs.” The verse does not say Gentiles have taken Israel’s place, inherited Israel’s national identity, or cancelled promises made to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David. Romans 11 still warns Gentiles, **“Boast not against the branches”** (Romans 11:18), and verse 29 says concerning Israel, **“For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.”** Gentile believers become heirs through union with Christ. Romans 8:17 calls believers **“heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.”** Ephesians 1:11 says, **“In whom also we have obtained an inheritance.”** The inheritance is centered in Christ, not in a theological repossession of somebody else’s covenant property.

That should remove both inferiority and arrogance. The Gentile believer is not a second-class Christian standing in the hallway while Jewish believers occupy the dining room. He is a fellowheir. But neither may he boast as though grace proved him superior to Israel. Grace leaves no room for either complex. **The beggar invited to the King’s table has no reason to feel inferior once seated and no reason to start claiming he built the palace.**

“and of the same body”

Paul goes further. Gentiles are not only fellowheirs; they are **“of the same body.”** That is the heart of the mystery. Ephesians 2:15 called this body **“one new man.”** Verse 16 said Christ reconciled both Jew and Gentile **“unto God in one body by the cross.”** First Corinthians 12:13 explains, **“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles.”** God has not created parallel Churches, one Jewish and one Gentile, operating under separate Heads. There is one body, and Jesus Christ is its Head.

This is precisely why the Church cannot simply be Israel renamed. If Gentiles merely became Israel, Paul had a perfectly good vocabulary available to say so. Instead, he says believing Jew and Gentile become members **“of the same body.”** Ephesians 3:5 called this truth previously hidden; Ephesians 2:15 called the result **new**. Romans 11 continues to

discuss national Israel as a distinct subject while Ephesians discusses the Church as Christ's body. Those passages do not fight one another until somebody forces both groups into the same doctrinal box. **Right division does not tear apart what God joined; it simply refuses to rename what God distinguished.**

Being members of the same body also destroys fleshly hierarchy inside the Church. First Corinthians 12:20 says, **"But now are they many members, yet but one body."** The hand cannot boast over the foot, and the eye cannot tell the hand, **"I have no need of thee"** (1 Corinthians 12:21). Jewish ancestry gives no higher spiritual rank inside Christ's body, and Gentile background gives no basis for arrogance. Different gifts, callings, maturity, and responsibilities remain, but every genuine believer shares the same Head, Spirit, gospel, and spiritual organism. **In the body of Christ, there are different members but no premium membership tier.**

"and partakers of his promise in Christ"

Gentiles are also **"partakers of his promise in Christ."** Again the controlling words are **"in Christ."** Paul does not say Gentiles become partakers by entering Moses, taking circumcision, acquiring Israel's genealogy, or keeping Israel's national ordinances. Their participation is in Christ. Ephesians has been building this truth from chapter 1: believers are blessed **"in Christ"** (1:3), accepted **"in the beloved"** (1:6), redeemed **"through his blood"** (1:7), sealed after believing (1:13), quickened with Christ (2:5), raised with Him (2:6), and made nigh **"in Christ Jesus"** (2:13).

The phrase **"his promise"** must be read in its immediate Pauline context. Ephesians 1:13 speaks of **"that holy Spirit of promise."** Galatians 3:14 says believers **"receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."** The Gentile's present participation is therefore not a license to seize every national, territorial, and kingdom promise given to Israel. He participates in the spiritual blessings God gives **in Christ by the gospel**. The Church's blessings are so rich that it is difficult to understand why anyone feels compelled to raid Israel's prophetic pantry. **When God has seated you in heavenly places, stealing somebody else's land deed looks especially unnecessary.**

This does not diminish Old Testament promises; it protects them. Romans 15:8 says Jesus Christ came **"to confirm the promises made unto the fathers."** Verse 9 then says **"the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy."** The distinction is beautiful: promises to the fathers, mercy to the Gentiles, all centered in Christ. God can fulfill both without contradiction. **Grace to the Gentile is not proof that God abandoned the Jew; it is proof that God's faithfulness is large enough to reach both without lying to either.**

"by the gospel"

The final phrase tells us how Gentiles become fellowheirs, members of the same body, and partakers of promise: **"by the gospel."** Not by natural birth. Not by covenant theft. Not by circumcision. Not by baptismal regeneration. Not by law-keeping. Not by institutional membership. **By the gospel.** First Corinthians 15:1–4 defines the saving gospel around Christ's death for our sins, burial, and resurrection. Romans 1:16 calls the gospel **"the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."**

Ephesians 1:13 gives the same order: **"after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise."** Hearing precedes believing, and believing is followed by sealing. The sinner is not secretly inserted into Christ before faith and then later informed of what happened. The gospel is preached; the sinner believes; God seals him. Acts 16:31 says, **"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."** God did not hide the saving condition behind theological curtains.

The gospel also keeps Jew and Gentile on equal ground. Romans 3:22 says the righteousness of God is **"unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference."** Romans 10:12 says **"there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek."** Both come through Christ. Both receive righteousness by faith. Both enter one body by the Spirit. The gospel does not flatten every dispensational distinction, but it eliminates every fleshly claim to superior salvation. **At Calvary, pedigree becomes history and faith in Christ becomes the issue.**

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 3:6 defines the mystery revealed in this chapter: **believing Gentiles become fellowheirs, members of the same body, and partakers of God's promise in Christ by the gospel**. The mystery is not merely that Gentiles would receive blessing—that had already been prophesied—but the specific one-body relationship created in Christ.

The verse also preserves Israel's distinct national and prophetic future. Gentiles do not become Israel; they enter the body of Christ. Their inheritance, unity, and participation are all located **in Christ** and received **by the gospel**. Grace therefore magnifies the Church without cancelling promises God made to Israel.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. Gentiles Become Fellowheirs

Romans 8:17 — **"Heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ."**
Ephesians 1:11 — **"In whom also we have obtained an inheritance."**

Galatians 4:7 — **“If a son, then an heir of God through Christ.”**
Titus 3:7 — **“Made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”**
Colossians 1:12 — **“Partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.”**

2. One Body In Christ

Ephesians 2:16 — **“Reconcile both unto God in one body.”**
1 Corinthians 12:13 — **“Whether we be Jews or Gentiles… into one body.”**
Ephesians 4:4 — **“There is one body.”**
Romans 12:5 — **“We, being many, are one body in Christ.”**
Colossians 1:18 — **“He is the head of the body, the church.”**

3. The One New Man

Ephesians 2:15 — **“For to make in himself of twain one new man.”**
2 Corinthians 5:17 — **“If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.”**
Galatians 6:15 — **“Neither circumcision availeth any thing… but a new creature.”**
Colossians 3:10 — **“Put on the new man.”**
Ephesians 4:24 — **“Put on the new man.”**

4. Promise In Christ

Ephesians 1:13 — **“That holy Spirit of promise.”**
Galatians 3:14 — **“Receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.”**
2 Corinthians 1:20 — **“All the promises of God in him are yea.”**
Ephesians 2:13 — **“But now in Christ Jesus.”**
Galatians 3:29 — **“If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed.”**

5. Salvation By The Gospel

1 Corinthians 15:1 — **“The gospel which I preached unto you.”**
1 Corinthians 15:3–4 — **“Christ died for our sins… he was buried… he rose again.”**
Romans 1:16 — **“The gospel of Christ… the power of God unto salvation.”**
Ephesians 1:13 — **“The gospel of your salvation.”**
Acts 16:31 — **“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”**

6. Jew And Gentile Equal In Salvation

Romans 10:12 — **“There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek.”**
Romans 3:22 — **“Unto all and upon all them that believe.”**
Galatians 3:28 — **“Ye are all one in Christ Jesus.”**
Acts 15:9 — **“Put no difference between us and them.”**
Romans 3:29 — **“Is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes.”**

7. Israel Remains Distinct

Romans 11:1 — **“Hath God cast away his people? God forbid.”**
Romans 11:25 — **“Blindness in part is happened to Israel.”**
Romans 11:26 — **“And so all Israel shall be saved.”**
Romans 11:28 — **“Beloved for the fathers' sakes.”**
Romans 11:29 — **“The gifts and calling of God are without repentance.”**

8. Promise And Mercy Distinguished

Romans 15:8 — **“To confirm the promises made unto the fathers.”**
Romans 15:9 — **“The Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy.”**
Genesis 12:3 — **“In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.”**
Galatians 3:8 — **“In thee shall all nations be blessed.”**
Ephesians 2:13 — **“Made nigh by the blood of Christ.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 3:6 is the verse that keeps the mystery from floating around as vague theological language. Paul tells us what God revealed: Gentiles become **“fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel.”** Every phrase matters. Fellowheirs means the Gentile believer is not standing outside the window watching Jewish believers enjoy Christ. Same body means there are not two Churches or two levels of Christian standing. Partakers in Christ means the blessing is located in the Saviour rather than ethnic ancestry. And **“by the gospel”** means the entrance is not through law, works, circumcision, or religious ceremony. **God did not bring the Gentile near by changing his family tree; He brought him near by the blood of Christ.**

The verse also exposes replacement theology without requiring any complicated maneuver. If Gentiles had simply become Israel, Paul could have said so. Instead, he says they are made members **“of the same body.”** Ephesians 2 had already called the result **“one new man.”** Romans 11 continues to speak of Israel as Israel and warns Gentiles against boasting over the branches. God’s present work in the Church therefore does not require Him to cancel His future work with Israel. The Church possesses its own enormous riches in Christ—heavenly position, spiritual blessings, one body, one Spirit, direct access to the Father, and an inheritance with Christ. **A Church seated in heavenly places does not need to steal Israel’s chair to prove that grace has been generous.**

The phrase **“by the gospel”** also keeps salvation wonderfully clear. The sinner enters these blessings through believing the gospel of Jesus Christ, not through religious performance. Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again. The sinner hears that message and believes. Ephesians 1:13 says after hearing the gospel and believing, the believer is sealed

with the Holy Spirit. That sequence leaves no room for boasting and no need for a sacramental obstacle course between the sinner and the Saviour. Good works follow salvation, discipleship follows salvation, baptism follows salvation, service follows salvation, and Christian growth follows salvation; none of those things becomes the price of entrance. **The gospel opens the door grace built, and faith walks through it empty-handed.**

Finally, this mystery should produce humility rather than doctrinal arrogance. Gentile believers received mercy beyond anything their natural position entitled them to claim. Jewish believers enter the same body by the same Saviour and stand on the same grace. Nobody gets to strut around Christ's body with a superior pedigree. At the same time, understanding the mystery should make believers careful students of Scripture because confusing Israel and the Church eventually distorts covenants, prophecy, salvation, and Christian standing. God revealed distinctions so they could be honored, and He revealed unity so it could be enjoyed. **Ephesians 3:6 gives us both without contradiction: Israel remains Israel, Gentiles remain Gentiles in the flesh, and everyone who believes the gospel becomes something neither one possessed by natural birth—a member of the same body in Jesus Christ.**

Ephesians 3:7 Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

"Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power."
Ephesians 3:7

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"Whereof I was made a minister"

The word **"Whereof"** reaches directly back to the gospel and the mystery described in verse 6. Paul has just declared that the Gentiles should be **"fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel."** Of that gospel and of that revealed truth Paul says, **"I was made a minister."** He did not appoint himself. He did not survey the religious landscape, notice an opening among Gentiles, print himself some credentials, and announce a new career. He **"was made"** a minister. The passive wording keeps God in the position of authority. Acts 9:15 records the Lord saying of Paul, **"he is a**

chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles." The ministry originated in Christ's choice before it ever appeared in Paul's labor.

The word **"minister"** should also be rescued from religious pomp. Biblically, ministry means service. Paul possessed apostolic authority, received extraordinary revelation, wrote inspired Scripture, and carried a distinctive Gentile commission, yet he describes himself as a minister. First Corinthians 3:5 asks, **"Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed?"** The servant does not become the Master because God uses him effectively. The preacher is not the Head of the body, the owner of the flock, or the source of grace. Christ is. **The higher God lifts a man in usefulness, the more dangerous it becomes when the man starts admiring the ladder.**

This also explains why genuine ministry cannot be reduced to employment. A man may be employed by a church organization without having been spiritually fitted for the work, and another may serve Christ faithfully without receiving a paycheck. Paul's ministry grew from divine appointment. First Timothy 1:12 says, **"I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry."** Christ put him there. That does not excuse disorder or eliminate biblical qualifications for local church offices, but it does establish the principle: true spiritual ministry begins with God's calling and must remain under God's authority.

"according to the gift of the grace of God"

Paul says his ministry was **"according to the gift of the grace of God."** Ministry itself was grace. He did not present his apostleship as a reward for being naturally superior. Quite the opposite. First Corinthians 15:9 says, **"I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God."** Then verse 10 says, **"But by the grace of God I am what I am."** Paul remembered what he had been without becoming paralyzed by what he had been. Grace did not merely forgive the persecutor; grace turned the persecutor into a preacher.

The word **"gift"** removes boasting. A gift is received, not earned as wages. Romans 12:6 says believers have **"gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us."** First Corinthians 12:4 says, **"Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit."** Whatever ability God gives for service belongs to the category of stewardship, not personal ownership. A teacher did not invent truth. An evangelist did not invent the gospel. A giver did not manufacture the resources from nothing. A preacher did not create the breath in his lungs. **Grace gives the tool, the opportunity, the strength, and then leaves the flesh standing nearby wondering what exactly it planned to brag about.**

The phrase also places Christian service after salvation rather than inside the price of salvation. Ephesians 2:8–9 already said salvation is **"by grace"** and **"not of works."** Verse 10 then placed good works where they belong: after salvation. Ephesians 3:7 follows the same order. Paul was not ministering in order to earn grace; ministry came **according to the gift of grace already given**. That distinction guards against legalism and spiritual burnout. The Christian does not labor to persuade God to accept him. He labors because he has already been accepted in Christ.

Grace therefore creates responsibility without creating merit. Paul could work harder than others and still say, **"yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me"** (1 Corinthians 15:10). That is not false humility. It is doctrinal accuracy. **The Christian who understands grace can labor until he is exhausted without imagining his sweat purchased one drop of Christ's favor.**

"given unto me"

Paul repeats the fact that this ministry was **"given unto me."** Ephesians 3:2 had already spoken of **"the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward."** Verse 7 repeats the idea because stewardship is central to the passage. Paul received something from God that was intended to pass through him to others. What God gave him was never meant to stop with him.

This pattern runs throughout Paul's ministry. First Corinthians 11:23 says, **"For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you."** Receive, then deliver. Second Timothy 2:2 tells Timothy, **"the things that thou hast heard of me… the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."** Truth travels through faithful stewardship. It is received, guarded, taught, and passed on. **A reservoir that never releases water eventually becomes a swamp; Bible knowledge that never serves anybody can produce the same smell.**

The personal wording **"unto me"** does not make Paul the exclusive owner of God's truth. Verse 5 said the mystery was revealed **"unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit."** Yet Paul had a distinctive assignment toward the Gentiles. Romans 11:13 says, **"I am the apostle of the Gentiles."** The Bible can acknowledge a special stewardship without turning that stewardship into a rival Christianity. Paul's ministry belongs under Christ's authority and within God's larger revelation.

The practical application reaches every believer. God does not give everyone Paul's office, but whatever He gives is still stewardship. Time is given. Opportunity is given. Spiritual gifts are given. Knowledge is given. Money is given. Open doors are given. The question is not merely what a Christian possesses but what he does with what God placed in his hands.

God's gifts become Christian stewardship the moment we stop asking, "Why did I get this?" and begin asking, "Who am I supposed to help with it?"

"by the effectual working of his power"

Paul finally explains how this ministry operated: **"by the effectual working of his power."** Those words move the emphasis away from Paul's natural ability and back to God. Paul worked, preached, traveled, reasoned, suffered, wrote, prayed, corrected, planted churches, and endured enormous opposition. Yet underneath all that visible activity was divine power working effectively through him.

Ephesians has already used tremendous language concerning that power. Ephesians 1:19 speaks of **"the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power."** Verse 20 says that power was **"wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead."** The same epistle now says Paul's ministry operated by **"the effectual working of his power."** Christian ministry is therefore resurrection-powered before it is personality-powered. The gospel's effectiveness cannot finally be explained by charisma, eloquence, organization, education, or natural courage.

That does not mean preparation is useless. Paul reasoned from Scripture, taught carefully, worked diligently, and instructed Timothy to study. But preparation without divine power is polished machinery with the electrical cord still lying on the floor. First Corinthians 2:4 says Paul's preaching was **"not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power."** Second Corinthians 4:7 says, **"we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."** God deliberately places heavenly treasure in fragile containers so nobody mistakes the jar for the treasure.

The word **"effectual"** also matters. God's power accomplishes something. First Thessalonians 2:13 says the word of God **"effectually worketh also in you that believe."** Philippians 2:13 says, **"it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."** The power of God is not religious atmosphere. It changes sinners, strengthens saints, opens understanding, produces fruit, sustains suffering servants, and carries the gospel farther than human strength could take it. **God's power is not decoration for ministry; it is the reason ministry survives after human strength runs out.**

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 3:7 presents Christian ministry as a **divine stewardship produced by grace and empowered by God**. Paul did not make himself a minister; he was made one according to God's gift. His ministry therefore gave him no ground for personal boasting. Grace supplied the calling, the stewardship, and the ability to carry it out.

The verse also distinguishes **human labor from divine power without separating them**. Paul worked intensely, but the effectiveness of his labor came from God. Biblical ministry neither excuses laziness by appealing to divine sovereignty nor worships human effort as though results can be manufactured. The servant labors faithfully while depending upon the power of God.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. Made A Minister By God

1 Timothy 1:12 — **"Putting me into the ministry."**
Colossians 1:25 — **"Whereof I am made a minister."**
Acts 9:15 — **"He is a chosen vessel unto me."**
Romans 15:16 — **"The minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles."**
2 Corinthians 3:6 — **"Who also hath made us able ministers."**

2. Ministry Given By Grace

1 Corinthians 15:10 — **"By the grace of God I am what I am."**
Romans 12:6 — **"Gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us."**
Ephesians 3:8 — **"Unto me… is this grace given."**
Romans 15:15 — **"Because of the grace that is given to me of God."**
Galatians 2:9 — **"When they perceived the grace that was given unto me."**

3. Gifts Come From God

1 Corinthians 12:4 — **"There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit."**
James 1:17 — **"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above."**
1 Peter 4:10 — **"As every man hath received the gift, even so minister."**
Romans 12:6 — **"Having then gifts differing."**
1 Corinthians 7:7 — **"Every man hath his proper gift of God."**

4. Receiving And Delivering Truth

1 Corinthians 11:23 — **"I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you."**
1 Corinthians 15:3 — **"I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received."**
2 Timothy 2:2 — **"The same commit thou to faithful men."**
1 Thessalonians 2:4 — **"Put in trust with the gospel."**
1 Timothy 6:20 — **"Keep that which is committed to thy trust."**

5. God's Power In Ministry

1 Corinthians 2:4 — **"In demonstration of the Spirit and of power."**
2 Corinthians 4:7 — **"The excellency of the power may be of God."**

Ephesians 1:19 — **“The exceeding greatness of his power.”**
Colossians 1:29 — **“According to his working, which worketh in me mightily.”**
2 Corinthians 12:9 — **“My strength is made perfect in weakness.”**

6. God Working In Believers

Philippians 2:13 — **“It is God which worketh in you.”**
1 Thessalonians 2:13 — **“Effectually worketh also in you that believe.”**
Hebrews 13:21 — **“Working in you that which is wellpleasing.”**
Ephesians 3:20 — **“According to the power that worketh in us.”**
Colossians 1:29 — **“His working, which worketh in me mightily.”**

7. No Room For Boasting

1 Corinthians 3:5 — **“Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers?”**
1 Corinthians 4:7 — **“What hast thou that thou didst not receive?”**
1 Corinthians 1:29 — **“That no flesh should glory in his presence.”**
Galatians 6:14 — **“God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross.”**
2 Corinthians 3:5 — **“Our sufficiency is of God.”**

8. Faithful Stewardship

1 Corinthians 4:2 — **“It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.”**
1 Peter 4:10 — **“Good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”**
Luke 12:48 — **“Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required.”**
2 Timothy 4:5 — **“Make full proof of thy ministry.”**
Colossians 4:17 — **“Take heed to the ministry… that thou fulfil it.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 3:7 gives one of the healthiest descriptions of ministry in the New Testament because it leaves no room for either laziness or pride. Paul says he **“was made a minister.”** He did not wander into ministry because he needed a profession, nor did he appoint himself because he enjoyed being heard. Christ took a man who had persecuted believers and made him a servant of the very gospel he once opposed. That ought to destroy the idea that usefulness rests primarily upon natural background or personal impressiveness. God can use education, personality, discipline, experience, and ability, but He is not dependent upon them. **The ministry belongs to the One who makes the minister, not to the minister who happens to occupy the pulpit.**

The phrase **“according to the gift of the grace of God”** keeps Christian service from becoming another form of self-righteousness. Grace saves, but grace also equips for service. The same Paul who worked relentlessly refused to pretend his labor made him

spiritually self-created. He could say, **“I laboured more abundantly than they all,”** and immediately add, **“yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.”** That is the biblical balance. Grace does not make the servant passive; it makes the servant thankful. A man who understands grace may work harder than everybody around him while boasting less than anybody around him. **The flesh wants credit for every brick it carries; grace remembers who supplied the brick, the strength, the job site, and the breath required to lift it.**

The words **“given unto me”** turn every blessing into stewardship. What God gives is never merely for display. Paul received revelation so he could preach it. He received grace so he could minister. He received understanding so Gentiles could understand their place in Christ. The same principle applies to believers today even though Paul’s apostolic office was unique. If God gives knowledge, use it faithfully. If He gives resources, use them wisely. If He gives opportunity, walk through the door. If He gives ability, serve without imagining the ability originated with you. Spiritual gifts become spiritually dangerous when they become identity trophies instead of tools for service. **A gift displayed on a shelf may impress visitors, but a gift put into service actually accomplishes what the Giver intended.**

Finally, Paul says everything operated **“by the effectual working of his power.”** That is where Christian ministry either becomes spiritual or merely religious. Programs can be organized by human power. Buildings can be purchased by human power. Audiences can be attracted by human power. Emotional atmospheres can be created by human power. But no human method can make a dead sinner alive, open a blinded heart to Scripture, produce genuine spiritual fruit, or sustain faithful ministry through years of suffering. Those things require God. That does not excuse poor preparation or careless work; it means preparation must never become the object of faith. Paul worked, but God worked through Paul. **The servant supplies obedience; God supplies the power—and when that order is remembered, the work can be great without the worker needing to become great in his own eyes.**

Ephesians 3:8 Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

“Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;”
Ephesians 3:8

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints"

Paul begins by placing himself as low as possible before magnifying the ministry God gave him. He does not say, "Unto me, the greatest theologian of the age," or, "Unto me, the indispensable apostle without whom God's program would collapse." He says, **"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints."** That is remarkable coming from a man through whom God gave so much New Testament revelation. Yet the more Paul understood Christ, the less impressed he became with Paul. First Corinthians 15:9 says, **"For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle."** First Timothy 1:15 goes lower still: **"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief."** Spiritual growth did not inflate Paul's opinion of himself; it enlarged his view of Christ.

That is biblical humility, not theatrical self-hatred. Paul did not deny what God had done through him. He could say, **"I laboured more abundantly than they all"** and in the same breath add, **"yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me"** (1 Corinthians 15:10). Humility is not pretending God gave you nothing. It is recognizing that whatever good exists in your ministry came from grace rather than natural greatness. A man can have genuine ability, real knowledge, faithful service, and still know that none of it gives him grounds to strut before God. **The closer a man gets to the Light, the easier it becomes to see the dust on his own coat.**

Paul's statement also protects Christian ministry from celebrity religion. The flesh loves rankings, titles, applause, influence, followers, platforms, and recognition. Paul had apostolic authority and yet called himself **"less than the least of all saints."** Modern religion often reverses the order: the smaller the ministry, the larger the title printed beneath the name. But heaven measures differently. Matthew 23:12 says, **"whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted."** A ministry becomes dangerous when the servant begins treating himself as part of the message. **God can use a vessel mightily without asking the vessel to become fascinated with itself.**

"is this grace given"

Paul immediately explains why he possesses the ministry described in the verse: **"is this grace given."** He does not call it a personal achievement. It is grace, and it is given. Verse 7 already said he was made a minister **"according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me."** Verse 8 repeats the point because Paul wants no confusion about the source. God did not reward Paul for persecuting the Church. God saved him, called him, entrusted him with

truth, and empowered him for ministry by grace. **Grace did not find a deserving preacher; grace created one out of a former persecutor.**

The wording fits the entire argument of Ephesians. Salvation is **"by grace"** in Ephesians 2:8. Ministry is also by grace in Ephesians 3:7–8. Grace therefore does more than rescue a sinner from judgment; it also equips the saved man for service. Romans 12:6 says, **"Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us."** First Peter 4:10 says, **"As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another."** Whatever God gives for service remains a trust. The gift belongs to God before it ever becomes useful through us.

This keeps ministry from turning into a merit system after salvation. A believer does not serve so that God will finally accept him. He serves because God already accepted him in Christ. Ephesians 1:6 says believers are **"accepted in the beloved."** Ephesians 2:10 says they are **"created in Christ Jesus unto good works."** Works come after grace, and ministry comes after grace. **The servant does not work his way into the family; the child of God works because he is already home.**

Grace also removes comparison. One believer may preach, another teach, another give, another help, another pray, another serve quietly where few people notice. Romans 12 says gifts differ **"according to the grace that is given to us."** If God distributed the gifts, comparing gifts becomes foolish. A hammer has no reason to boast because it is not a saw, and the saw has no reason to despise the hammer. **In God's workshop, usefulness depends on being faithful to the hand that holds you, not wishing you were shaped like another tool.**

"that I should preach among the Gentiles"

The grace given to Paul had purpose: **"that I should preach among the Gentiles."** This was no vague spiritual calling. Acts 9:15 records the Lord saying of Paul, **"he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles."** Acts 22:21 records Christ saying, **"I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles."** Romans 11:13 says, **"I am the apostle of the Gentiles."** God was not improvising. Paul's Gentile ministry was part of the stewardship described throughout Ephesians 3.

The fact that Paul was sent to Gentiles magnifies the grace revealed in chapter 2. Those Gentiles had been **"without Christ," "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel," "strangers from the covenants of promise,"** and **"without God in the world."** Yet through Christ they were made nigh, reconciled in one body, brought into God's household, and made fellowheirs. Now God sends a preacher directly to them. **The people who once**

stood far off were not merely permitted to approach; God sent a messenger down the road looking for them.

This does not mean Paul preached a salvation opposed to Christ. He preached Christ. First Corinthians 2:2 says, **"I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified."** First Corinthians 15:3–4 centers the gospel on Christ's death for sins, burial, and resurrection. The distinctive feature of Paul's ministry lies not in a different Saviour but in the revelation and stewardship concerning what God is now doing in Christ—especially the one body and Gentile inclusion by the gospel.

Right division keeps this clear. Gentiles are not saved by becoming Israel, keeping the law of Moses, receiving circumcision, or entering Israel's national covenant. They receive Christ **"by the gospel."** Ephesians 3:6 has already said they are **"fellowheirs, and of the same body."** The Church is not Israel with additional seating. It is one body under one Head. **Paul was not sent to make Gentiles Jewish enough to qualify for Christ; he was sent to preach Christ strongly enough that Gentiles could believe and be placed into His body.**

"the unsearchable riches of Christ"

Here is the content of Paul's preaching: **"the unsearchable riches of Christ."** What a phrase. Paul does not say the riches are small, measurable, or quickly exhausted. They are **"unsearchable."** The word does not mean they cannot be known at all, because Paul is preaching them and Ephesians is explaining them. It means they cannot be traced to the bottom, exhausted, fully inventoried, or completely measured. The believer can spend a lifetime searching Christ's riches and die having barely crossed the foyer.

Ephesians itself has already opened several rooms in that treasury. In Christ we have **"redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins"** (1:7). We have been blessed **"with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ"** (1:3). We are accepted in the beloved, sealed with the Holy Spirit, given an inheritance, quickened from spiritual death, raised together, seated in heavenly places, saved by grace, brought near by blood, reconciled in one body, given access to the Father, made fellowcitizens, and built into God's habitation. And Paul is only three chapters into one epistle. **Christ's riches are so abundant that Ephesians sounds like a man walking through a treasury trying to describe rooms faster than he can enter them.**

These riches are centered in Christ Himself. Salvation is not merely receiving benefits while Christ remains incidental. Colossians 2:3 says in Him **"are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."** Colossians 2:10 says, **"ye are complete in him."** Romans 8:32 asks, **"He that spared not his own Son… how shall he not with him also freely give us**

all things?" The believer's wealth is inseparable from the Person of Christ. **Heaven's treasure is not merely what Christ gives; heaven's treasure is Christ.**

The phrase should also correct prosperity-minded Christianity. The riches Paul preached were not primarily bigger houses, healthier bodies, larger bank accounts, or easier circumstances. The man writing about **"unsearchable riches"** was a prisoner. That alone should cure the notion that spiritual wealth can be measured by earthly comfort. Paul possessed chains on his wrists and riches in Christ that Rome could not tax, confiscate, or lock away. **A prisoner with Christ can be richer than a king without Him.**

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 3:8 joins **humility, grace, calling, and Christ-centered preaching** in one verse. Paul sees himself as **"less than the least of all saints,"** yet God gives him extraordinary grace and a distinctive ministry toward the Gentiles. His low view of self does not prevent service; it makes grace more visible.

The verse also centers Christian ministry upon **"the unsearchable riches of Christ."** The preacher's task is not to make himself impressive but to make Christ known. Those riches include redemption, forgiveness, acceptance, union with Christ, spiritual life, heavenly position, inheritance, access to the Father, and membership in the one body—blessings so vast that eternity will not exhaust their glory.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. Paul's Humility

1 Corinthians 15:9 — **"I am the least of the apostles."**
1 Timothy 1:15 — **"Sinners; of whom I am chief."**
1 Corinthians 15:10 — **"By the grace of God I am what I am."**
Romans 12:3 — **"Not to think of himself more highly than he ought."**
Philippians 2:3 — **"In lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves."**

2. Grace Given For Ministry

Ephesians 3:7 — **"The gift of the grace of God given unto me."**
Romans 12:6 — **"Gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us."**
Romans 15:15 — **"Because of the grace that is given to me of God."**
1 Peter 4:10 — **"Good stewards of the manifold grace of God."**
Galatians 2:9 — **"The grace that was given unto me."**

3. Paul Sent To The Gentiles

Acts 9:15 — **“A chosen vessel unto me… before the Gentiles.”**
Acts 22:21 — **“I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.”**
Romans 11:13 — **“I am the apostle of the Gentiles.”**
Romans 15:16 — **“The minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles.”**
Galatians 2:8 — **“The apostleship of the Gentiles.”**

4. Preaching Christ

1 Corinthians 2:2 — **“Jesus Christ, and him crucified.”**
2 Corinthians 4:5 — **“We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord.”**
Acts 9:20 — **“He preached Christ in the synagogues.”**
Colossians 1:28 — **“Whom we preach.”**
Philippians 1:18 — **“Christ is preached.”**

5. Riches In Christ

Ephesians 1:7 — **“According to the riches of his grace.”**
Ephesians 2:7 — **“The exceeding riches of his grace.”**
Philippians 4:19 — **“According to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”**
Colossians 2:3 — **“All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”**
Romans 11:33 — **“O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!”**

6. Complete In Christ

Colossians 2:10 — **“Ye are complete in him.”**
1 Corinthians 1:30 — **“Christ Jesus… made unto us wisdom, and righteousness.”**
Ephesians 1:3 — **“All spiritual blessings… in Christ.”**
Romans 8:32 — **“With him also freely give us all things.”**
Colossians 1:19 — **“In him should all fulness dwell.”**

7. Heavenly Riches Versus Earthly Circumstances

2 Corinthians 6:10 — **“As poor, yet making many rich.”**
Philippians 4:12 — **“I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound.”**
2 Corinthians 4:17 — **“A far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”**
Matthew 6:20 — **“Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.”**
Colossians 3:2 — **“Set your affection on things above.”**

8. No Boasting In The Minister

1 Corinthians 3:5 — **“Who then is Paul… but ministers?”**
1 Corinthians 4:7 — **“What hast thou that thou didst not receive?”**

2 Corinthians 4:7 — **“The excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.”**
Galatians 6:14 — **“God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross.”**
1 Corinthians 1:31 — **“He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 3:8 places one of the richest ministries in the New Testament inside one of the humblest self-descriptions: **“less than the least of all saints.”** That combination ought to correct the modern assumption that usefulness must produce self-importance. Paul possessed revelation, apostolic authority, a Gentile commission, and an enormous influence upon the Church, yet his growing knowledge of Christ made him smaller in his own eyes. He could recognize his calling without worshipping himself for having one. That is the difference between biblical confidence and fleshly pride. Humility does not say God cannot use you; humility says that if God uses you, God gets the credit. **The servant who keeps getting bigger while Christ becomes background scenery has misunderstood the very ministry he claims to possess.**

The words **“is this grace given”** also remind us that ministry is not payment for spiritual greatness. Paul was once a persecutor. Grace saved him and then grace entrusted him with service. Every Christian should understand the same principle in whatever sphere God gives him. Teaching, giving, helping, praying, witnessing, leadership, hospitality, encouragement, and countless unseen acts of service are not trophies proving personal superiority. They are opportunities entrusted by grace. That means we should use them diligently but hold them humbly. We cannot boast in what we received, and we should not despise what somebody else received. **Grace has an effective way of making hard workers out of believers while simultaneously taking the bragging rights out of their pockets.**

Then Paul tells us what deserves the spotlight: **“the unsearchable riches of Christ.”** Christian preaching is at its healthiest when Christ keeps getting larger and the preacher keeps getting smaller. The pulpit is not a stage for personality worship, endless autobiography, motivational philosophy, political entertainment, or religious branding. The message is Christ—His blood, cross, resurrection, righteousness, grace, body, headship, inheritance, coming, glory, and the immeasurable wealth believers possess in Him. A lifetime of preaching cannot exhaust that subject. Eternity itself will not make Jesus Christ old news. **The preacher who runs out of things to say about Christ has not exhausted Christ; he has exhausted his own attention span.**

Finally, the phrase **“unsearchable riches”** should change what believers call wealth. Paul writes as a prisoner, yet speaks like a man standing inside an infinite treasury. He had

learned what the world never quite understands: possessions can be taken, health can fail, liberty can disappear, reputation can be attacked, and circumstances can turn overnight, while what the believer possesses in Christ remains untouched. Redemption does not depreciate. Justification cannot be repossessed by a bank. The indwelling Spirit cannot be seized by an empire. Heavenly citizenship survives every earthly border. **A Christian may lose almost everything the world calls wealth and still wake up spiritually richer than the richest unbeliever who ever signed his name at the bottom of a balance sheet.**

Ephesians 3:9 Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

"And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:" Ephesians 3:9

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"And to make all men see"

Paul has just said that grace was given to him so that he should **"preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ"** (Ephesians 3:8). Verse 9 continues the sentence: **"And to make all men see."** Paul's ministry was not merely to announce that Christ saves sinners; it also involved bringing believers into an understanding of what God was presently doing through the body of Christ. The word **"see"** deals with spiritual understanding. Paul wanted truth brought into the light so men could comprehend what God had revealed. Ephesians 1:18 had already prayed that **"the eyes of your understanding being enlightened"** might enable believers to know the things God had provided for them.

Notice also the breadth of the expression: **"all men."** That does not teach universal salvation. Scripture never says every man will believe the gospel merely because the gospel is preached to every man. Paul was commissioned to make the truth known broadly, especially among Gentiles who had once been described as **"far off"** (Ephesians 2:13). First Timothy 2:4 says God **"will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth,"** but men still must believe. Revelation made available to all does not mean reception by all. A Bible can lie open on a man's table for fifty years while his mind remains shut tighter than the cover.

This phrase also destroys the idea that the deepest truths of Scripture belong to a hidden priestly class. Verse 4 had said, **“when ye read, ye may understand.”** Verse 9 says Paul labored **“to make all men see.”** God revealed the mystery so it could be understood, taught, preached, and believed. There is nothing spiritual about manufacturing fog around a doctrine God intended to illuminate. **When God turns on the light, religion has no business charging admission to the lamp.**

“what is the fellowship of the mystery”

Paul does not merely say believers should know that a mystery exists. They are to see **“what is the fellowship of the mystery.”** The mystery has already been defined in verse 6: Gentiles are **“fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel.”** The fellowship therefore concerns shared participation in what God has created in Christ. Believing Jews and Gentiles who were once separated now stand in one spiritual body under one Head. Ephesians 2:16 says Christ reconciled both **“unto God in one body by the cross.”**

The word **“fellowship”** is important because the mystery is not merely information to be catalogued; it produces a relationship among those who are in Christ. First Corinthians 12:13 says, **“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles.”** The believer does not merely study the body of Christ from the outside. He is placed into it. He shares the same salvation, the same spiritual Head, the same access to the Father, the same Holy Spirit, and the same spiritual standing in Christ with every other genuine member of that body.

Yet this fellowship must not be twisted into the claim that the Church has become Israel. Ephesians 3 never says Gentiles become Jews or that Israel’s national promises evaporate into the Church. The mystery is the **same body**, not a renamed Israel. Romans 11:1 still asks, **“Hath God cast away his people?”** and answers, **“God forbid.”** Romans 11:25 still speaks of **“blindness in part”** happening **“to Israel.”** The Holy Ghost apparently knew how to distinguish Israel from the Church after Calvary, and we would be wise to resist improving His vocabulary. **Fellowship in one body creates spiritual unity without requiring theological identity theft.**

The practical side is equally sharp. If believers truly share fellowship in one body, then pride, envy, racial superiority, denominational vanity, and personality worship are all out of place. First Corinthians 12:21 says, **“the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee.”** The body has many members, and none of them is the Head. Christ alone occupies that position. **The mystery creates fellowship by putting everybody in Christ, not by putting everybody under the biggest personality in the room.**

“which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God”

Now Paul tells us how long this mystery had been concealed: **“from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God.”** That language is stronger than saying men simply overlooked it. The mystery was **hid in God**. Romans 16:25 describes **“the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began.”** Colossians 1:26 calls it **“the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints.”** God did not merely wait for somebody clever enough to solve an Old Testament puzzle. He revealed at the appointed time what had previously been concealed.

This is why rightly dividing the word of truth matters. The Old Testament contained prophetic statements concerning Gentile blessing, Messiah’s kingdom, Israel’s restoration, and the salvation of the nations. It also contained types that later believers can recognize in the light of New Testament revelation. But recognizing a type after the mystery is revealed is not the same thing as saying the mystery had been plainly taught beforehand. Eve can present a remarkable picture of Christ and the Church when Ephesians 5:31–32 identifies the connection, yet Genesis 2 does not contain Paul’s explanation of the body of Christ. The picture was there; the doctrinal revelation explaining the picture came later.

That distinction keeps us from forcing the Church backward into every Old Testament passage. Israel had real promises, real covenants, a real national calling, and real prophetic expectations. The mystery of the body of Christ was hidden until God chose to reveal it. If everything about the Church were plainly laid out in Israel’s prophets, Paul’s repeated statements that the mystery was hidden and kept secret would become strangely unnecessary. **You cannot call something a secret while insisting everybody had been reading it plainly for a thousand years.**

The phrase **“hid in God”** also emphasizes divine sovereignty. The mystery existed in God’s purpose before men knew anything about it. God was not repairing a failed plan after Israel’s unbelief caught Him by surprise. Ephesians 1:11 describes Him as the One **“who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.”** What was hidden from man was never hidden from God. **The mystery was new to human revelation, not new to the mind of the Almighty.**

“who created all things by Jesus Christ”

The verse closes by identifying the God in whom the mystery had been hidden as the One **“who created all things by Jesus Christ.”** That statement takes us from the mystery of the Church back to creation itself and places Jesus Christ at the center. John 1:3 says of the Word, **“All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was**

made." Colossians 1:16 says of Christ, **"For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth."** Jesus Christ is not part of creation. He is the Creator.

That truth demolishes every religious system that lowers Christ to the status of a created being, exalted angel, lesser deity, or merely remarkable teacher. If **all things** were created by Jesus Christ, then He cannot belong to the category of the things created. Colossians 1:17 says, **"And he is before all things, and by him all things consist."** John 1:1 declares, **"the Word was God."** The same Christ who died for sinners is the One through whom worlds were made. Calvary was not the death of a good religious philosopher; it was the Creator entering His creation to redeem fallen men.

There is also a magnificent connection between creation and the mystery. The One who created all things is perfectly capable of creating **"one new man"** in Himself (Ephesians 2:15). The God who formed Adam from the dust did not strain Himself when He formed the body of Christ. Second Corinthians 5:17 says, **"if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature."** Salvation is not divine cosmetic work performed on an improved sinner. It is connected with new creation. **The Christ who spoke worlds into existence does not need religious assistance to make a sinner new.**

Finally, this phrase reminds us that the mystery belongs inside the larger glory of Jesus Christ. Dispensational truth is valuable because it helps us understand what God has revealed, but the center of the Bible is not a chart. The center is Christ. The mystery is in Christ, the body belongs to Christ, salvation is through Christ, and creation itself was accomplished by Christ. **Right division has missed its purpose if it makes a man fascinated with dispensations but bored with the Lord who rules them.**

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 3:9 teaches that God intended the revealed mystery to be made known. Paul was commissioned **"to make all men see"** the fellowship created by the mystery: believing Jews and Gentiles united in one body through Christ without erasing Israel's national identity or prophetic future. What had previously been hidden in God was now being openly proclaimed.

The verse also reaches back beyond the Church to creation itself. The God who concealed the mystery from former ages is the God **"who created all things by Jesus Christ."** Jesus Christ therefore stands at both ends of the verse: He is the center of the revealed mystery and the divine Creator through whom all things came into existence.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. Spiritual Understanding

Ephesians 1:18 — **“The eyes of your understanding being enlightened.”**
Colossians 1:9 — **“Filled with the knowledge of his will.”**
2 Timothy 2:7 — **“The Lord give thee understanding in all things.”**
Psalm 119:130 — **“The entrance of thy words giveth light.”**
Luke 24:45 — **“Then opened he their understanding.”**

2. The Mystery Made Known

Ephesians 3:3 — **“By revelation he made known unto me the mystery.”**
Ephesians 3:4 — **“When ye read, ye may understand.”**
Romans 16:26 — **“But now is made manifest.”**
Colossians 1:26 — **“But now is made manifest to his saints.”**
Ephesians 6:19 — **“To make known the mystery of the gospel.”**

3. Fellowship In One Body

Ephesians 3:6 — **“Fellowheirs, and of the same body.”**
Ephesians 2:16 — **“Reconcile both unto God in one body.”**
1 Corinthians 12:13 — **“By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body.”**
Romans 12:5 — **“We, being many, are one body in Christ.”**
Ephesians 4:4 — **“There is one body.”**

4. The Mystery Was Hidden

Romans 16:25 — **“Kept secret since the world began.”**
Colossians 1:26 — **“Hid from ages and from generations.”**
Ephesians 3:5 — **“In other ages was not made known.”**
1 Corinthians 2:7 — **“The hidden wisdom.”**
Ephesians 3:9 — **“From the beginning of the world hath been hid in God.”**

5. Israel Remains Distinct

Romans 11:1 — **“Hath God cast away his people? God forbid.”**
Romans 11:25 — **“Blindness in part is happened to Israel.”**
Romans 11:26 — **“And so all Israel shall be saved.”**
Romans 11:28 — **“Beloved for the fathers' sakes.”**
Romans 11:29 — **“The gifts and calling of God are without repentance.”**

6. Christ The Creator

John 1:3 — **“All things were made by him.”**
Colossians 1:16 — **“By him were all things created.”**
Colossians 1:17 — **“He is before all things.”**

Hebrews 1:2 — **“By whom also he made the worlds.”**
1 Corinthians 8:6 — **“One Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things.”**

7. New Creation In Christ

2 Corinthians 5:17 — **“He is a new creature.”**
Ephesians 2:10 — **“Created in Christ Jesus unto good works.”**
Ephesians 2:15 — **“To make in himself of twain one new man.”**
Galatians 6:15 — **“But a new creature.”**
Colossians 3:10 — **“Put on the new man.”**

8. Christ At The Center

Colossians 1:18 — **“That in all things he might have the preeminence.”**
Colossians 2:3 — **“All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”**
Ephesians 1:10 — **“Gather together in one all things in Christ.”**
Philippians 2:10 — **“At the name of Jesus every knee should bow.”**
Revelation 19:16 — **“KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 3:9 reminds us that revealed truth is supposed to produce light, not religious fog. Paul says his commission was **“to make all men see.”** God never intended the mystery of the body of Christ to become the private possession of theological specialists who speak as though ordinary believers need a permission slip before opening Ephesians. Verse 4 had already said, **“when ye read, ye may understand.”** That places responsibility on every believer to read carefully, compare Scripture with Scripture, and rightly divide the word of truth. Ignorance may be fashionable in an age that prefers slogans to study, but it is not spirituality. **An open Bible with a teachable heart will take a believer farther than a shelf full of religious credentials protecting a closed system.**

The **“fellowship of the mystery”** also corrects two opposite errors. One error divides believers whom Christ has placed into one body; the other destroys every biblical distinction in the name of unity. Scripture does neither. Believing Jew and Gentile are genuinely united in Christ, sharing one Spirit, one body, one gospel, and equal access to the Father. Yet national Israel does not therefore disappear from prophecy, and the Church does not become Israel wearing a Gentile name tag. Romans 11 continues speaking of Israel as Israel while Ephesians speaks of the Church as Christ’s body. Right division allows both truths to stand without making them fight. **Biblical unity is strong enough to join what God joined without erasing what God still distinguishes.**

Then comes the remarkable statement that this mystery **"from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God."** That should cure the habit of dragging the Church backward into every verse of the Old Testament. Certainly the Old Testament contains pictures, shadows, patterns, and prophecies whose fuller significance becomes evident after New Testament revelation. But a type seen afterward is not the same thing as a doctrine plainly revealed beforehand. God says the mystery was hidden, and faith should be content to let Him know where He hid it. This also magnifies His wisdom, because the present dispensation was never an emergency patch sewn onto a torn prophetic program. God knew the end from the beginning, and what surprised men never surprised Him. **History has never forced God into Plan B, because omniscience does not keep an emergency notebook.**

Finally, the verse ends where sound doctrine should always end: with Jesus Christ exalted. The God who hid the mystery **"created all things by Jesus Christ."** That single statement destroys every attempt to demote Christ into the ranks of created beings. He made all things; therefore He is before the things He made. The same Christ who created the universe also creates the believer anew, heads the Church, reconciles Jew and Gentile in one body, and possesses the unsearchable riches Paul was commissioned to preach. We may study dispensations, mysteries, covenants, prophecy, and doctrine until our notebooks are full, but all of it must finally bring us back to the Lord Jesus Christ. **If our Bible study makes our charts bigger while Christ becomes smaller, we have learned the arrangement and missed the One who created the whole thing.**

Ephesians 3:10 Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

"To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,"
Ephesians 3:10

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"To the intent that now"

The opening words **"To the intent"** tell us that God has a purpose behind everything Paul has just described. The mystery was not revealed merely to satisfy theological curiosity. Paul was given grace to preach **"the unsearchable riches of Christ"** (Ephesians 3:8), to make men see **"the fellowship of the mystery"** (Ephesians 3:9), and now verse 10 reveals another purpose operating beyond what men can see. God is accomplishing something

through the Church before an audience in heavenly places. Salvation is personal, but God's purpose in salvation is larger than the individual Christian. The believer is not merely rescued from hell and handed a ticket to heaven; he has been placed into a divine purpose that displays something about God Himself.

The word **"now"** is equally important. Ephesians 3:5 said the mystery **"in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed."** Verse 10 continues that dispensational contrast. There was something hidden, and now it is manifested. There were former ages, and now there is a revealed administration involving the Church, the body of Christ. God has not changed in character, but His revelation has unfolded according to His timing. Second Timothy 2:15 therefore commands the believer to be **"rightly dividing the word of truth."** If every age were doctrinally identical in every respect, there would not be much to divide. **God never changes His holiness, truth, or character, but He has never promised to conduct every household in history under the same set of instructions.**

The Church therefore occupies a particular place in God's revealed program. Ephesians 3 does not present the body of Christ as Israel renamed, enlarged, or spiritually repainted. The mystery involves believing Jews and Gentiles becoming **"fellowheirs, and of the same body"** (Ephesians 3:6). Israel's promises remain Israel's promises, while the Church stands in a newly revealed relationship to Christ as His body. The little word **"now"** guards the passage from theological systems that flatten the whole Bible into one undifferentiated arrangement.

"unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places"

The audience now shifts from men on earth to **"the principalities and powers in heavenly places."** Ephesians has already introduced that terminology. Ephesians 1:20–21 says God raised Christ from the dead and set Him at His own right hand **"far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion."** Colossians 1:16 says that by Christ **"were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible,"** including **"principalities"** and **"powers."** These expressions therefore concern orders of spiritual authority within the unseen realm. Scripture presents a universe containing more than flesh-and-blood humanity.

Ephesians 6:12 later warns believers that **"we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."** That passage clearly identifies hostile spiritual powers. Yet Ephesians 3:10 does not require us to claim that every principality and power mentioned here is evil. Christ created all orders of being and is **"far above"** them all.

The central point is that heavenly intelligences are witnessing something God is doing through the Church. Some may behold it in loyal wonder; hostile powers may behold it as evidence that their rebellion has not frustrated God's purpose. Either way, heaven is paying attention.

That should correct the small view we often have of the Christian life. We tend to imagine that if nobody on earth notices our faithfulness, nothing important happened. Ephesians 3:10 says otherwise. God is demonstrating His wisdom on a stage larger than human applause. First Corinthians 4:9 says the apostles were **"made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men."** First Peter 1:12 says the things concerning salvation are things **"which things the angels desire to look into."** Scripture pulls back the curtain and shows that heavenly beings observe the unfolding work of redemption. **A believer may feel unnoticed on earth while living in the middle of a demonstration heaven itself is studying.**

"might be known by the church"

The remarkable expression is **"might be known by the church."** God is making something known through the Church. The Church is not the source of the wisdom; God is. The Church is the instrument through which that wisdom is displayed. Ephesians 2:10 says believers are **"his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works."** Ephesians 2:22 says they are **"builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."** Now Ephesians 3:10 shows that this divinely constructed body serves as a living demonstration of God's wisdom before the heavenly realm.

What exactly does the Church demonstrate? Consider what God has done. He takes spiritually dead sinners from Jewish and Gentile backgrounds, saves them by grace through faith, reconciles both unto Himself **"in one body by the cross"** (Ephesians 2:16), gives them one Spirit, one Head, one standing in Christ, and makes them fellowheirs. Human history had displayed division, rebellion, sin, hostility, death, and alienation. God answers with the cross and produces **"one new man"** in Christ. The devil divided; Christ reconciles. Sin scattered; grace gathers. Death ruled; Christ quickens. **God answers the wreckage of fallen creation not with panic, but with a body built out of redeemed sinners.**

This gives enormous importance to the Church while leaving no room for Church worship. Christ remains the Head. Colossians 1:18 says, **"he is the head of the body, the church."** The Church has significance because of the One to whom it is joined, not because religious institutions possess authority independent of Christ. Buildings, denominations, traditions, and ecclesiastical machinery are not what Ephesians 3:10 is glorifying. God is displaying

His wisdom through redeemed people united to His Son. **The Church is glorious only as the moon is glorious: every ounce of light worth seeing comes from another source.**

The phrase also gives practical force to Christian conduct. If God is displaying His wisdom through the Church, division, carnality, doctrinal corruption, and pride contradict the testimony the Church was designed to present. Ephesians 4 will therefore command believers to **"walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called."** Position comes first, practice follows. The believer does not behave properly to become part of the body; because he is part of the body, his conduct ought to match the calling.

"the manifold wisdom of God"

What heavenly powers are learning through the Church is **"the manifold wisdom of God."** The word **"manifold"** speaks of wisdom displayed in many forms, dimensions, and applications. God's wisdom is not one-dimensional. Romans 11:33 exclaims, **"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!"** First Corinthians 1:24 calls Christ **"the power of God, and the wisdom of God."** What looked like defeat at Calvary became victory. What looked like Israel's rejection of Messiah would not prevent Gentile salvation, the formation of the Church, or Israel's eventual prophetic fulfillment. God does not merely solve problems; He makes the solutions reveal dimensions of His wisdom that the problems could never conceal.

The Church displays that wisdom because it contains combinations the flesh could never have manufactured. Jew and Gentile become members of the same body without Gentiles becoming Israel. Sinners who were dead become alive. Those far off become nigh. Enemies are reconciled. People with no spiritual claim are made fellowheirs. And all of it happens **"in Christ by the gospel"** (Ephesians 3:6). God does not compromise His holiness to show mercy, because Christ satisfied righteousness at the cross. He does not discard Israel in order to bless Gentiles, because Romans 11 says His gifts and calling remain **"without repentance."** He does not save sinners by their merit, yet produces good works afterward. Every apparent contradiction is resolved in divine wisdom.

This wisdom also exposes the poverty of human religion. First Corinthians 1:21 says, **"the world by wisdom knew not God."** Human wisdom builds systems in which man climbs upward through ritual, merit, philosophy, moral achievement, or religious status. God's wisdom comes down in Jesus Christ, accomplishes redemption, offers salvation by grace, and then takes the redeemed sinner and makes him part of a heavenly body. The wisdom of the world says man must become worthy. The wisdom of God says Christ is worthy and the sinner must be found in Him. **Man builds ladders toward heaven; God sent His Son down, broke the ladder of boasting, and raised believers up with Christ.**

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 3:10 reveals that the Church is part of a cosmic demonstration of God's wisdom. The mystery was revealed **"now,"** and through the formation of one body in Christ God is making His wisdom known even to principalities and powers in heavenly places. The Church therefore occupies a place in God's purpose far greater than an earthly religious organization. It is His workmanship and an exhibit of what His grace, cross, and power can accomplish.

The verse also keeps Christ central. The Church does not generate divine wisdom; it displays it. God's manifold wisdom appears in saving sinners by grace, joining Jew and Gentile in one body without cancelling Israel's promises, reconciling enemies through the cross, and building a spiritual habitation under Christ as Head. The result leaves no room for human boasting and every reason to glorify God.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. God's Present Purpose In The Church

Ephesians 3:5 — **"As it is now revealed."**
Ephesians 3:6 — **"Fellowheirs, and of the same body."**
Ephesians 2:15 — **"To make in himself of twain one new man."**
Ephesians 2:16 — **"Reconcile both unto God in one body."**
Colossians 1:18 — **"The body, the church."**

2. Principalities And Powers

Ephesians 1:21 — **"Far above all principality, and power."**
Colossians 1:16 — **"Whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers."**
Colossians 2:10 — **"The head of all principality and power."**
Ephesians 6:12 — **"Against principalities, against powers."**
Colossians 2:15 — **"Having spoiled principalities and powers."**

3. Heavenly Beings Observing God's Work

1 Corinthians 4:9 — **"A spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men."**
1 Peter 1:12 — **"Which things the angels desire to look into."**
Luke 15:10 — **"Joy in the presence of the angels of God."**
Hebrews 1:14 — **"Ministering spirits."**
1 Timothy 5:21 — **"The elect angels."**

4. The Church As God's Workmanship

Ephesians 2:10 — **“For we are his workmanship.”**
Ephesians 2:21 — **“Groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord.”**
Ephesians 2:22 — **“An habitation of God through the Spirit.”**
1 Corinthians 12:27 — **“Ye are the body of Christ.”**
Colossians 1:24 — **“His body's sake, which is the church.”**

5. The Wisdom Of God

Romans 11:33 — **“O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!”**
1 Corinthians 1:24 — **“Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.”**
1 Corinthians 2:7 — **“We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery.”**
Daniel 2:20 — **“Wisdom and might are his.”**
Job 12:13 — **“With him is wisdom and strength.”**

6. The Wisdom Of The Cross

1 Corinthians 1:18 — **“The preaching of the cross… is the power of God.”**
1 Corinthians 1:21 — **“The world by wisdom knew not God.”**
1 Corinthians 1:27 — **“God hath chosen the foolish things of the world.”**
1 Corinthians 1:29 — **“That no flesh should glory in his presence.”**
1 Corinthians 1:30 — **“Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom.”**

7. One Body Through Grace

1 Corinthians 12:13 — **“By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body.”**
Romans 12:5 — **“We, being many, are one body in Christ.”**
Ephesians 4:4 — **“There is one body.”**
Ephesians 2:13 — **“Made nigh by the blood of Christ.”**
Ephesians 3:6 — **“Fellowheirs, and of the same body.”**

8. Christ Above Every Power

Philippians 2:9 — **“God also hath highly exalted him.”**
Ephesians 1:22 — **“Hath put all things under his feet.”**
Colossians 1:17 — **“He is before all things.”**
Colossians 2:15 — **“Triumphing over them in it.”**
1 Peter 3:22 — **“Angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 3:10 should enlarge our understanding of what God is doing through the Church. Too often Christians think of the Church merely as the place where people meet on

Sunday, sing a few hymns, hear a sermon, shake hands, and go home. The Bible gives us something far larger. God says His manifold wisdom is being made known **"by the church"** to principalities and powers in heavenly places. That means the body of Christ stands in the middle of a cosmic demonstration of divine wisdom. Every redeemed sinner placed into that body is evidence that Satan's rebellion, human sin, death, religious confusion, and national division could not outmaneuver God. **The Church is not God's emergency repair shop; it is part of a purpose so vast that heavenly powers are watching the lesson unfold.**

That truth also puts human pride in its proper place. The Church is the demonstration, but God is the wisdom behind it. We did not invent the gospel, design the cross, create the one body, produce the Holy Spirit, or raise Christ from the dead. Ephesians 2 already told us we were dead in trespasses and sins before God quickened us. A corpse does not deserve applause for the resurrection performed upon it. Yet religious man has an astonishing talent for receiving grace and then finding a way to congratulate himself. Ephesians 3:10 closes that door. God receives the glory because God conceived the purpose, Christ accomplished redemption, the Spirit forms the body, and redeemed sinners simply become living evidence that divine wisdom works. **Grace is God taking people who had nothing to boast about and making them part of something they can spend eternity boasting about in Christ.**

The verse should also make us take Christian conduct more seriously without confusing conduct with salvation. We are saved by grace through faith and not of works, but once saved we belong to a body through which God intends to display His wisdom. That gives holiness, unity, sound doctrine, faithfulness, love, and service enormous practical significance. Carnality does not remove a believer from his position in Christ, but it can badly misrepresent what that position is supposed to produce. Ephesians 4 will therefore move from doctrine to walk, urging believers to live consistently with their calling. Standing comes before state, but standing is meant to affect state. **We do not live right in order to become God's workmanship; we live right because God's workmanship should not resemble the junk pile He rescued us from.**

Finally, the phrase **"manifold wisdom of God"** should give confidence when God's program appears complicated from our limited viewpoint. We see one generation, one crisis, one failure, one nation, one church, or one lifetime at a time. God sees the whole purpose. He can preserve Israel's promises while forming the Church, save Gentiles without turning them into Israel, reconcile Jew and Gentile in one body, judge sin without sacrificing mercy, and defeat spiritual enemies through a cross that looked like defeat to the world. What seems tangled from ground level may form a perfect pattern when seen

from above. The principalities and powers are being shown that God's wisdom is deeper than rebellion and older than every scheme formed against Him. **The safest place for a Christian is not where he understands every move God makes, but where he trusts the wisdom of the One who has never made a foolish move.**

Ephesians 3:11 Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

"According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:" Ephesians 3:11

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"According to the eternal purpose"

Ephesians 3:11 reaches directly back to the astonishing statement in verse 10 that God is making **"the manifold wisdom of God"** known by the Church unto principalities and powers in heavenly places. Paul now tells us that this is not divine improvisation. It is **"according to the eternal purpose."** Those four words move the discussion outside the limits of human history. The Church did not appear because God lost control of Israel, the cross was not a rescue operation devised after Satan gained an unexpected advantage, and Gentile salvation was not an emergency amendment inserted into a damaged prophetic program. Before human rebellion ever appeared on earth, God possessed an eternal purpose.

The word **"eternal"** matters. God's purpose is older than Adam, older than Abraham, older than Moses, older than Israel, and older than the present creation itself. Second Timothy 1:9 speaks of **"his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."** Titus 1:2 speaks of eternal life **"which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began."** God does not discover history as history happens. Isaiah 46:10 describes Him as **"declaring the end from the beginning."** Men encounter events one minute at a time; God never waits for tomorrow to find out whether yesterday ruined His plans.

That distinction should keep dispensational truth from being misunderstood. Right division recognizes changes in God's dealings with men, but those changes do not indicate changes in God's knowledge. The mystery was **hidden** in former ages, but hidden is not the same as unplanned. Ephesians 3:9 said it had been **"hid in God."** What men did not know,

God already knew. Revelation changes from man's standpoint because God discloses truth according to His timetable; God Himself never learns anything. **The mystery may have surprised apostles when revealed, but it never surprised the God who hid it.**

"which he purposed"

The verse does not merely say God possessed a vague eternal intention. It says the purpose is something **"which he purposed."** The repetition strengthens the point. God's purpose originates in God. Ephesians 1:11 already described Him as the One **"who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."** Romans 8:28 speaks of believers who are **"the called according to his purpose."** God acts with design. The universe is not drifting toward a destination that God hopes to recognize when it arrives.

This does not make men puppets or eliminate genuine human responsibility. Scripture repeatedly commands men to believe, repent, obey, choose, refuse, preach, pray, and serve. God's purpose and human responsibility stand together without requiring Scripture to apologize for either. Acts 2:23 says Christ was delivered **"by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God,"** yet the men who crucified Him were still charged with wicked hands. God's sovereignty does not turn sin into righteousness, and human rebellion does not turn God into a helpless spectator. **Men can shake their fists at heaven without knocking God off His throne.**

God's purpose also gives stability to the believer. A Christian should not read the headlines, watch institutions crumble, observe religious apostasy, and conclude that heaven must be scrambling for a response. Psalm 33:11 says, **"The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations."** Proverbs 19:21 says, **"there are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand."** Human plans expire quickly enough to make yesterday's confident predictions embarrassing. God's counsel does not require revision meetings.

The practical lesson is substantial. If God acts according to purpose, the Christian should learn to live purposefully rather than randomly. Ephesians will soon move from heavenly doctrine to earthly walk. The believer is not saved by works, but he is **"created in Christ Jesus unto good works"** (Ephesians 2:10). Grace does not produce aimlessness. **God's eternal purpose does not create careless Christians; properly understood, it gives temporary lives an eternal frame of reference.**

"in Christ Jesus our Lord"

The eternal purpose is not merely connected with Christ as though He were one participant among many. It is **"in Christ Jesus our Lord."** Christ stands at the center of the purpose. Ephesians 1:9 speaks of **"the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which**

he hath purposed in himself." Verse 10 says God intends to **"gather together in one all things in Christ."** Colossians 1:18 says Christ must have **"the preeminence."** Everything in God's revealed program moves toward the exaltation of His Son.

The wording **"Christ Jesus"** emphasizes the One who is both Messiah and Saviour, the crucified and risen Lord in whom believers possess their spiritual standing. The Church's blessings are repeatedly located **"in Christ."** Ephesians 1:3 says we are blessed **"with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."** Ephesians 1:7 says, **"In whom we have redemption through his blood."** Ephesians 2:6 says we are made to sit **"in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."** Ephesians 3:6 says Gentiles become fellowheirs and of the same body **"in Christ by the gospel."** The eternal purpose is not centered in a denomination, nation, religious institution, philosophical system, or human civilization. It is centered in a Person.

That truth also preserves the distinction between Christ and the Church. The Church occupies a glorious place because it is His body, but Christ remains **"our Lord."** He is not the mascot of the Church, the spiritual consultant of the Church, or the ceremonial name attached to the Church's own ambitions. He is Lord. Colossians 1:18 calls Him **"the head of the body, the church."** Ephesians 1:22 says God **"gave him to be the head over all things to the church."** The body does not issue instructions to the Head. **Whenever the Church starts telling Christ what He must approve, the body has developed the theological equivalent of trying to put its feet where its head belongs.**

The phrase also corrects any system that makes the eternal purpose primarily about man. Redemption certainly blesses the sinner beyond description, but salvation is ultimately part of something larger than human comfort. Ephesians 1:6 says it is **"to the praise of the glory of his grace."** Verse 12 says believers should be **"to the praise of his glory."** Ephesians 2:7 says God will display **"the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."** God saves sinners, builds the Church, displays His wisdom, defeats spiritual powers, and keeps His promises so that Christ receives glory. **Man benefits magnificently from the plan, but Jesus Christ is still the center of the blueprint.**

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 3:11 reveals that the Church and the mystery described in this chapter belong to **God's eternal purpose**, not to a last-minute adjustment in history. What was hidden from men was never hidden from God. His purpose existed before its revelation and unfolds according to His own counsel and wisdom.

The verse also identifies the center of that purpose: **“Christ Jesus our Lord.”** The Church, salvation, the one body, Gentile inclusion, heavenly blessing, and the display of God’s manifold wisdom all find their meaning in Christ. Right division therefore does not fragment Scripture into unrelated pieces; it shows how God administers different dealings while ultimately exalting the same Lord Jesus Christ.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. God’s Eternal Purpose

2 Timothy 1:9 — **“His own purpose and grace… before the world began.”**
Titus 1:2 — **“Promised before the world began.”**
Ephesians 1:11 — **“According to the purpose of him.”**
Romans 8:28 — **“The called according to his purpose.”**
Romans 9:11 — **“That the purpose of God according to election might stand.”**

2. God’s Counsel Cannot Fail

Psalm 33:11 — **“The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever.”**
Proverbs 19:21 — **“The counsel of the LORD, that shall stand.”**
Isaiah 46:10 — **“My counsel shall stand.”**
Job 42:2 — **“No thought can be withholden from thee.”**
Daniel 4:35 — **“None can stay his hand.”**

3. God Knows The End From The Beginning

Isaiah 46:10 — **“Declaring the end from the beginning.”**
Acts 15:18 — **“Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.”**
Psalm 139:16 — **“In thy book all my members were written.”**
Romans 11:33 — **“O the depth… of the wisdom and knowledge of God!”**
Hebrews 4:13 — **“All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him.”**

4. Christ At The Center Of God’s Purpose

Ephesians 1:10 — **“Gather together in one all things in Christ.”**
Colossians 1:18 — **“That in all things he might have the preeminence.”**
Colossians 1:16 — **“All things were created by him, and for him.”**
Philippians 2:10 — **“At the name of Jesus every knee should bow.”**
Revelation 19:16 — **“KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.”**

5. The Believer’s Position In Christ

Ephesians 1:3 — **“All spiritual blessings… in Christ.”**
Ephesians 1:7 — **“In whom we have redemption through his blood.”**

Ephesians 2:6 — **“In heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”**
2 Corinthians 5:17 — **“If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.”**
Colossians 2:10 — **“Ye are complete in him.”**

6. The Mystery Was Planned Before It Was Revealed

Ephesians 3:5 — **“In other ages was not made known.”**
Ephesians 3:9 — **“Hath been hid in God.”**
Romans 16:25 — **“Kept secret since the world began.”**
Colossians 1:26 — **“Hid from ages and from generations.”**
1 Corinthians 2:7 — **“The hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world.”**

7. God’s Purpose And Human Responsibility

Acts 2:23 — **“The determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.”**
Acts 4:28 — **“Whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before.”**
Philippians 2:12 — **“Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.”**
Philippians 2:13 — **“It is God which worketh in you.”**
Galatians 6:7 — **“Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.”**

8. Christ Is Lord Of The Church

Ephesians 1:22 — **“Head over all things to the church.”**
Colossians 1:18 — **“He is the head of the body, the church.”**
Romans 14:9 — **“That he might be Lord both of the dead and living.”**
Acts 2:36 — **“God hath made that same Jesus… both Lord and Christ.”**
Philippians 2:11 — **“Jesus Christ is Lord.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 3:11 gives the believer something desperately needed in an unstable world: the assurance that history is not running loose. Paul calls God’s plan **“the eternal purpose.”** Nations may rise and collapse, churches may compromise, governments may change, religious movements may appear impressive for twenty years and disappear in thirty, but God’s purpose does not age with them. He knew the end before the beginning and never required a committee meeting in heaven to decide what to do next. Even the mystery that former ages did not know was already hidden in God rather than invented after events took an unexpected turn. That should steady the Christian when circumstances look chaotic. **What looks like confusion from the street level may still be operating beneath a purpose written before the street existed.**

This verse also corrects the idea that the Church was God’s emergency substitute after Israel disappointed Him. Israel certainly rebelled, rejected prophets, and rejected Messiah,

but none of that caught God unprepared. The mystery was hidden in God and later revealed according to His timing. The Church is therefore not Israel wearing a new name, nor is it a spare nation pulled off the shelf because the original arrangement failed. Believing Jews and Gentiles are made members of **one body in Christ**, while Romans 11 still protects God's promises to national Israel. Right division allows the present Church and Israel's future to remain exactly where Scripture places them. **God does not have to break yesterday's promise in order to accomplish today's purpose.**

The phrase **"in Christ Jesus our Lord"** is where the whole matter settles. God's eternal purpose is not fundamentally centered in us. That may offend an age trained to believe every spiritual truth ought eventually to lead back to personal fulfillment, self-esteem, comfort, prosperity, and applause. Scripture leads somewhere better: it leads to Christ. We are redeemed in Him, accepted in Him, seated in Him, complete in Him, and made members of His body. The blessing is enormous, but the glory belongs to the One who supplied it. A Christian who understands Ephesians should become more secure without becoming more self-important because everything that makes him spiritually rich is located in Another. **Grace gives the believer everything worth having and then lovingly removes every reasonable excuse for bragging about it.**

Finally, the eternal purpose gives ordinary Christian obedience extraordinary significance. Our lives are temporary, but they belong to a purpose that is not. That means faithfulness matters when nobody applauds, holiness matters when compromise appears easier, sound doctrine matters when error becomes fashionable, and service matters even when results appear small. We are not saved by our performance, and our standing in Christ does not rise and fall with the quality of our latest week. But because our standing is secure, we ought to live in a manner worthy of the calling God has given us. Christ is our Lord, not merely our insurance against judgment. **The Christian life becomes much clearer when we stop asking how God's eternal purpose can be fitted into our plans and begin asking how our short lives can be spent inside His.**

Ephesians 3:12 Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

"In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him."
Ephesians 3:12

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

“In whom”

The verse begins with two words that control everything that follows: **“In whom.”** The boldness, access, confidence, and faith described in this verse do not exist independently of Jesus Christ. Paul has just said that God’s eternal purpose was **“purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord”** (Ephesians 3:11), and now he continues, **“In whom.”** The believer’s position before God is inseparable from his position in Christ. Ephesians has repeated this truth from the opening chapter: we are blessed **“in Christ”** (Ephesians 1:3), accepted **“in the beloved”** (Ephesians 1:6), redeemed **“through his blood”** (Ephesians 1:7), raised and seated **“in Christ Jesus”** (Ephesians 2:6), and made nigh **“in Christ Jesus”** (Ephesians 2:13). Christianity is not fundamentally about improving the old man until God finds him acceptable; it is about being placed in the One who already is accepted.

That destroys religious boasting at the root. The believer does not approach God because he had an unusually good week, kept his temper, read enough chapters, prayed long enough, gave enough money, or performed enough religious duties to earn an appointment. Those things matter in fellowship and discipleship, but they are not the foundation of access. The foundation is **“in whom.”** A saved man may come before God because he belongs to Christ. Romans 8:1 says, **“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.”** The safest location in the universe is not a building, denomination, nation, or monastery. It is **in Christ**.

This also guards the distinction between standing and state. A believer’s state may fluctuate. His prayer life may be strong one week and weak the next. He may walk obediently or require chastening. But his standing **in Christ** rests upon what Christ accomplished, not upon his own daily perfection. That is not permission for carnality; it is the foundation from which holiness can grow without terror. **A child does not obey in order to become a son; he ought to obey because he already is one.**

“we have boldness”

Paul does not say we might someday obtain boldness if we reach a sufficiently advanced spiritual level. He says, **“we have boldness.”** This is a present possession. The word does not mean arrogance, irreverence, or casual familiarity with God. Biblical boldness is freedom to approach God openly because the barrier of condemnation has been dealt with through Christ. Hebrews 4:16 says, **“Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace.”** The throne is still a throne, but for the believer it has become a throne of grace.

This is one of the great reversals produced by redemption. Adam sinned and hid from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. Sin naturally makes man hide, excuse, blame, and flee. But Christ’s blood gives the believer grounds to come near.

Hebrews 10:19 says Christians have **“boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.”** The blood does not teach us to treat God lightly; it gives us the right to approach the Holy God without expecting condemnation.

Religious systems often rebuild barriers Christ removed. They persuade people that access must pass through a human priest, ceremonial ladder, saint, sacrament, or institutional gatekeeper. Ephesians 2:18 already said, **“For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.”** Christ is enough. First Timothy 2:5 says, **“there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”** If Christ is the one Mediator, introducing a collection of unofficial assistant mediators is not reverence; it is clutter. **Calvary opened the door, and religion has spent centuries trying to install another receptionist.**

Boldness also changes prayer. The Christian does not pray like a condemned criminal trying to persuade the Judge not to notice him. He comes as a child to a Father through the Son. Romans 8:15 says believers have received **“the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.”** Reverence remains, but dread of condemnation is removed. Boldness is not shouting louder; it is knowing why you are allowed to be there.

“and access”

The believer not only has boldness but **“access.”** Access means entrance into the presence of God. Ephesians 2:18 had already stated, **“For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.”** Jew and Gentile alike receive this access through Christ. No believer receives a superior doorway because of ancestry, education, church office, or religious achievement.

Access is one of the most underappreciated blessings of salvation. Under the law, Israel’s worship contained barriers, curtains, priestly limitations, and restricted approaches. Hebrews 9:7 says the high priest entered the second tabernacle **“alone once every year, not without blood.”** But when Christ died, Matthew 27:51 says, **“the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.”** The direction matters. God opened the way. The sinner did not climb up and tear the veil from below.

This does not mean the Church has become Israel or that the Church inherits Israel’s earthly priesthood. The comparison shows how superior the believer’s access in Christ is. The Church is a heavenly body with Christ as Head, and every saved believer has direct approach to the Father through Him. First Peter 2:5 calls believers **“an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices.”** No earthly priesthood stands between the Christian and the Father because Christ’s priesthood is sufficient.

The practical implication is enormous. Access means there is no legitimate excuse for prayerlessness. The door is open, the blood has been shed, the Mediator is seated at God's right hand, and the Spirit helps our infirmities. Yet believers can spend hours consulting everybody except the One whose presence has been opened to them. **We have direct access to heaven and still sometimes treat prayer like a number we only dial after every earthly line is busy.**

"with confidence"

Boldness describes freedom of approach; confidence describes settled assurance while approaching. Paul says we have access **"with confidence."** Confidence is not confidence in self. The whole context makes that impossible. Paul has called himself **"less than the least of all saints"** in verse 8. A man who just put himself beneath the saints is hardly recommending self-confidence three verses later. His confidence is rooted in Christ.

Hebrews 10:22 says, **"Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith."** First John 5:14 says, **"this is the confidence that we have in him."** Notice again where confidence rests: **"in him."** Christian assurance is not psychological positive thinking. It is faith resting on objective facts: Christ died, Christ rose, Christ intercedes, Christ promised, and God cannot lie.

Confidence therefore survives feelings. Feelings can be useful servants but terrible theologians. A Christian may feel distant from God after failure, feel spiritually weak during trial, or feel unworthy during prayer. He should feel unworthy in himself, because he is. But he is not approaching God in himself. He approaches **in Christ**. The blood does not become less effective because the believer had a miserable Tuesday. **If access depended upon emotional weather, half the Church would need an umbrella before it could pray.**

This confidence should never become carelessness toward sin. First John 1:9 still teaches confession, and Hebrews 12 still teaches chastening. Fellowship can be hindered even while sonship remains secure. Confidence in access is not a license to carry rebellion into the throne room and demand that God bless it. Rather, it gives the believer confidence to confess honestly, seek mercy, obtain grace, and keep walking.

"by the faith of him"

Paul closes the verse with **"by the faith of him."** The wording deserves to be allowed to stand exactly as the King James Bible gives it. The believer's access ultimately rests upon Christ, not upon the strength of human religious performance. Galatians 2:16 similarly speaks of being **"justified by the faith of Christ."** Philippians 3:9 speaks of righteousness **"which is through the faith of Christ."** Whatever theological distinctions may be

discussed concerning faith, Paul's wording consistently directs attention away from man's merit and toward Christ.

This does not eliminate the necessity of believing. Ephesians 1:13 says, **"after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise."** Acts 16:31 says, **"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."** The sinner must believe the gospel. Yet even saving faith has no value because faith itself is a meritorious work. Faith has value because of its Object. Weak faith in a strong Saviour is better than strong confidence in a false foundation.

Christ's faithfulness provides the security underneath the believer's approach. Second Timothy 2:13 says, **"If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself."** Hebrews 7:25 says Christ **"ever liveth to make intercession"** for those who come unto God by Him. Our confidence is therefore tied to His finished work, His living intercession, His character, and His promises. **The strength of the bridge matters more than the trembling knees of the traveler crossing it.**

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 3:12 reveals the believer's extraordinary privilege of direct approach to God through Jesus Christ. **Boldness, access, and confidence** are present possessions because the believer stands **in Christ**. These blessings do not come through religious hierarchy, personal merit, ceremonies, or spiritual achievement.

The verse also grounds assurance in Christ rather than in fluctuating human performance. Believers must personally believe the gospel, yet the security and effectiveness of their access rest upon the Saviour whose blood opened the way and whose faithfulness never changes. Standing remains secure in Christ while fellowship and practical walk still require obedience, confession, and holiness.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. In Christ

Ephesians 1:3 — **"All spiritual blessings… in Christ."**
Ephesians 1:6 — **"Accepted in the beloved."**
Ephesians 2:6 — **"In heavenly places in Christ Jesus."**
Romans 8:1 — **"No condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus."**
Colossians 2:10 — **"Ye are complete in him."**

2. Boldness Before God

Hebrews 4:16 — **“Come boldly unto the throne of grace.”**
Hebrews 10:19 — **“Boldness to enter into the holiest.”**
1 John 4:17 — **“Boldness in the day of judgment.”**
1 John 5:14 — **“This is the confidence that we have in him.”**
Ephesians 6:19 — **“That I may open my mouth boldly.”**

3. Access Through Christ

Ephesians 2:18 — **“Through him we both have access.”**
Romans 5:2 — **“By whom also we have access by faith.”**
John 14:6 — **“No man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”**
Hebrews 7:25 — **“Come unto God by him.”**
1 Timothy 2:5 — **“One mediator between God and men.”**

4. The Opened Way

Matthew 27:51 — **“The veil of the temple was rent in twain.”**
Hebrews 10:20 — **“A new and living way.”**
Hebrews 9:12 — **“By his own blood he entered in once.”**
Hebrews 6:19 — **“Which entereth into that within the veil.”**
Hebrews 9:24 — **“Into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.”**

5. Confidence And Assurance

Hebrews 10:22 — **“In full assurance of faith.”**
1 John 5:14 — **“The confidence that we have in him.”**
Philippians 1:6 — **“He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it.”**
2 Timothy 1:12 — **“I know whom I have believed.”**
Romans 8:38 — **“For I am persuaded.”**

6. Faith In Christ

Acts 16:31 — **“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.”**
Ephesians 1:13 — **“After that ye believed, ye were sealed.”**
Romans 3:22 — **“Unto all and upon all them that believe.”**
Galatians 2:16 — **“Justified by the faith of Christ.”**
Philippians 3:9 — **“The righteousness which is of God by faith.”**

7. Christ’s Faithfulness

2 Timothy 2:13 — **“He abideth faithful.”**
Hebrews 7:25 — **“He ever liveth to make intercession.”**
Hebrews 13:8 — **“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.”**

1 Corinthians 1:9 — **“God is faithful.”**
1 Thessalonians 5:24 — **“Faithful is he that calleth you.”**

8. Sonship And Prayer

Romans 8:15 — **“Abba, Father.”**
Galatians 4:6 — **“God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts.”**
Matthew 6:9 — **“Our Father which art in heaven.”**
Philippians 4:6 — **“Let your requests be made known unto God.”**
1 Peter 5:7 — **“Casting all your care upon him.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 3:12 should permanently change the way a saved believer thinks about approaching God. Paul does not describe access as something reserved for unusually mature Christians, ordained clergy, mystics, monks, or people who have somehow accumulated enough religious points to get through heaven’s security gate. He says, **“we have boldness and access with confidence.”** The words are present tense, and the possession belongs to those who are in Christ. That means the youngest genuine believer has a privilege no earthly king can purchase. Through Jesus Christ he can approach the Father directly. Religion has a habit of constructing velvet ropes around things God opened by blood, but the New Testament keeps pointing back to the same Mediator. **When Christ opened the way to the Father, no religious institution received authority to install another locked door.**

This boldness must be understood biblically, because flesh can corrupt almost anything. Boldness is not swagger before God, and confidence is not presumption. We do not enter God’s presence as though holiness has become casual or sin has become insignificant. We come because Christ’s blood answered the guilt that kept sinners away. Hebrews tells us to come boldly to the throne of grace, but it still calls it a throne. Reverence and confidence therefore belong together. A believer can bow deeply while approaching freely. He can confess sin honestly without fearing that one admitted failure will cause God to revoke his sonship. **Grace does not make God less holy; it gives the believer a holy way to approach Him without being consumed.**

The verse also exposes how unstable a Christian becomes when he bases assurance on his current spiritual condition. Some days prayer feels powerful; other days it feels like every sentence is wearing boots made of concrete. Some days Scripture seems bright; other days the believer fights distraction through every paragraph. If access depended upon those sensations, confidence would vanish every time emotions changed direction. But the verse begins **“In whom,”** not “in how well you feel this morning.” Standing is in

Christ. Fellowship must still be maintained, sin confessed, and obedience pursued, but the believer's acceptance does not fluctuate with emotional temperature. **Our feelings may rise and fall like a thermometer, but the finished work of Christ is not taking its temperature from us.**

Finally, this privilege ought to produce prayer rather than merely doctrine about prayer. Having access while refusing to use it is one of the strangest contradictions in Christian living. We will consult friends, read opinions, search for solutions, rehearse problems in our minds, worry through the night, and sometimes treat prayer as the emergency lever behind glass marked "break only after everything else fails." Yet the Father has given direct access through the Son. Philippians 4:6 says, **"in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."** First Peter 5:7 says, **"Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you."** The believer who understands Ephesians 3:12 should not become proud of having access; he should become ashamed of how little he uses it. **The door to the Father is open, the Mediator is sufficient, the blood has spoken, and confidence is ours in Christ—so there is little wisdom in carrying alone what heaven has invited us to bring inside.**

Why Prayer Should Not Feel Impossible

Key Passage: Ephesians 3:12

"In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him." — Ephesians 3:12

Prayer becomes unnecessarily complicated when a Christian begins looking at himself instead of looking at the One through whom he approaches God. Ephesians 3:12 does not say, "In whom the strongest Christians may occasionally obtain access if they have behaved well enough." It says, **"In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him."** Every major word points away from personal worthiness and toward Jesus Christ. The access is **"in whom."** The boldness is possessed now. The confidence rests in Christ rather than in our fluctuating spiritual condition. Yet many saved people approach prayer like a trespasser creeping across somebody else's property, hoping heaven does not notice them before they can whisper a request and run. They know doctrinally that Christ died for them, but practically they still imagine they have to become sufficiently impressive before the Father will listen. That is not humility; it is a failure to understand what the blood of Christ accomplished. **When Christ opened the way to the**

Father, He did not leave the believer standing outside trying to earn permission to knock.

There is, of course, a legitimate sense of unworthiness in the Christian life. In ourselves we are unworthy. Paul called himself **"less than the least of all saints"** (Ephesians 3:8), and nobody reading his ministry could accuse him of possessing an inflated doctrine of human goodness. Isaiah saw the Lord and cried, **"Woe is me! for I am undone"** (Isaiah 6:5). Job said, **"I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes"** (Job 42:6). Peter fell before Christ and said, **"Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord"** (Luke 5:8). Biblical men who saw something of God did not walk away admiring themselves. But here is the difference: recognizing that we are unworthy in ourselves does not mean believing that Christ is insufficient to bring us near. The gospel does not teach the sinner to manufacture worthiness; it places the believer in the Worthy One. Ephesians 1:6 says we are **"accepted in the beloved."** There is the answer to the anxious conscience. **Prayer does not require us to convince God that we deserve access; prayer begins with God declaring that our access rests in His Son.**

The devil, the flesh, bad religion, and sometimes bad preaching all know how to turn prayer into an obstacle course. One voice says you did not pray enough yesterday, so why should God listen today? Another says you are not spiritual enough. Another points to an old failure already confessed and forgiven. Another insists that unless your emotions are warm, your words eloquent, your knees sore, and your vocabulary sufficiently religious, the request probably never made it past the ceiling. Meanwhile Ephesians 3:12 sits there in plain English and tears down the whole carnival: **"we have boldness and access with confidence."** Prayer is not easy because sin is insignificant. Prayer is possible because Christ is sufficient. It is not casual because God is holy, but it is not impossible because the believer is in Christ. **The throne is still a throne, but because of Jesus Christ it is a throne of grace.**

1. Prayer Begins With Position, Not Performance

The first two words of Ephesians 3:12 are **"In whom."** Those words should be written across the doorway of every discussion about prayer. Paul does not begin with what the believer feels, what the believer accomplished, how long the believer prayed yesterday, or whether the believer considers himself spiritually impressive today. He begins with Christ. Ephesians has already established the believer's position repeatedly. We are blessed **"with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ"** (Ephesians 1:3). We are **"accepted in the beloved"** (Ephesians 1:6). We have **"redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins"** (Ephesians 1:7). We have been **"made nigh by the blood of Christ"** (Ephesians 2:13). Before Paul ever tells us about our access in chapter 3, he spends two

chapters telling us where we stand. God knows that if you get your position wrong, you will turn prayer into religious begging instead of believing access.

This is where the distinction between standing and state becomes indispensable. The believer's **standing** is what God has made him in Christ. His **state** is how consistently he is living in practical fellowship with that standing. The state can be poor. A saved man can be cold, carnal, distracted, disobedient, discouraged, or spiritually lazy. Scripture never minimizes those conditions. First Corinthians 3:1 speaks to believers as **"carnal, even as unto babes in Christ."** But notice the last two words: **"in Christ."** Carnality required correction, yet their position did not evaporate every time their behavior dipped below the standard. That distinction does not excuse sin; it makes biblical correction possible without turning every failure into another conversion experience. **If standing rises and falls with state, assurance becomes a spiritual elevator with the flesh pushing the buttons.**

Prayer therefore begins from the believer's standing in Christ, while fellowship determines the quality of his practical walk with God. First John 1:9 says, **"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."** Confession matters because fellowship matters. But confession is not a repeated application for adoption. A son who disobeys his father needs correction and restored fellowship; he does not need to be born into the family again every Thursday afternoon. Romans 8:15 says believers have received **"the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father."** That is the relationship from which prayer operates. **You do not confess sin so God will finally allow you to become His child; you confess because you are His child and refuse to let unjudged sin spoil fellowship with your Father.**

2. Calvary Opened What Sin Had Closed

Sin creates distance. The first human response to fallen guilt is seen in Genesis 3:8, where Adam and Eve **"hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God."** Sin still does that. It produces hiding, excuses, blame, fear, and avoidance. Man knows something is wrong between himself and God even when he spends years inventing philosophies to explain why God supposedly does not exist. The conscience knows there is a Judge before the intellect finishes building its escape route. Isaiah 59:2 says, **"your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you."** If prayer depended on sinners repairing that separation by personal righteousness, nobody would ever get through. The problem is not that heaven has poor reception. The problem is that sin destroyed fellowship with God.

Then comes Calvary. Hebrews 10:19 says believers have **"boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus."** Notice what provides the boldness: not our spotless

performance but His shed blood. Verse 20 calls it **"a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil."** Matthew 27:51 records that when Christ died, **"the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom."** God tore it from the top. Man did not climb up and cut his own entrance into the presence of God. Redemption came downward. The whole gospel is the story of God accomplishing what religion could never climb high enough to reach. **Man spent centuries building ladders; Christ opened the door.**

This is why any system that places another necessary spiritual mediator between the saved believer and God is moving backward across Calvary. First Timothy 2:5 says, **"For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."** One means one. No amount of ceremony turns one into seventeen. The believer may ask other Christians to pray, and Scripture certainly encourages intercession, but another Christian does not become your mediator before the Father. Christ holds that office without an assistant staff. Ephesians 2:18 says, **"For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father."** Through Him. By one Spirit. Unto the Father. That is the whole Godhead involved in access, and there is no vacancy in the arrangement for religious bureaucracy. **Calvary did not tear down the veil so somebody could sew another one together and sell tickets to get behind it.**

3. Boldness Is Not The Same Thing As Arrogance

The word **"boldness"** frightens some Christians because they confuse boldness with presumption. They think approaching God confidently sounds disrespectful, so they adopt a posture of perpetual uncertainty as though doubt were a form of reverence. But Hebrews 4:16 says, **"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace."** God Himself commands the bold approach. The command does not say come arrogantly, carelessly, casually, or demanding your way like a spoiled child. It says come boldly. Biblical boldness is not a high opinion of yourself. It is a high opinion of the sufficiency of Jesus Christ.

The throne remains a throne. God has not become the believer's buddy in the trivial sense modern religion sometimes communicates. He is still **"the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy"** (Isaiah 57:15). Revelation 4 does not picture heaven as a casual coffee shop where everybody treats the Almighty as one of the fellows. God remains majestic, sovereign, holy, and worthy of worship. Yet that same holy God invites His children to approach. Reverence and confidence are not enemies. A child may deeply respect his father while knowing he is welcome in the house. **The blood of Christ did not make God less holy; it made a holy way for sinners to come near.**

Arrogance says, “God should hear me because I deserve it.” Boldness says, “God invites me because Christ is worthy.” Arrogance points inward. Boldness points upward. Arrogance presents its résumé. Boldness pleads the blood. The Pharisee in Luke 18 stood and prayed **“with himself,”** rehearsing his fasting, giving, and superiority. The publican would not even lift his eyes to heaven and said, **“God be merciful to me a sinner.”** Jesus said the latter went down justified. The answer is not to turn the publican’s humility into lifelong uncertainty after salvation. Once God has justified the believer, he may still approach humbly, but now he approaches as one who has been brought near. **True boldness kneels lower than pride ever could because it knows the only reason the door is open is Jesus Christ.**

4. Your Weakness Does Not Make Christ Weak

One of the most common obstacles to prayer is personal weakness. A believer looks at his inconsistency, poor concentration, inadequate knowledge, emotional instability, or repeated struggles and decides that somebody else probably has better access to God. That is exactly backward. Hebrews 4:15 says our High Priest is one who can **“be touched with the feeling of our infirmities.”** The next verse does not conclude, “Therefore stay away until you improve.” It says, **“Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”** The time you most need grace is the time weakness is most obvious. If you had to overcome the weakness before coming for grace, grace would arrive about as usefully as an ambulance showing up after the patient had cured himself.

Romans 8:26 addresses weakness even more directly: **“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought.”** Notice that the Bible anticipates believers sometimes not even knowing how to pray properly. God did not respond by cancelling their prayer privileges. The Spirit **“maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.”** That is an astonishing comfort. Prayer does not rest upon flawless wording. God is not grading sentence structure at the throne. There are times when a broken believer barely knows what to say, and heaven is not confused by the lack of polished vocabulary. **A groan carried by the Spirit travels farther than an eloquent speech carried by pride.**

Paul himself learned that weakness could become the setting for divine sufficiency. In 2 Corinthians 12:9 Christ told him, **“My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.”** The lesson was not that weakness is good in itself or that Christians should cultivate incompetence. The lesson was dependence. Paul wanted the thorn removed; God taught him that His power did not depend upon Paul feeling strong. The same principle applies in prayer. A believer may enter prayer tired, confused,

discouraged, burdened, or emotionally drained and still approach the same Father through the same Son by the same Spirit. **Your weakness may change the sound of your prayer, but it does not change the strength of your Mediator.**

5. Feelings Are Poor Gatekeepers For The Throne

There will be days when prayer feels natural and days when prayer feels like trying to lift a stone wall with your fingertips. Feelings change because we live in bodies, face circumstances, experience fatigue, carry burdens, endure temptation, and battle the flesh. None of that means feelings are worthless. David expressed intense emotion throughout the Psalms. Paul spoke of sorrow, heaviness, joy, fear, comfort, and longing. The problem begins when emotion is promoted from servant to authority and asked to determine whether God's promises are still valid. Ephesians 3:12 does not say, "In whom we have access when access feels real." It says, **"we have"** it.

Christian assurance rests on facts before feelings. Christ died. Christ was buried. Christ rose again. Christ sits at the right hand of God. Christ makes intercession. The believer is accepted in the beloved. The believer is sealed with the Holy Spirit. Those truths do not become more true on an emotionally strong morning or less true at midnight when anxiety is knocking on every window of the mind. Second Timothy 1:12 says, **"I know whom I have believed."** Paul's confidence was tied to a Person. **Feelings may describe the weather inside the soul, but they do not rewrite the geography of where the believer stands in Christ.**

That is particularly important after failure. When a Christian sins, conviction can be sharp, and it should be. The Holy Spirit does not pat rebellion on the head and call it growth. But conviction should drive the believer toward God in confession, not away from Him in despair. The flesh says, "Hide until you feel worthy again." Scripture says, **"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins"** (1 John 1:9). Who benefits from a Christian hiding from God for a week because he sinned yesterday? Certainly not the Christian. The devil does not mind conviction if he can twist it into isolation. **Biblical conviction says, "Get right with God"; condemnation whispers, "Stay away from God." Learn the difference.**

6. Prayer Is Not A Religious Performance

Jesus specifically warned against turning prayer into theater. Matthew 6:5 describes hypocrites who loved to pray standing in public **"that they may be seen of men."** Verse 7 warns, **"when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do."** Religious man can corrupt something as beautiful as prayer into a stage performance for other religious people. He can measure spirituality by length, volume, vocabulary, posture, tone of voice,

or how many impressive phrases can be squeezed into five minutes. None of those things guarantees that the heart is speaking with God. A man can pray forty minutes and spend thirty-nine of them listening to himself.

Prayer does not require theatrical language because the Father already knows what we need. Matthew 6:8 says, **"your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him."** That does not make prayer unnecessary; it makes performance unnecessary. We are not informing an ignorant God. We are communing with our Father, expressing dependence, asking according to His will, giving thanks, confessing sin, interceding for others, and casting cares upon Him. Philippians 4:6 says, **"in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."** Every thing. That includes concerns that do not sound dramatic enough for a testimony meeting.

This should free Christians who think they are "bad at prayer." If by that they mean they struggle with consistency, then discipline is needed. If they mean they do not sound like somebody else, that is another matter entirely. God did not ask you to imitate another Christian's prayer voice. He did not ask you to memorize somebody's spiritual vocabulary and perform it back to Him. He asked you to come through Christ. A child speaking plainly to his father can be more genuine than a professional religious speech polished until every human trace has been removed. **God is not impressed when prayer sounds magnificent to everybody except the person it is supposedly addressed to.**

7. Open Access Should Produce A Praying Life

The tragedy of Ephesians 3:12 is not that believers lack access. The tragedy is that we have it and often barely use it. We carry burdens God invited us to cast upon Him. We rehearse worries for hours that we could have brought to the throne within minutes. We consult people, search for information, imagine worst-case scenarios, replay conversations, predict disasters, and mentally argue with people who are not even in the room. Then somewhere near the end of the process we remember prayer. First Peter 5:7 says, **"Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you."** We sometimes treat that verse like an emergency exit rather than the main entrance.

Paul's own letters show that prayer was woven throughout his ministry. He prayed for believers to receive wisdom and spiritual understanding (Ephesians 1:16–18). He prayed for them to be strengthened with might by the Spirit (Ephesians 3:16). He thanked God for churches, prayed for open doors, requested prayer for his preaching, and interceded for others while imprisoned. Prayer was not the decorative introduction before Paul got down to the serious business of ministry. Prayer was part of the serious business. Colossians 4:2 says, **"Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving."** Romans 12:12

says, **“continuing instant in prayer.”** The New Testament assumes that access should be used.

A praying life does not mean spending every waking minute on your knees. It means developing a life in which dependence upon God becomes habitual rather than occasional. Nehemiah could pray in the middle of a conversation with a king. Paul and Silas could pray at midnight in prison. Jesus could pray before major decisions, during pressure, in thanksgiving, and in agony. Prayer belongs in quiet mornings, troubled nights, hospital rooms, cars, offices, churches, bedrooms, moments of temptation, seasons of gratitude, and hours when words come slowly. The throne does not operate according to office hours. **A believer with continual access has no reason to live as though heaven closes after Sunday evening service.**

Conclusion

Prayer should not feel impossible because the possibility of prayer does not originate in us. It originates in Jesus Christ. Ephesians 3:12 says, **“In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.”** The verse never asks us to become worthy enough to approach God. It points us to the One in whom we are accepted, redeemed, brought near, and given access. Personal weakness does not make Christ weaker. Emotional coldness does not undo the blood. A bad day does not tear the veil back together. Sin must be confessed, fellowship must be guarded, obedience matters, and holiness is not optional for discipleship, but none of those truths changes the foundation of the believer’s approach. **Prayer becomes impossible only when we make our worthiness the door instead of Christ.**

So when you feel weak, pray. When you have failed, confess and pray. When you do not know what to say, pray. When you are grateful, pray. When you are frightened, pray. When the answer seems delayed, pray. When circumstances make no sense, pray. When you have experienced victory, pray before victory turns into self-confidence. When temptation approaches, pray before the flesh begins negotiating terms. Hebrews 4:16 does not say come boldly only when you have something impressive to report. It says, **“Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”** Need is not a disqualification from the throne; need is one of the reasons the throne is open.

And remember what sits underneath all of it: **Christ is enough.** He is the Mediator. He is the High Priest. His blood opened the way. His righteousness is sufficient. His intercession continues. His grace is available. His Father has become our Father through Him. The Christian life is not lived by staring endlessly at our inability to deserve what Christ freely

purchased. We recognize our weakness, reject confidence in the flesh, and come anyway—not arrogantly, but believingly; not casually, but confidently; not because we are sufficient, but because He is. **The great lesson of Ephesians 3:12 is not that strong Christians know how to force heaven's door open. It is that Jesus Christ already opened the door, and the weakest child of God is invited to walk through it.**

Ephesians 3:13 Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

"Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory." Ephesians 3:13

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"Wherefore I desire that ye faint not"

The word **"Wherefore"** ties verse 13 to everything Paul has just unfolded. He has explained the mystery of believing Jews and Gentiles becoming fellowheirs and members of the same body. He has spoken of the unsearchable riches of Christ, the manifold wisdom of God displayed by the Church, God's eternal purpose in Christ, and the believer's boldness and access with confidence. Now Paul turns from tremendous doctrine to the very practical danger of discouragement. His readers knew he was suffering, and he understood that watching a faithful servant suffer could shake weaker believers. So he says, **"I desire that ye faint not."** Paul was in trouble, but his concern was that they not lose heart because of his trouble.

To **"faint"** here is not merely physical collapse. It is spiritual weariness that causes a believer to lose courage, loosen his grip, and begin questioning whether faithfulness is worth the cost. Galatians 6:9 says, **"let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."** Second Corinthians 4:1 says, **"seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not."** The danger is real because suffering has a way of testing theology where comfortable circumstances never do. A man may confidently announce that God is sovereign while everything is going well; the doctrine gets inspected more closely when the prison door shuts behind him.

Paul's desire therefore reveals pastoral wisdom. He did not want believers interpreting suffering as proof that the gospel had failed. That is one of the oldest mistakes in religion: if the righteous suffer, somebody assumes God must have lost control. Job's friends

practically built an entire counseling ministry around that error. Paul offers another interpretation. A servant of God can suffer precisely because he is faithful. Second Timothy 3:12 says, **"Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." Faith does not promise a road without tribulation; it teaches you how to recognize God when the road runs through it.**

"at my tribulations for you"

Paul calls them **"my tribulations."** He does not pretend the suffering is imaginary. Biblical faith is not positive thinking that renames chains as jewelry and prison walls as decorative stonework. Paul experienced real confinement, opposition, rejection, beatings, weariness, and danger. Second Corinthians 11 gives a catalogue of suffering that would make most modern definitions of ministerial hardship look rather delicate. Yet Paul does not make suffering the center of his identity. They are his tribulations, but Christ remains his Lord and the gospel remains his mission.

The striking words are **"for you."** Ephesians 3:1 had already called Paul **"the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles."** His imprisonment was connected with the ministry God had entrusted to him toward Gentiles. Paul had preached a gospel that placed believing Gentiles into the same body with believing Jews apart from becoming Jewish proselytes or submitting to Israel's ceremonial system. That ministry brought opposition. Acts repeatedly shows Paul suffering because he carried Christ's message beyond traditional boundaries. He was willing to pay personally for truth that spiritually enriched others.

That is genuine ministry. Paul did not ask, "How does this affect my comfort?" before deciding whether doctrine was worth preaching. He measured ministry by faithfulness to Christ. Second Corinthians 12:15 says, **"I will very gladly spend and be spent for you."** Colossians 1:24 speaks of rejoicing in sufferings for the saints. A hireling calculates how much inconvenience truth may cause before deciding how loudly to preach it. A servant asks what Christ said and leaves the bill with God. **Truth that costs nothing to preach in one generation may have been purchased by blood in another.**

Paul's words also clarify suffering and salvation. His tribulations did not atone for the Ephesians' sins. Only Christ's blood does that. Paul was not a co-redeemer adding ministerial pain to Calvary. Ephesians 1:7 has already said, **"In whom we have redemption through his blood."** Paul's suffering was for their benefit in service, not for their justification. Christ suffered to redeem sinners; Paul suffered to carry the message of that redemption. **Never confuse the servant's scars with the Saviour's blood. One testifies to faithful ministry; the other purchased eternal redemption.**

"which is your glory"

Paul finishes with an extraordinary interpretation of his suffering: **"which is your glory."** What looked outwardly like Paul's humiliation was connected with the Ephesians' spiritual privilege. His imprisonment did not prove their gospel was shameful; his willingness to suffer testified to the value of the message that had reached them. Gentiles who had once been **"without Christ"** and **"far off"** were now fellowheirs, members of the same body, and partakers of promise in Christ. Paul's suffering was bound up with proclaiming that magnificent truth.

The word **"glory"** therefore reverses the world's normal evaluation. Rome could see a prisoner; God saw an apostle fulfilling his stewardship. Men could see chains; the Ephesians were to see the gospel advancing through a man who considered Christ worth the chains. Philippians 1:12 says, **"the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel."** Circumstances that appeared to hinder ministry became instruments that advanced it. God has a habit of using what men call defeat as scaffolding for something they did not know He was building.

This does not mean believers should seek suffering or romanticize persecution. Scripture never commands Christians to create trouble in order to feel spiritual. First Peter 4:15 warns, **"let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer."** There is no glory in consequences produced by foolishness or sin. But verse 16 adds, **"Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed."** The issue is not suffering itself but the reason for it. **Pain is not automatically spiritual, but suffering faithfully for Christ can carry a glory the world has no scale capable of weighing.**

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 3:13 teaches believers not to interpret faithful suffering as evidence of divine failure. Paul's tribulations were real, but they arose in connection with his ministry to the Gentiles and therefore became part of the story of their spiritual blessing. His chains did not cancel his calling, and persecution did not invalidate the mystery he preached.

The verse also distinguishes Christ's redemptive suffering from the servant's ministerial suffering. Paul did not suffer to purchase salvation; Christ alone accomplished redemption through His blood. Paul suffered because he carried that saving message faithfully. What appeared to be shame from Rome's viewpoint became glory when seen through God's eternal purpose.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. Do Not Faint

Galatians 6:9 — **“Let us not be weary in well doing.”**
2 Corinthians 4:1 — **“We faint not.”**
2 Corinthians 4:16 — **“For which cause we faint not.”**
Luke 18:1 — **“Men ought always to pray, and not to faint.”**
Hebrews 12:3 — **“Lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.”**

2. Tribulation In Christian Service

John 16:33 — **“In the world ye shall have tribulation.”**
Acts 14:22 — **“We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.”**
Romans 5:3 — **“We glory in tribulations also.”**
2 Timothy 3:12 — **“Shall suffer persecution.”**
1 Thessalonians 3:3 — **“We are appointed thereunto.”**

3. Paul’s Suffering For The Gentiles

Ephesians 3:1 — **“The prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles.”**
Colossians 1:24 — **“My sufferings for you.”**
2 Corinthians 12:15 — **“I will very gladly spend and be spent for you.”**
2 Timothy 2:10 — **“I endure all things for the elect's sakes.”**
Philippians 2:17 — **“Offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith.”**

4. Suffering Does Not Stop The Gospel

Philippians 1:12 — **“Unto the furtherance of the gospel.”**
2 Timothy 2:9 — **“The word of God is not bound.”**
Acts 28:30–31 — **“Preaching the kingdom of God… with all confidence.”**
Philippians 1:14 — **“Much more bold to speak the word without fear.”**
1 Thessalonians 2:2 — **“We were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel.”**

5. Suffering For Christ Is Not Shame

1 Peter 4:16 — **“If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed.”**
Romans 8:18 — **“Not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed.”**
2 Timothy 1:12 — **“Nevertheless I am not ashamed.”**
Philippians 1:20 — **“Christ shall be magnified in my body.”**
Hebrews 11:26 — **“Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches.”**

6. Christ Alone Purchased Redemption

Ephesians 1:7 — **“Redemption through his blood.”**
Colossians 1:14 — **“Redemption through his blood.”**
1 Peter 1:18–19 — **“With the precious blood of Christ.”**

Hebrews 9:12 — **“By his own blood… having obtained eternal redemption.”**
1 Corinthians 15:3 — **“Christ died for our sins.”**

7. God Uses Affliction For Good

2 Corinthians 4:17 — **“Worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”**
Romans 8:28 — **“All things work together for good.”**
Genesis 50:20 — **“God meant it unto good.”**
Philippians 1:19 — **“This shall turn to my salvation through your prayer.”**
Psalm 119:71 — **“It is good for me that I have been afflicted.”**

8. Glory Beyond Present Suffering

Romans 8:17 — **“If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.”**
Romans 8:18 — **“The glory which shall be revealed in us.”**
2 Corinthians 4:17 — **“An eternal weight of glory.”**
1 Peter 5:10 — **“After that ye have suffered a while.”**
2 Timothy 2:12 — **“If we suffer, we shall also reign with him.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 3:13 corrects one of the most damaging assumptions believers can make: that suffering necessarily means something has gone wrong with God’s plan. Paul was imprisoned, but he did not interpret prison as proof that Christ had abandoned him. He actually worried that other believers would misread his circumstances and **“faint.”** That tells us how easily visible circumstances can become false commentators on invisible truth. We look at chains and assume defeat, at opposition and assume failure, at hardship and assume we missed God’s will. Scripture refuses that shallow arithmetic. **Sometimes obedience puts a man in the storm that compromise would have allowed him to avoid.**

Paul also teaches us that faithful service may cost the servant something while blessing somebody else. He calls them **“my tribulations for you.”** That is foreign to a Christianity built around comfort, personal branding, and the constant question, “What do I get out of this?” Real ministry spends. Parents spend themselves for children, pastors for flocks, missionaries for fields, teachers for students, and ordinary believers for people they may never be able to repay. That expenditure does not purchase salvation, and it should never be confused with Christ’s unique sacrifice at Calvary. But grace produces servants who can endure inconvenience because somebody else’s spiritual good matters more than their immediate ease. **The gospel is free to the sinner, but carrying it faithfully has often cost the messenger dearly.**

The phrase **“which is your glory”** teaches us to evaluate suffering from heaven’s viewpoint rather than Rome’s. Rome saw Paul behind bars. God saw a servant whose imprisonment was helping carry gospel truth into places it might never have reached otherwise. Philippians confirms that his bonds actually made others bolder to preach. This does not mean every hardship automatically produces spiritual fruit. Foolishness can create unnecessary trouble, sin can produce painful consequences, and stubbornness can disguise itself as persecution if we are not careful. But suffering that comes from faithfulness to Christ must never be treated as shame. **The world judges a ministry by whether the servant escaped the chains; God may judge it by whether he kept preaching while wearing them.**

Finally, Paul’s concern that the Ephesians not faint speaks directly to every believer who becomes discouraged by watching faithful people suffer. Do not build your theology on somebody else’s hospital room, prison cell, financial trial, rejection, or grief. Build it on the words of God. Circumstances change; Scripture does not. The same Paul who suffered could still speak of unsearchable riches, eternal purpose, manifold wisdom, confident access, and glory because he knew that present pain was not the whole story. Romans 8:18 says present sufferings are **“not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” Faith does not deny the weight of today’s tribulation; it simply refuses to pretend today is large enough to contain the ending.**

Ephesians 3:14 Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

“For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,”
Ephesians 3:14

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

“For this cause”

Paul begins, **“For this cause,”** and those words reach backward into the tremendous doctrinal ground he has just covered. The expression first appeared in Ephesians 3:1: **“For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles.”** Paul then interrupted the sentence to explain the mystery, his stewardship of grace, the one body, the unsearchable riches of Christ, the manifold wisdom of God, and the eternal purpose accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. After warning the Ephesians not to faint at his tribulations, he returns to the prayer he was beginning earlier. Doctrine has brought him to

his knees. He has not studied the mystery merely so he can draw a better chart; what God has revealed moves him to pray that believers actually experience the spiritual strength appropriate to their position.

That is one of the great lessons of the verse. Biblical doctrine should lead to prayer, worship, holiness, and spiritual dependence. If a man can spend years learning Scripture and become harder, colder, prouder, and less prayerful, he has learned information without allowing truth to govern him. Paul has just written about things hidden from ages, heavenly principalities, God's eternal purpose, and direct access through Christ. His response is not to congratulate himself on being the man who knows these truths. He bows. **The man who has genuinely seen something of God's eternal purpose usually discovers that knees are more useful than applause.**

"For this cause" also means Paul's prayer is rooted in objective truth rather than emotional impulse. He is not praying because the Ephesians happen to be having a bad week. He is praying because of what God has made them in Christ. They are fellowheirs. They are of the same body. They possess access with confidence. They are part of the Church through which God displays His wisdom. Paul therefore asks God to make the inward life of these believers correspond more fully with their exalted spiritual position. Christian prayer is strongest when it grows from doctrine. **The best prayers are not attempts to talk God into becoming faithful; they are responses to what His word has already declared Him to be.**

"I bow my knees"

Paul says, **"I bow my knees."** Scripture records prayer in more than one bodily posture, so the verse should not be turned into a legalistic rule claiming that every legitimate prayer must be offered on the knees. Abraham stood before the LORD in Genesis 18:22. David sat before the LORD in 2 Samuel 7:18. Jesus spoke of men standing and praying in Mark 11:25. Yet kneeling is a deeply biblical expression of humility, submission, worship, and earnestness. Solomon **"kneeled down upon his knees"** when dedicating the temple (2 Chronicles 6:13). Daniel **"kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed"** (Daniel 6:10). Jesus Himself **"kneeled down, and prayed"** in Luke 22:41.

Paul's posture therefore fits the burden of the prayer. He is a prisoner, but the Roman chains have not prevented him from entering the presence of God. Rome may control where his body is housed, but it cannot control where his prayer goes. The man who has just told the Ephesians not to faint now demonstrates where spiritual endurance is found. He bends before God rather than bending before circumstances. The world often interprets kneeling as weakness, but Scripture presents it as a position from which believers can

stand spiritually. **A man on his knees before God may be standing taller than an empire that thinks it has him chained.**

The expression also exposes the foolishness of spiritual pride. Paul has received tremendous revelation, yet revelation has not made him self-sufficient. He does not say, "I have sufficient doctrine now; prayer is unnecessary." Knowledge sends him lower. First Corinthians 8:1 warns, **"Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth."** Knowledge divorced from dependence can inflate the flesh, but truth received properly produces humility. Paul knows that neither his apostolic authority nor his doctrinal knowledge can manufacture spiritual maturity in the Ephesians. God must work in the inner man, which is exactly what the following verses will request.

There is practical instruction here without ceremonial bondage. Kneeling physically can help the believer remember whom he is addressing, but the heart must bow whether the body can or not. A man can wear holes in the knees of his trousers while his heart remains upright in rebellion. Isaiah 66:2 says God looks to him who is **"poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word."** God is not impressed by religious posture divorced from spiritual submission. **Bent knees are beautiful when they belong to a bowed heart; otherwise they are only exercise.**

"unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ"

Paul knows exactly to whom he is praying: **"unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."** Christian prayer is not directed toward an undefined spiritual force, an impersonal universe, departed saints, angels, or some vague divine energy. Paul approaches the Father. Ephesians 2:18 already gave the pattern: **"For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father."** The believer comes to the Father through the Son by the Spirit. The entire Godhead is involved in Christian access.

The wording **"the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ"** also keeps Christ's identity and relationship clear. Jesus Christ is not merely an inspired religious teacher pointing toward God while remaining separate from divine glory. Ephesians 3:9 has already spoken of God who **"created all things by Jesus Christ."** Ephesians 1:20–22 places Christ above every principality and power. Yet as the incarnate Son, Christ speaks of His Father and submits perfectly to Him. Scripture presents distinction of persons without dividing the Godhead into competing gods. John 1:1 says, **"the Word was with God, and the Word was God."** Biblical Christianity does not solve divine mysteries by deleting half the verses.

The expression also reminds us that our relationship with the Father exists through Jesus Christ. We do not approach God on the basis of some universal fatherhood of mankind. John 1:12 says, **"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the**

sons of God." Galatians 3:26 says, **"For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus."** Sonship in the saving sense belongs to those who are in Christ, not automatically to every member of Adam's fallen race. Jesus told unbelieving religious leaders in John 8:44, **"Ye are of your father the devil."** That verse ruins sentimental religion rather quickly.

Yet for the believer, the truth is glorious. Romans 8:15 says we have received **"the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father."** Galatians 4:6 says, **"God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father."** Paul bows before the Father not as a condemned stranger trying to earn entrance but as one who possesses access through Christ. Ephesians 3:12 has just said, **"In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him."** Verse 14 shows Paul using the access he has just described. **Doctrine about access becomes valuable when the believer actually walks through the open door and prays.**

The title **"our Lord Jesus Christ"** also preserves authority inside intimacy. God is Father, but Jesus Christ is **Lord**. Modern religion sometimes likes the comfort of family language while quietly misplacing the authority of Lordship. Paul does not. The same Christ through whom we approach the Father is the Lord before whom every knee shall bow. Prayer therefore involves both confidence and submission. We come boldly, but not to issue orders. We come as children, but not as rulers. **The throne of grace is open to the believer, but it has never been converted into a customer-service counter where God takes instructions.**

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 3:14 shows doctrine turning into devotion and spiritual dependence. After explaining the mystery, the one body, the manifold wisdom of God, and confident access through Christ, Paul bows his knees. His prayer is not an interruption of doctrine but its proper result. Truth about the believer's standing in Christ should produce humble dependence upon God for strength in the inner man.

The verse also presents the direction and basis of Christian prayer. Paul prays to **"the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."** Believers approach the Father through Christ by the Spirit, not through earthly mediators or religious ceremony. Their boldness does not eliminate reverence, and God's fatherhood does not eliminate Christ's lordship.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. Prayer Flowing From Doctrine

Ephesians 1:16 — **"Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers."**

Colossians 1:9 — **“Do not cease to pray for you.”**
Romans 12:1 — **“I beseech you therefore, brethren.”**
Philippians 1:9 — **“And this I pray.”**
2 Thessalonians 1:11 — **“Wherefore also we pray always for you.”**

2. Kneeling Before God

2 Chronicles 6:13 — **“Kneeled down upon his knees.”**
Daniel 6:10 — **“Kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed.”**
Luke 22:41 — **“Kneeled down, and prayed.”**
Acts 20:36 — **“He kneeled down, and prayed with them all.”**
Acts 21:5 — **“We kneeled down on the shore, and prayed.”**

3. Other Biblical Prayer Postures

2 Samuel 7:18 — **“Then went king David in, and sat before the LORD.”**
Genesis 18:22 — **“Abraham stood yet before the LORD.”**
Mark 11:25 — **“When ye stand praying.”**
Psalm 95:6 — **“Let us kneel before the LORD our maker.”**
1 Timothy 2:8 — **“Lifting up holy hands.”**

4. Access To The Father

Ephesians 2:18 — **“Through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.”**
Ephesians 3:12 — **“We have boldness and access with confidence.”**
John 14:6 — **“No man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”**
Hebrews 4:16 — **“Come boldly unto the throne of grace.”**
Hebrews 10:19 — **“Boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.”**

5. God As The Believer’s Father

Romans 8:15 — **“Whereby we cry, Abba, Father.”**
Galatians 4:6 — **“Crying, Abba, Father.”**
Matthew 6:9 — **“Our Father which art in heaven.”**
John 20:17 — **“My Father, and your Father.”**
1 John 3:1 — **“That we should be called the sons of God.”**

6. Sonship Through Christ

John 1:12 — **“Power to become the sons of God.”**
Galatians 3:26 — **“Children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.”**
Ephesians 1:5 — **“The adoption of children by Jesus Christ.”**

Romans 8:14 — **“They are the sons of God.”**
1 John 5:12 — **“He that hath the Son hath life.”**

7. Christ As Lord

Acts 2:36 — **“Both Lord and Christ.”**
Romans 10:9 — **“Confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus.”**
Philippians 2:11 — **“Jesus Christ is Lord.”**
Colossians 2:6 — **“Christ Jesus the Lord.”**
Revelation 19:16 — **“KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.”**

8. Humility Before God

James 4:10 — **“Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord.”**
1 Peter 5:6 — **“Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God.”**
Isaiah 66:2 — **“Poor and of a contrite spirit.”**
Psalm 51:17 — **“A broken and a contrite heart.”**
Micah 6:8 — **“Walk humbly with thy God.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 3:14 teaches something modern Christianity desperately needs: the proper response to great doctrine is not merely more discussion but deeper dependence upon God. Paul has just unfolded truths large enough to fill libraries—the mystery hidden in former ages, Gentiles becoming fellowheirs, the one body, heavenly principalities observing God’s wisdom, and an eternal purpose centered in Christ. Yet when Paul reaches the practical response, he bows his knees. He does not treat revelation as material for intellectual exhibition. He knows that believers can understand correct doctrine on paper and still desperately need God to work in their inner man. The Bible was never given merely to make us informed spectators of divine truth. **Truth has reached its proper destination when it brings the mind into light and the heart into submission.**

Paul’s kneeling also corrects the strange idea that prayer is primarily for people who do not know enough Bible to solve their own problems. Paul knew more revealed truth than any religious philosopher around him, and he prayed constantly. Knowledge did not make prayer unnecessary; it showed him how necessary prayer really was. The mature Christian discovers that study and prayer are not competitors. Scripture gives prayer content, while prayer keeps study from becoming sterile pride. A believer who studies without praying can become sharp enough to dissect everybody else’s errors while remaining blind to the condition of his own heart. **A Bible open on the desk and knees bent before God belong in the same room.**

The words **“unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ”** also rescue prayer from vague spirituality. We are not sending positive thoughts into the universe or addressing whatever concept of deity happens to make people comfortable. We come to the Father through Jesus Christ. That access was purchased by blood, not created by human sincerity. At the same time, the believer comes as a child rather than a condemned outsider because faith in Christ brings adoption. This should produce both assurance and reverence. God is Father, but He is not casual; Christ is Saviour, but He is also Lord. **The believer may come boldly without ever forgetting whose throne he approaches.**

Finally, Paul shows us that prayer is one of the strongest answers to discouragement. Verse 13 told the Ephesians not to faint because of his tribulations, and verse 14 immediately shows Paul on his knees. He does not answer suffering with denial, resentment, panic, or endless speculation. He prays. There are burdens that cannot be argued away and circumstances that cannot be fixed by another conversation, but the believer still has access to the Father. Kneeling does not mean surrendering to circumstances; it means surrendering the circumstances to God. Rome could imprison Paul but could not imprison his intercession. **The Christian who knows where to bow has already discovered where real strength begins.**

Ephesians 3:15 Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

“Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,”
Ephesians 3:15

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

“Of whom the whole family”

The words **“Of whom”** reach directly back to **“the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ”** in verse 14. Paul has bowed his knees unto the Father, and now he identifies the source from whom the whole family receives its name. The family does not originate in man, religious organization, denominational structure, national ancestry, or ecclesiastical machinery. It is **“of”** the Father. That agrees with Ephesians 2:19, where saved Gentiles are told that they are **“no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God.”** Salvation does more than rescue a sinner from judgment; it changes his spiritual relationship and household.

The expression **“the whole family”** must not be twisted into the sentimental doctrine that every human being is already a spiritual child of God simply because God created him. Scripture will not allow that. John 1:12 says, **“But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.”** If every man were already a son of God in the saving sense, there would be no need to **“become”** one. Galatians 3:26 says, **“For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.”** Spiritual sonship is connected with faith in Christ, not merely with membership in Adam’s race. The Bible has no interest in comforting a lost sinner by telling him he belongs to God’s redeemed family while he remains outside Christ.

At the same time, Paul says **“the whole family,”** not merely one local congregation, one nationality, one generation, or one earthly assembly. God’s redeemed household is larger than what any believer sees around him. Ephesians has already shown believing Jews and Gentiles brought together in one body, and this verse lifts the believer’s eyes beyond his immediate surroundings. We belong to something larger than our town, century, nationality, and earthly fellowship. **Religion loves to shrink God’s family down to the size of its own mailing list; Scripture keeps opening the walls until the believer remembers that God’s household is bigger than his favorite circle.**

“in heaven and earth is named”

The family is described as being **“in heaven and earth.”** That immediately tells us that death does not erase the family relationship God has established. Some of God’s people are presently on earth; others are already with the Lord. Paul says in Philippians 1:23 that he had a **“desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better.”** Second Corinthians 5:8 says believers are willing **“rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.”** Hebrews 12:23 speaks of **“the spirits of just men made perfect.”** God’s family is therefore not limited to those presently walking around in mortal bodies.

This does not teach soul sleep. A believer who departs this body does not become unconscious until resurrection morning. Paul plainly says **“to depart, and to be with Christ.”** The resurrection of the body is still future, and First Corinthians 15 carefully distinguishes the present mortal body from the resurrection body to come, but the saved person is not erased while waiting. The saints in heaven are still part of God’s family, just as believers on earth are. **The grave can separate a believer from his earthly address, but it cannot remove his name from the Father’s household.**

The expression **“in heaven and earth”** also guards us against making the Church merely an earthly institution. The body of Christ has a heavenly calling and position. Ephesians 2:6 says God **“hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in**

Christ Jesus." Philippians 3:20 says, **"For our conversation is in heaven."** We live on earth, serve on earth, suffer on earth, and walk through a world that often treats heavenly things as foolishness, yet our spiritual standing reaches far above the dirt beneath our feet. **A Christian may own an earthly address, but his citizenship paperwork is filed somewhere considerably higher.**

The final words are **"is named."** Naming in Scripture often carries identity, relationship, authority, or belonging. God is the source of the family's identity. We do not invent the family and then invite God to preside over it. He names it. He defines it. He determines the terms of entrance. Those terms are not race, ritual, law-keeping, church membership, baptismal water, human merit, or religious pedigree. They are centered in Jesus Christ. Ephesians 1:5 says believers have received **"the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself."** Galatians 4:4–5 says Christ came **"that we might receive the adoption of sons."**

That also means God's family cannot be defined according to whatever culture presently calls spiritual. Men may broaden the household until unbelief, idolatry, false religion, and rejection of Christ are all placed inside it under the banner of universal brotherhood. Scripture refuses the rewrite. Jesus told unbelieving religious men in John 8:42, **"If God were your Father, ye would love me."** Then in verse 44 He said, **"Ye are of your father the devil."** Those are not the words of modern religious diplomacy, but they are the words of Jesus Christ. **God's family is defined by God's Son, not by man's desire to make the guest list more respectable to the world.**

Yet for the believer, the truth is wonderfully secure. He belongs to a family whose identity is grounded in God rather than in temporary earthly relationships. Human families can fail, scatter, quarrel, age, and die. The household of faith stretches from earth into heaven. The Father has not misplaced one member. **What grace joins to Christ, geography cannot divide and death cannot cancel.**

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 3:15 presents God as the source and defining Father of a family extending **"in heaven and earth."** The verse does not teach universal salvation or universal spiritual fatherhood. Scripture clearly ties spiritual sonship to receiving Christ and believing on Him. The family in view belongs to God because of His redemptive work, not because every person automatically occupies that relationship.

The verse also gives great comfort concerning departed believers. Some members of God's household remain on earth while others are with Christ in heaven. Their location has changed, but their relationship to God has not. The Church's heavenly position and God's

enduring household remind believers that salvation joins them to something larger than their present earthly circumstances.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. The Household Of God

Ephesians 2:19 — **“Of the household of God.”**
Galatians 6:10 — **“Them who are of the household of faith.”**
1 Timothy 3:15 — **“The house of God, which is the church of the living God.”**
Hebrews 3:6 — **“Whose house are we.”**
1 Peter 4:17 — **“Judgment must begin at the house of God.”**

2. Children Of God Through Christ

John 1:12 — **“Power to become the sons of God.”**
Galatians 3:26 — **“Children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.”**
Ephesians 1:5 — **“The adoption of children by Jesus Christ.”**
Galatians 4:5 — **“That we might receive the adoption of sons.”**
Romans 8:14 — **“They are the sons of God.”**

3. God Is Not Father Of Every Man Spiritually

John 8:42 — **“If God were your Father, ye would love me.”**
John 8:44 — **“Ye are of your father the devil.”**
1 John 3:10 — **“The children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil.”**
John 3:18 — **“He that believeth not is condemned already.”**
Ephesians 2:3 — **“Were by nature the children of wrath.”**

4. Saints Present With The Lord

2 Corinthians 5:8 — **“Absent from the body… present with the Lord.”**
Philippians 1:23 — **“To depart, and to be with Christ.”**
Luke 23:43 — **“To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.”**
Hebrews 12:23 — **“The spirits of just men made perfect.”**
Revelation 6:9 — **“The souls of them that were slain.”**

5. The Believer’s Heavenly Connection

Ephesians 2:6 — **“Sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”**
Philippians 3:20 — **“Our conversation is in heaven.”**
Colossians 3:1 — **“Seek those things which are above.”**
Colossians 3:3 — **“Your life is hid with Christ in God.”**
Hebrews 12:22 — **“The heavenly Jerusalem.”**

6. One Family Across Jew And Gentile

Ephesians 2:14 — **“Hath made both one.”**
Ephesians 2:16 — **“Reconcile both unto God in one body.”**
Ephesians 3:6 — **“Fellowheirs, and of the same body.”**
1 Corinthians 12:13 — **“Whether we be Jews or Gentiles… into one body.”**
Romans 12:5 — **“One body in Christ.”**

7. God Knows Those Who Are His

2 Timothy 2:19 — **“The Lord knoweth them that are his.”**
John 10:14 — **“I know my sheep.”**
John 10:28 — **“They shall never perish.”**
Romans 8:38–39 — **“Shall be able to separate us from the love of God.”**
1 Corinthians 8:3 — **“The same is known of him.”**

8. Our Family Identity Comes From God

1 John 3:1 — **“That we should be called the sons of God.”**
Romans 8:16 — **“We are the children of God.”**
Galatians 4:6 — **“Because ye are sons.”**
Ephesians 5:1 — **“As dear children.”**
Philippians 2:15 — **“The sons of God, without rebuke.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 3:15 should enlarge the believer’s understanding of what it means to belong to God. Christianity is not merely an individual arrangement in which a sinner gets his sins forgiven and then spends the rest of life managing his private spirituality. Salvation brings the believer into a household. Ephesians 2:19 says we are **“of the household of God,”** and Ephesians 3:15 speaks of **“the whole family in heaven and earth.”** That means the Christian belongs to something older, larger, and more enduring than his present congregation, nationality, or generation. No denomination owns the family, no earthly leader founded it, and no culture gets to redefine it. **The Father names the family, Christ brings sinners into it, and the Spirit marks those who belong to it.**

At the same time, the verse must not be stretched into universal fatherhood. There is a popular religious instinct to call every person a child of God regardless of whether he has received Jesus Christ. It sounds compassionate until the Bible is allowed into the conversation. John 1:12 says receiving Christ gives men the right **“to become the sons of God,”** while Ephesians 2 describes the unsaved as **“children of wrath.”** Jesus Himself told unbelieving religious men that if God were their Father they would love Him. The issue is

not whether God created mankind; He did. The issue is whether fallen men automatically possess the saving relationship of sons, and Scripture says they do not. **Creation gives every man accountability to God; regeneration brings the believing sinner into God's family.**

The phrase **"in heaven and earth"** also gives enormous comfort when believers think about death. Christianity does not pretend separation is painless. Death is still called **"the last enemy"** in 1 Corinthians 15:26, and grief is real. But for the saved, death changes location without cancelling relationship. Paul could speak of departing **"to be with Christ,"** and he could speak of being absent from the body and present with the Lord. Those who died in Christ have not slipped out of God's household simply because we cannot presently see them. They are in the heavenly portion of a family that still has members walking on earth. **Death can empty a chair at our table, but it cannot empty heaven of the person Christ received.**

Finally, this verse should change the way believers treat one another while we are still here. If saved people belong to the same household, petty superiority looks especially foolish. Jew and Gentile, rich and poor, educated and uneducated, old and young all come into the family through the same Lord Jesus Christ. That does not erase biblical roles, local church order, accountability, or doctrinal boundaries, but it destroys boasting. Nobody was born naturally into this spiritual family, and nobody bought his place at the table. We are there because of grace. The Father who named the family did not ask us to spend our time competing for attention inside it; He called us to walk as **"dear children." The Christian who knows where he belongs should have less need to prove that he is more important than the relatives sitting beside him.**

Ephesians 3:16 Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

"That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;"
Ephesians 3:16

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"That he would grant you"

Ephesians 3:16 continues the prayer Paul began in verse 14: **“For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”** Paul now tells us what he is asking the Father to do: **“That he would grant you.”** The language immediately places the requested blessing in the category of divine giving. Paul is not asking the Ephesians to manufacture spiritual strength out of determination, personality, emotional excitement, or religious discipline. He is asking God to **grant** something. Christian growth certainly involves obedience, study, prayer, self-denial, and faithful choices, but the power that makes spiritual life effective does not originate in the flesh. The believer works because God works in him.

The wording also shows that Paul’s prayer concerns believers, not lost men seeking justification. These Ephesians have already been saved by grace through faith, sealed with the Holy Spirit, made alive with Christ, raised together, seated in heavenly places, reconciled in one body, and given access to the Father. Paul is not praying that they will become saved again. He is praying that saved people will experience the spiritual strengthening appropriate to what they already possess in Christ. That is the difference between **standing** and **state**. Their standing is secure; their practical spiritual condition needs continual strengthening. **Salvation gives the believer life; discipleship teaches that life to stand upright under pressure.**

The word **“grant”** also destroys the illusion of self-sufficiency. A man may improve habits by discipline, increase knowledge by study, strengthen the body by exercise, and sharpen natural abilities through practice, but spiritual might in the inner man cannot be manufactured by human machinery. Zechariah 4:6 states the principle plainly: **“Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.”** Religious flesh can imitate a great deal of outward activity. It can learn vocabulary, adopt mannerisms, quote verses, build platforms, and make noise. But imitation is not inward power. **The flesh can learn how to look spiritual long before it learns how utterly incapable it is of producing spiritual life.**

“according to the riches of his glory”

Paul does not merely ask God to grant strength **out of** His riches, but **“according to the riches of his glory.”** That is an enormous standard. A wealthy man might give a poor man ten dollars out of his riches and hardly notice the loss. But to give **according to** his riches would mean giving in proportion to what he possesses. Paul is asking God to strengthen believers according to the measure of divine abundance. Since God’s glory cannot be exhausted, the supply behind the prayer is not fragile.

Ephesians has repeatedly described God's resources in the language of riches. Ephesians 1:7 speaks of **"the riches of his grace."** Ephesians 2:7 speaks of **"the exceeding riches of his grace."** Ephesians 3:8 speaks of **"the unsearchable riches of Christ."** Now verse 16 speaks of **"the riches of his glory."** The believer is not dealing with a spiritually bankrupt Father rationing out scraps of strength because heaven is experiencing a shortage. Paul prays on the basis of abundance. **God has never needed to check the balance before answering a prayer for spiritual strength.**

The phrase also corrects the prosperity-minded definition of divine riches. Paul is not praying that every Ephesian become financially wealthy, physically comfortable, socially influential, or free from trouble. He is writing as a prisoner. The strength he seeks is inward. The riches are connected to God's glory, not man's luxury. Philippians 4:19 says, **"But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."** God's riches may sustain a believer through hardship rather than remove every hardship. Sometimes heaven's richest answer is not escape but strength sufficient to remain faithful in the fire.

This is why outward circumstances are a poor measure of inward wealth. Paul could wear chains and still speak of riches. A believer can lose possessions, reputation, health, freedom, or comfort and still possess resources in Christ that no earthly loss can touch. Second Corinthians 4:16 says, **"though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day." The world counts wealth by what surrounds a man; God often reveals wealth by what remains inside him after everything around him has been shaken.**

"to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man"

Here is the heart of the verse: **"to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man."** Paul is praying for spiritual reinforcement at the deepest level of the believer's life. The verb **"strengthened"** tells us weakness is possible. Saved people can become spiritually exhausted, discouraged, fearful, unstable, tempted, distracted, and worn down. None of those conditions necessarily means salvation has been lost. They mean the inner man needs strength.

The source of that strength is **"his Spirit."** The Holy Spirit is not a religious mood, emotional atmosphere, vague influence, or spiritual electricity. He is the divine Person who indwells the believer. Ephesians 1:13 says believers are **"sealed with that holy Spirit of promise."** Ephesians 4:30 warns, **"grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."** The same Spirit who seals the believer also works within him.

Philippians 2:13 says, **“For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”** Spiritual strength comes from divine activity within a surrendered believer.

The phrase **“with might”** indicates something stronger than temporary inspiration. Paul is not asking that the Ephesians feel encouraged for ten minutes after a stirring meeting. He is praying for divine power adequate for spiritual warfare, suffering, temptation, service, and growth. Ephesians 6 will soon command believers to **“be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.”** The Christian life is not sustained by motivational fumes. **A believer cannot fight spiritual battles indefinitely on yesterday’s emotional excitement.**

The location is equally important: **“in the inner man.”** Scripture distinguishes the outward man from the inward man. Second Corinthians 4:16 says, **“though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.”** Romans 7:22 says, **“For I delight in the law of God after the inward man.”** The outward man ages, tires, suffers, and eventually dies. The inner man is where spiritual understanding, desire, conviction, fellowship, and moral response take place.

This does not mean the body is unimportant. Christianity is not a religion that despises physical creation. Romans 12:1 commands believers to present their bodies **“a living sacrifice.”** First Corinthians 6:20 says, **“glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.”** But Paul knows that lasting spiritual stability must operate from within outward. Clean up behavior without strengthening the inner man and religion becomes cosmetic. **Painting the outside of a collapsing house does not strengthen the beams.**

The inner man is also where battles are often decided before anyone else sees them. Fear begins there. Pride grows there. Bitterness takes root there. Temptation negotiates there. Faith also operates there. Prayer strengthens there. Scripture renews there. A Christian may look composed while inwardly collapsing, which is why Paul prays deeper than appearances. God does not merely want believers who can maintain the right expression in public; He wants inward strength that survives when nobody is watching. **Public faithfulness is safest when private strength has already been built into the inner man.**

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 3:16 teaches that spiritual strength is a **divine grant**, supplied according to God’s abundant glory and ministered by the Holy Spirit. Paul is praying for believers who are already saved and secure in Christ, showing the distinction between positional standing and practical spiritual condition.

The verse also directs attention inward. The Christian life cannot be sustained merely by outward religious activity. God strengthens the **inner man**, where conviction, faith, desire,

spiritual warfare, and fellowship operate. The outward man may weaken while the inward man grows stronger through the Spirit's work.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. Strength Comes From God

Psalm 18:32 — **"It is God that girdeth me with strength."**
Isaiah 40:29 — **"He giveth power to the faint."**
Philippians 4:13 — **"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."**
2 Timothy 4:17 — **"The Lord stood with me, and strengthened me."**
1 Peter 5:10 — **"Make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you."**

2. Strength By The Spirit

Zechariah 4:6 — **"Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit."**
Romans 8:13 — **"Through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body."**
Galatians 5:16 — **"Walk in the Spirit."**
Ephesians 5:18 — **"Be filled with the Spirit."**
Philippians 2:13 — **"God which worketh in you."**

3. The Inner Man

Romans 7:22 — **"I delight in the law of God after the inward man."**
2 Corinthians 4:16 — **"The inward man is renewed day by day."**
1 Peter 3:4 — **"The hidden man of the heart."**
Psalm 51:6 — **"Truth in the inward parts."**
Proverbs 4:23 — **"Keep thy heart with all diligence."**

4. The Riches Of God

Ephesians 1:7 — **"According to the riches of his grace."**
Ephesians 2:7 — **"The exceeding riches of his grace."**
Ephesians 3:8 — **"The unsearchable riches of Christ."**
Philippians 4:19 — **"According to his riches in glory."**
Romans 11:33 — **"O the depth of the riches."**

5. Strength In Weakness

2 Corinthians 12:9 — **"My strength is made perfect in weakness."**
Isaiah 40:31 — **"They that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength."**
2 Corinthians 4:7 — **"The excellency of the power may be of God."**
2 Corinthians 4:16 — **"Though our outward man perish."**
Psalm 73:26 — **"God is the strength of my heart."**

6. Standing And Spiritual Growth

Ephesians 2:6 — **“Made us sit together in heavenly places.”**
Colossians 2:10 — **“Ye are complete in him.”**
2 Peter 3:18 — **“Grow in grace.”**
Philippians 2:12 — **“Work out your own salvation.”**
Philippians 2:13 — **“It is God which worketh in you.”**

7. Spiritual Power For Warfare

Ephesians 6:10 — **“Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.”**
Ephesians 6:11 — **“Put on the whole armour of God.”**
2 Corinthians 10:4 — **“The weapons of our warfare are not carnal.”**
1 Corinthians 16:13 — **“Quit you like men, be strong.”**
2 Timothy 2:1 — **“Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.”**

8. Renewal From Within

Colossians 3:10 — **“Renewed in knowledge.”**
Romans 12:2 — **“Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.”**
Titus 3:5 — **“Renewing of the Holy Ghost.”**
Psalm 51:10 — **“Renew a right spirit within me.”**
2 Corinthians 3:18 — **“Changed into the same image.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 3:16 corrects the modern obsession with outward strength. The world teaches people to project confidence, control appearances, build an image, cultivate influence, and make weakness invisible. God goes after **“the inner man.”** A believer may appear successful outwardly while fear, bitterness, temptation, pride, discouragement, or spiritual exhaustion is eating through the beams inside. Paul does not pray that the Ephesians become better performers. He prays that God will strengthen them inwardly by His Spirit. **God would rather build strength where nobody applauds than polish weakness where everybody can see it.**

The verse also rescues believers who feel their own weakness too sharply. Paul’s prayer assumes that Christians need strengthening. That does not mean they are unsaved, abandoned, or spiritual failures beyond recovery. It means they are human beings carrying heavenly treasure in earthen vessels. The answer is not pretending to be strong. The answer is depending upon the Spirit of God. Second Corinthians 12:9 says, **“My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.”** Weakness acknowledged before God can become the place where His power is most clearly seen. **God never commanded**

the earthen vessel to become iron; He commanded it to depend upon the treasure inside.

This also helps keep salvation and discipleship properly divided. The believer is already accepted in Christ, sealed by the Spirit, and seated in heavenly places. Paul is not asking God to improve their performance so they can qualify to remain saved. He is asking that saved people become strong enough inwardly to live consistently with what grace has already made them. Eternal security should never produce spiritual laziness. Quite the opposite: secure standing gives the believer a stable foundation from which to grow, obey, serve, repent, endure, and fight. **Grace does not remove the need for strength; it removes the terror that every moment of weakness has thrown you out of the family.**

Finally, the phrase **"according to the riches of his glory"** should enlarge our expectations concerning what God can do inwardly. We often measure available spiritual strength by our own energy, history, personality, age, health, or emotional condition. Paul measures it by God's riches. That changes the calculation completely. The outward man may weaken with age, suffering, disappointment, or physical limitation while the inner man becomes stronger, steadier, wiser, and more dependent upon Christ. Some of the strongest saints on earth may be sitting in bodies that can barely cross a room. **Heaven does not measure spiritual strength by how loudly a man can move the furniture; it measures whether the inner man can still stand when everything earthly begins to shake.**

Ephesians 3:17 Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

"That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,"
Ephesians 3:17

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"That Christ may dwell in your hearts"

Paul's prayer moves from the strengthening of the **"inner man"** in verse 16 to Christ dwelling in the heart in verse 17. The Ephesians were already saved believers. They had already trusted Christ, had already been sealed **"with that holy Spirit of promise"** (Ephesians 1:13), had already been quickened together with Christ, and had already been made members of His body. Paul is therefore not praying that Christ will enter them for the

first time through a second salvation experience. He is praying about Christ having settled, governing residence in the inward life of people who already belong to Him. Salvation puts the believer in Christ; spiritual growth increasingly brings the believer's thoughts, desires, affections, decisions, and priorities under Christ's rule.

The word **"dwell"** carries the idea of residence rather than a passing visit. Christ is not meant to be treated like a respected guest brought into one carefully cleaned room while the believer keeps the rest of the house under private management. Colossians 3:16 says, **"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom."** That is the practical side of Christ's rule in the heart. His words are to occupy the mind, govern the conscience, shape the affections, correct the will, and expose whatever the flesh would rather keep behind a locked door. **Christ did not save us to become an honored visitor in the hallway of a life still ruled by self.**

The **"heart"** in Scripture is much more than emotional sentiment. Proverbs 4:23 says, **"Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life."** Romans 10:10 says, **"with the heart man believeth unto righteousness."** The heart involves the inward center of thought, will, affection, and spiritual response. That is where Paul wants Christ's influence established. A man may maintain respectable outward habits while harboring pride, bitterness, envy, lust, unbelief, resentment, and self-will inside. Religion is often satisfied when the front porch has fresh paint. God walks into the house and checks the foundation.

This also connects directly with verse 16. The inner man must be strengthened **"by his Spirit"** so that Christ's presence and lordship become practically dominant in the believer's heart. The Holy Spirit does not magnify Himself at the expense of Christ; He magnifies Christ. John 16:14 says, **"He shall glorify me."** The Spirit-strengthened Christian increasingly becomes Christ-centered rather than self-centered. **The surest evidence of genuine spiritual power is not how much attention a man can draw to himself, but how much room Christ occupies inside him.**

"by faith"

Christ dwells in the heart **"by faith."** That phrase keeps the entire Christian life anchored to dependence upon God rather than dependence upon flesh. The Christian begins by faith and must continue by faith. Galatians 3:3 asks believers who had begun in the Spirit, **"are ye now made perfect by the flesh?"** The answer is obvious. Flesh cannot complete what grace began. Colossians 2:6 says, **"As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him."** We received Him by faith, and we walk by faith.

Faith is not positive imagination, religious optimism, or confidence that everything will turn out according to our preferred schedule. Biblical faith rests upon what God has said. Romans 10:17 says, **“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”** The Christian does not make Christ more real by generating stronger emotions. He believes God’s word and orders his life accordingly. Feelings may follow; sometimes they do not. Faith does not wait for the emotions to sign the paperwork before obeying Scripture.

That matters because believers often measure spiritual reality by internal sensation. If they feel close to God, they assume everything is sound. If they feel dry, they assume Christ must be distant. Paul gives us something better than emotional guesswork: **“by faith.”** Second Corinthians 5:7 says, **“For we walk by faith, not by sight.”** Sight includes more than what the eyes physically observe; the whole Christian life refuses to make visible circumstances the final authority. **Faith does not deny what you feel; it simply refuses to crown feeling as king.**

Faith also governs practical surrender. The believer trusts Christ enough to let His word contradict the flesh. When Scripture says forgive, faith obeys despite wounded pride. When Scripture says flee fornication, faith does not negotiate with appetite. When Scripture says be content, faith refuses to worship circumstances. When Scripture says pray without ceasing, faith keeps bringing burdens to God. **Christ dwells richly where His word is believed deeply enough to be obeyed practically.**

“that ye, being rooted and grounded in love”

Paul now combines two powerful pictures: **“rooted”** and **“grounded.”** One comes from agriculture; the other from construction. A plant needs roots, and a building needs a foundation. God apparently has little interest in producing Christians who blow over whenever the weather changes. He wants depth below the surface. Colossians 2:7 uses similar language: **“Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith.”** Spiritual stability develops where truth goes down deeply before pressure comes in strongly.

To be **“rooted… in love”** means love must go beneath the surface of Christian life. This is not sentimental softness or doctrinal indifference. Biblical love rejoices in truth. First Corinthians 13:6 says charity **“rejoiceth in the truth.”** Christ Himself said in John 14:15, **“If ye love me, keep my commandments.”** Biblical love therefore cannot be separated from holiness, obedience, truth, correction, or faithfulness. The modern religious definition of love often amounts to smiling while everybody does whatever seems right in his own eyes. Scripture gives love a backbone.

The second picture is **“grounded.”** A building without a proper foundation may look impressive until pressure tests it. Jesus used that principle in Matthew 7 when He

contrasted the house built upon a rock with the house built upon sand. Ephesians has already described the Church as **"built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone"** (Ephesians 2:20). Now Paul applies foundation language to love. The believer's life is to stand upon a settled love shaped by Christ rather than by convenience.

This love operates both vertically and horizontally. First John 4:19 says, **"We love him, because he first loved us."** God's love toward us produces love toward Him, and love toward Him should produce love toward other believers. Ephesians 4:2 will soon command believers to forbear **"one another in love."** Ephesians 5:2 says, **"walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us."** Love therefore becomes both soil and foundation. **A Christian rooted in truth but untouched by love becomes hard; a Christian talking about love without truth becomes unstable. God intends both depth and strength.**

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 3:17 teaches that spiritual maturity involves Christ exercising increasing practical rule within the believer's inward life. The verse is not describing initial salvation, because Paul is praying for people already saved and sealed. It describes the ongoing life of faith in which Christ's word, character, and authority increasingly govern the heart.

The verse also establishes **love as both root and foundation**. Biblical love is not sentimental compromise. It is love shaped by truth, obedience, sacrifice, and the example of Christ. A believer strengthened by the Spirit, living by faith, and rooted in love becomes increasingly stable when pressure, temptation, disappointment, and conflict arrive.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. Christ In The Believer

Colossians 1:27 — **"Christ in you, the hope of glory."**
Galatians 2:20 — **"Christ liveth in me."**
Romans 8:10 — **"If Christ be in you."**
2 Corinthians 13:5 — **"Jesus Christ is in you."**
John 14:23 — **"We will come unto him, and make our abode with him."**

2. The Heart As The Inner Center

Proverbs 4:23 — **"Keep thy heart with all diligence."**
Romans 10:10 — **"With the heart man believeth."**
Psalm 51:10 — **"Create in me a clean heart."**
Hebrews 4:12 — **"The thoughts and intents of the heart."**
Matthew 12:35 — **"A good man out of the good treasure of the heart."**

3. Walking By Faith

2 Corinthians 5:7 — **“We walk by faith, not by sight.”**
Galatians 2:20 — **“The life which I now live… I live by the faith of the Son of God.”**
Colossians 2:6 — **“As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.”**
Romans 1:17 — **“The just shall live by faith.”**
Hebrews 11:6 — **“Without faith it is impossible to please him.”**

4. Faith Comes Through God’s Word

Romans 10:17 — **“Faith cometh by hearing… the word of God.”**
John 20:31 — **“That believing ye might have life through his name.”**
Acts 20:32 — **“The word of his grace, which is able to build you up.”**
Psalm 119:105 — **“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet.”**
Colossians 3:16 — **“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.”**

5. Rooted And Built Up

Colossians 2:7 — **“Rooted and built up in him.”**
Psalm 1:3 — **“Like a tree planted by the rivers of water.”**
Jeremiah 17:8 — **“As a tree planted by the waters.”**
Ephesians 2:20 — **“Built upon the foundation.”**
1 Corinthians 3:11 — **“Other foundation can no man lay.”**

6. Love Grounded In Truth

1 Corinthians 13:6 — **“Rejoiceth in the truth.”**
John 14:15 — **“If ye love me, keep my commandments.”**
1 John 5:3 — **“This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments.”**
2 John 6 — **“This is love, that we walk after his commandments.”**
Ephesians 4:15 — **“Speaking the truth in love.”**

7. Christ’s Love Toward Believers

Romans 5:8 — **“Christ died for us.”**
Galatians 2:20 — **“Who loved me, and gave himself for me.”**
Ephesians 5:2 — **“Christ also hath loved us.”**
Ephesians 5:25 — **“Christ also loved the church.”**
1 John 4:19 — **“We love him, because he first loved us.”**

8. Spiritual Stability

1 Corinthians 15:58 — **“Be ye stedfast, unmoveable.”**
Ephesians 4:14 — **“Be no more children, tossed to and fro.”**
Colossians 1:23 — **“Grounded and settled.”**
Psalm 112:7 — **“His heart is fixed, trusting in the LORD.”**
2 Peter 3:17 — **“Beware lest ye also… fall from your own stedfastness.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 3:17 forces us to ask whether Christ merely belongs to our doctrine or actually governs the interior rooms of our lives. These Ephesians were already believers, so Paul is not praying for another conversion experience. He is praying that Christ will dwell in their hearts **“by faith.”** A Christian can possess correct doctrine about Christ while still resisting Christ’s rule in practical areas of life. We may gladly invite Him into the room marked “salvation” while placing warning signs on the rooms marked finances, ambition, entertainment, relationships, bitterness, private thoughts, and personal plans. Scripture refuses that arrangement. **Christ did not purchase the house with His blood so the former tenant could continue dictating which rooms He may enter.**

The phrase **“by faith”** is equally important because spiritual maturity is not built upon emotional intensity. There will be days when Christ feels near and days when heaven seems silent. Faith does not change its theology every time emotional weather changes. It believes the word of God. The believer knows he is accepted in Christ because Scripture says so, sealed because Scripture says so, seated in heavenly places because Scripture says so, and called to obedience because Scripture says so. That is far stronger than depending upon whatever sensation happened to arrive this morning. **Feelings can ride in the car, but they should never be given the steering wheel.**

Then Paul says we are to be **“rooted and grounded in love.”** Roots are invisible until a storm reveals whether they were deep enough, and foundations remain hidden until weight exposes whether they were sound. Christian love operates the same way. It is easy to speak warmly when everyone agrees with us, treats us kindly, and requires nothing costly. Love becomes visible when patience is required, forgiveness hurts, correction must be given carefully, truth must be defended without hatred, and another believer needs support rather than applause. Biblical love is not weakness. Christ loved enough to die and loved enough to rebuke. **The love that cannot speak truth is sentimental cowardice, and the truth that cannot speak in love has forgotten the character of the Christ it claims to defend.**

Finally, this verse shows why inward spiritual formation matters so much. A Christian can maintain outward religious activity for a surprising length of time while inwardly becoming

dry, resentful, proud, fearful, or unstable. Paul prays deeper than appearances. He wants Christ dwelling in the heart, faith governing the walk, and love running roots beneath the surface. That kind of believer does not have to be spectacular to be strong. He becomes difficult to uproot because strength has been built where crowds cannot see it. When adversity arrives, the hidden roots hold. **God is not merely interested in Christians who look impressive in calm weather; He is building saints whose roots remember Christ when the storm forgets to be polite.**

Ephesians 3:18 Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

"May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;"
Ephesians 3:18

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"May be able to comprehend"

The words **"May be able to comprehend"** continue Paul's prayer rather than beginning a disconnected thought. In verse 16 he prayed that believers might be **"strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man."** In verse 17 he prayed **"That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith"** and that they might be **"rooted and grounded in love."** Now comes the result: spiritual strengthening and rootedness are intended to produce spiritual comprehension. Paul is not praying merely for stronger feelings. He wants believers strengthened inwardly so they can grasp truth that the natural mind, religious flesh, and casual reader will never appreciate properly.

The word **"comprehend"** shows that Christianity is not supposed to be a religion of cultivated confusion. God revealed truth so His people could understand it. Ephesians 3:4 had already said, **"when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ."** Colossians 1:9 records Paul praying that believers would be **"filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding."** Second Timothy 2:7 says, **"Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things."** God does not reward intellectual laziness, but neither does understanding come merely from intellectual horsepower. The Holy Spirit strengthens the inner man, Scripture supplies the truth, and the believer applies himself to what God has written. **The Bible is deep enough to humble the scholar and plain enough to feed the saint who will actually read it.**

Comprehension therefore requires more than information. A man may memorize verses about grace while still living as though God accepts him according to performance. He may know the words **"one body"** while behaving as though his group is the only group Christ recognizes. He may explain eternal security and still live terrified that every failure has erased his standing. Biblical comprehension means truth has traveled from the page into the understanding and begun rearranging the furniture. That is why Paul prays for ability to comprehend rather than merely an ability to recite. **A notebook full of doctrine is useful; a heart governed by doctrine is better.**

"with all saints"

Paul adds the crucial words **"with all saints."** Spiritual understanding is not reserved for an inner circle of religious specialists. The dimensions he is about to describe belong within the comprehension of **all saints**. In the New Testament, sainthood is not a medal awarded centuries after death to an unusually impressive Christian. Paul addresses ordinary saved believers as saints. Ephesians 1:1 was written **"to the saints which are at Ephesus."** First Corinthians 1:2 calls members of a deeply troubled local church **"called to be saints."** Their behavior sometimes needed severe correction, but their designation rested upon their position in Christ.

The expression also reveals the corporate nature of Christian growth. Paul does not say that every believer must become an isolated spiritual explorer inventing private doctrine in a corner. He says **"with all saints."** The body of Christ contains many members, gifts, teachers, examples, warnings, testimonies, and opportunities for mutual edification. Ephesians 4:16 will describe the body as **"fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth."** Christian fellowship does not replace Scripture, and no church has authority to correct the Book; nevertheless, believers are designed to learn, serve, strengthen, exhort, and grow together under Christ.

That does not mean **"all saints"** erases every distinction God maintains elsewhere in Scripture. The Church does not become national Israel because its members share spiritual comprehension in Christ. Ephesians has already told us that believing Jews and Gentiles are **"of the same body"** (Ephesians 3:6), while Romans 11 continues to speak distinctly of Israel and God's future dealings with that nation. Unity in Christ is real without turning every biblical noun into the same thing. **Right division allows saints to stand together without forcing Israel, the Gentiles, and the Church into one theological blender.**

There is also a needed rebuke here for spiritual elitism. Whenever somebody claims that the real truth is available only to his private circle, secret revelation, exclusive movement,

or special initiation, Ephesians 3:18 ought to clear its throat. Paul prays that believers may comprehend **"with all saints."** God may give teachers varying measures of understanding and responsibility, but revealed truth is not a private treasure chest guarded by a religious aristocracy. **The mystery was hidden once because God hid it; after God revealed it, men have no authority to hide it again.**

"what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height"

Paul now reaches for four dimensions: **"breadth, and length, and depth, and height."** He is describing something too vast for a narrow, one-dimensional understanding. Verse 17 has just said believers are to be **"rooted and grounded in love,"** and verse 19 immediately continues, **"And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge."** The immediate context therefore points strongly toward the vastness of Christ's love, though the whole surrounding passage also includes God's mystery, purpose, wisdom, and riches in Christ. Paul is praying that believers grasp how enormous the realities of their life in Christ truly are.

Think first of the **breadth**. The gospel reaches beyond one nation, social class, background, or human pedigree. Ephesians 2 has brought near those who were once **"far off."** Ephesians 3:6 declares Gentiles to be **"fellowheirs, and of the same body."** Revelation 5:9 looks forward to redeemed people **"out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation."** The breadth of Christ's saving work reaches farther than religious prejudice wants it to reach. Grace has never needed permission from human pride before crossing another border.

Then consider the **length**. Christ's love is not temporary affection that expires when the believer disappoints Him. Romans 8:38–39 declares that neither death, life, angels, principalities, powers, things present, things to come, height, depth, nor any other creature **"shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."** Ephesians 2:7 stretches grace into **"the ages to come."** The love of Christ reaches backward into God's eternal purpose and forward through ages yet unseen. **Human affection often comes with an expiration date hidden in the fine print; Christ's love has no such clause.**

Consider the **depth**. Christ came down to sinners who were not merely struggling but **"dead in trespasses and sins"** (Ephesians 2:1). Philippians 2 says He **"made himself of no reputation"** and **"humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."** The depth of divine grace reaches farther down than human ruin. No sinner is saved because he climbed high enough for Christ to reach him. Christ came

down. **Grace did not lower a rope halfway into the pit and congratulate the sinner who climbed the rest; Christ went where the sinner was.**

Finally, consider the **height**. Ephesians 2:6 says God **"hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."** The same grace that reaches into spiritual death raises believers into a heavenly position in Christ. Romans 8:17 calls them **"heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ."** First John 3:2 says, **"when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."** The height of God's purpose is not merely getting sinners out of trouble; it is bringing redeemed saints into glory with Christ. **Grace reaches lower than sin can sink and lifts higher than religion ever dared to promise.**

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 3:18 teaches that God intends believers to **comprehend** the vast realities revealed in Christ. Spiritual understanding requires the strengthening of the inner man described in verse 16 and the faith and love described in verse 17. Christianity is not designed to leave saints in permanent doctrinal infancy.

The verse also presents this comprehension as something shared **"with all saints."** The breadth, length, depth, and height point naturally into verse 19 and the immeasurable love of Christ, while also fitting the enormous scope of God's revealed purpose in Ephesians. The gospel reaches broadly, Christ's love endures eternally, grace descends to the depth of human ruin, and God raises believers to heavenly blessing in Christ.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. Spiritual Understanding

Ephesians 1:18 — **"The eyes of your understanding being enlightened."**
Ephesians 3:4 — **"When ye read, ye may understand."**
Colossians 1:9 — **"Spiritual understanding."**
2 Timothy 2:7 — **"The Lord give thee understanding in all things."**
Psalm 119:130 — **"The entrance of thy words giveth light."**

2. All Believers Called Saints

Ephesians 1:1 — **"To the saints which are at Ephesus."**
Romans 1:7 — **"Called to be saints."**
1 Corinthians 1:2 — **"Called to be saints."**
Philippians 1:1 — **"To all the saints in Christ Jesus."**
Colossians 1:2 — **"To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ."**

3. Growth Together In The Body

Ephesians 4:16 — **“Every joint supplieth.”**
1 Corinthians 12:27 — **“Ye are the body of Christ.”**
Romans 12:5 — **“One body in Christ.”**
Colossians 2:19 — **“All the body by joints and bands.”**
Hebrews 10:24 — **“Consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works.”**

4. The Breadth Of Grace

Ephesians 2:13 — **“Ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh.”**
Ephesians 3:6 — **“Gentiles should be fellowheirs.”**
Romans 10:12 — **“There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek.”**
Romans 10:13 — **“Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”**
Revelation 5:9 — **“Every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.”**

5. The Length Of Christ’s Love

Romans 8:38–39 — **“Shall be able to separate us from the love of God.”**
Ephesians 2:7 — **“In the ages to come.”**
Jeremiah 31:3 — **“I have loved thee with an everlasting love.”**
John 10:28 — **“They shall never perish.”**
Hebrews 13:8 — **“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.”**

6. The Depth Of Grace

Ephesians 2:1 — **“Dead in trespasses and sins.”**
Philippians 2:7 — **“Made himself of no reputation.”**
Philippians 2:8 — **“Became obedient unto death.”**
Romans 5:8 — **“While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”**
1 Timothy 1:15 — **“Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”**

7. The Height Of Our Position

Ephesians 2:6 — **“Sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”**
Romans 8:17 — **“Joint-heirs with Christ.”**
Colossians 3:3 — **“Your life is hid with Christ in God.”**
Philippians 3:20 — **“Our conversation is in heaven.”**
1 John 3:2 — **“We shall be like him.”**

8. The Love Of Christ

Ephesians 3:19 — **“The love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.”**
Galatians 2:20 — **“Who loved me, and gave himself for me.”**

Ephesians 5:2 — **“Christ also hath loved us.”**
Ephesians 5:25 — **“Christ also loved the church.”**
Romans 8:35 — **“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 3:18 tells us that spiritual maturity involves learning how enormous the things of Christ really are. Too many Christians live inside a theological closet when God has opened an entire mansion. They know they are saved, but barely investigate what salvation has placed them into. They know Christ loves them, but measure that love by yesterday’s circumstances. They know the Bible contains deep truth, but approach it like somebody checking a message rather than searching treasure. Paul prays for something larger: that believers **“may be able to comprehend.”** God does not want His children bragging about mysteries they cannot explain; He wants them growing into an understanding of what He has actually revealed. **The answer to shallow Christianity is not secret knowledge but deeper attention to the Book already lying open in front of us.**

The words **“with all saints”** should also humble anyone tempted by spiritual elitism. Truth does not belong to a private club. One believer may have studied longer, another may teach more effectively, and another may see a connection somebody else has missed, but none of us owns revelation. We receive what God wrote. We learn within a body where different members can strengthen one another while Scripture remains the final authority over everyone. That gives Christian fellowship a purpose much larger than social companionship. Believers should leave one another stronger in truth, more established in grace, more discerning about error, and more occupied with Christ. **The body of Christ was not designed as an audience gathered around religious celebrities; it is a living body whose members are supposed to help one another grow under the Head.**

Then Paul stretches the mind across **“breadth, and length, and depth, and height.”** The believer needs that enlargement because the flesh continually tries to make grace smaller. We reduce Christ’s love to our feelings, His faithfulness to our latest circumstances, His power to what we can imagine, and His purpose to what we can presently see. Scripture keeps breaking the walls outward. Grace reaches Gentiles who were far off. Christ’s love reaches through the ages. Redemption reaches sinners dead in trespasses. God’s purpose raises those sinners into heavenly places in Christ. The dimensions are not given so we can perform mathematical tricks with the text; they are given to make our small estimates of Christ look embarrassingly small. **Whenever we think we have reached the edge of Christ’s riches, Ephesians quietly informs us that we have probably only reached the edge of our own understanding.**

Finally, this comprehension should produce stability rather than speculation. Verse 17 said believers are to be **"rooted and grounded in love."** Deep roots and strong foundations are not built so Christians can spend their lives chasing every religious novelty that blows through town. The more we understand Christ's love, our position, God's purpose, and the riches of grace, the less attractive shallow substitutes become. A saint who knows what he has in Christ is harder to frighten with circumstances, harder to bribe with religion, harder to impress with human personalities, and harder to uproot with doctrinal winds. That is what Paul is praying toward. **God does not enlarge our understanding so our heads can become bigger; He enlarges it so our footing can become harder to move.**

Ephesians 3:19 Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

"And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God."
Ephesians 3:19

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"And to know the love of Christ"

Paul continues the prayer that began in verse 14. He has prayed that believers would be strengthened by the Spirit in the inner man, that Christ might dwell in their hearts by faith, and that they would be rooted and grounded in love. Verse 18 then speaks of comprehending **"the breadth, and length, and depth, and height."** Now verse 19 brings the subject into focus: **"And to know the love of Christ."** Paul is not praying that the Ephesians merely know facts about Christ's love. He wants that love understood, grasped, believed, and experienced as a governing reality in the Christian life.

The phrase **"the love of Christ"** points us first to what Christ has done. Galatians 2:20 says, **"the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."** Ephesians 5:2 says Christ **"hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God."** Ephesians 5:25 says, **"Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it."** Biblical love is not vague emotion drifting through religious language. Christ's love took the road to Calvary. It gave. It sacrificed. It bled. It endured the cross for sinners who had nothing in themselves worth boasting about. **The love of Christ is not measured by sentiment; it is measured by a cross.**

That love must also be understood within the believer's standing in Christ. Paul is writing to saved people, not telling them to earn Christ's love through better behavior. The believer's obedience matters greatly, but obedience is the response to love, not the price of it. Romans 5:8 says, **"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."** Christ did not wait for sinners to become lovable enough to deserve the cross. Grace moved first. That does not make sin harmless; it makes grace astonishing. **The Christian does not obey in order to become loved; he ought to obey because he already has been loved beyond calculation.**

The love of Christ also corrects the believer's tendency to interpret God through circumstances. Trouble comes, so perhaps Christ has stopped loving. Prayer is delayed, so perhaps Christ has forgotten. Suffering increases, so perhaps love has weakened. Romans 8:35 asks, **"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"** and then lists tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, and sword. Those things are not proof that Christ's love has failed. They are circumstances through which His love remains unchanged.

"which passeth knowledge"

Paul now gives us one of Scripture's great paradoxes: believers are to **know** something that **"passeth knowledge."** He does not contradict himself. He means that the love of Christ can truly be known without ever being exhaustively known. We can experience it, believe it, study it, preach it, and grow in our understanding of it, yet never reach its bottom. It exceeds the limits of finite comprehension.

That is consistent with everything Ephesians has already said. Paul spoke of **"the unsearchable riches of Christ"** in Ephesians 3:8. Something unsearchable can be searched without being exhausted. Likewise, Christ's love can be known without being fully contained by the human mind. Romans 11:33 says, **"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!"** Job 11:7 asks, **"Canst thou by searching find out God?"** The answer is not that God cannot be known at all, but that no creature can place the infinite God inside the boundaries of creaturely understanding.

This should humble intellectual pride. The Christian faith is not anti-intellectual; Paul repeatedly prays for knowledge, wisdom, and understanding. But Scripture never confuses knowledge with mastery over God. A man may know more doctrine than everyone in his church and still know only the shoreline of an ocean he cannot drain. **The moment a man thinks he has God neatly boxed, labeled, and shelved, he has probably boxed his theology instead.**

The phrase also rebukes shallow definitions of love. The world often defines love as approval, indulgence, emotional warmth, or the refusal to confront wrong. Christ's love is holier than that. Revelation 3:19 says, **"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten."** Love can correct. Love can discipline. Love can say no. Love can demand truth. John 14:15 says, **"If ye love me, keep my commandments."** Christ's love passes knowledge partly because it combines tenderness with holiness, mercy with truth, grace with righteousness, and sacrifice with lordship.

The believer therefore never graduates from studying the love of Christ. A child can understand that Jesus loves him, and an old saint can spend decades learning how vast that truth really is. The doctrine does not become childish because it is simple enough for a child. **Some truths are simple at the entrance and bottomless after you step inside.**

"that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God"

Paul now gives the purpose of all this strengthening, faith, rootedness, comprehension, and knowledge: **"that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God."** This is towering language and must be handled carefully. Paul is not teaching that believers become deity, become part of the Godhead, or cease being creatures. Scripture never teaches that saved men become God. God remains God; the creature remains creature. The phrase concerns spiritual fullness, not ontological transformation into deity.

Colossians 2:9 says of Christ, **"For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."** Then verse 10 says to believers, **"And ye are complete in him."** The fullness belongs perfectly and essentially to Christ; believers participate in spiritual fullness through union with Him. Ephesians 1:23 calls the Church **"the fulness of him that filleth all in all."** The language is about God filling, ruling, supplying, and bringing the believer into fuller conformity to what He has provided in Christ.

To be **"filled"** implies that something governs the available space. Ephesians 5:18 will say, **"be filled with the Spirit."** Colossians 1:9 speaks of being **"filled with the knowledge of his will."** Philippians 1:11 speaks of being **"filled with the fruits of righteousness."** The Christian life is not merely about removing bad things; it is about being filled with what comes from God. A house can be swept clean and remain empty. God intends occupation, not vacancy.

This fullness also concerns practical maturity. Paul wants believers strengthened inwardly, governed by Christ, rooted in love, enlarged in understanding, and increasingly filled with God's character and truth. This does not erase the distinction between standing and state. Positionally, believers are already complete in Christ. Practically, they must grow. Ephesians 4:13 will speak of coming **"unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of**

Christ." The saved person is complete in standing and incomplete in growth. **Grace settles the believer's position at once; discipleship spends a lifetime teaching his practice to catch up with it.**

The phrase should therefore awaken holy dissatisfaction with shallow Christianity. A believer may be saved and yet spiritually underdeveloped. He may be secure and yet weak. He may possess all spiritual blessings in Christ and live as though he has barely opened the package. Paul is praying for fullness, not mere survival. **God did not save us merely to occupy a pew until heaven calls our number; He intends the life of Christ to fill the believer from the inside out.**

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 3:19 joins two enormous truths: **the love of Christ is truly knowable, yet it exceeds full human comprehension**, and believers are meant to grow into spiritual fullness through their union with Christ. The verse therefore combines knowledge with humility. We can know Christ's love deeply without pretending we have exhausted it.

The verse also distinguishes positional completeness from practical maturity. Believers are already complete in Christ, but Paul still prays that they might be **"filled with all the fulness of God."** Christian growth is not an attempt to become saved more securely; it is the outworking of a salvation already possessed.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. The Love Of Christ

Galatians 2:20 — **"Who loved me, and gave himself for me."**
Ephesians 5:2 — **"Christ also hath loved us."**
Ephesians 5:25 — **"Christ also loved the church."**
Romans 8:35 — **"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"**
John 15:13 — **"Greater love hath no man than this."**

2. Christ's Love Demonstrated At Calvary

Romans 5:8 — **"While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."**
1 John 3:16 — **"He laid down his life for us."**
1 Peter 2:24 — **"Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree."**
Isaiah 53:5 — **"He was wounded for our transgressions."**
1 Corinthians 15:3 — **"Christ died for our sins."**

3. Love Beyond Full Comprehension

Ephesians 3:8 — **“The unsearchable riches of Christ.”**
Romans 11:33 — **“O the depth of the riches.”**
Job 11:7 — **“Canst thou by searching find out God?”**
Psalm 139:6 — **“Such knowledge is too wonderful for me.”**
Philippians 4:7 — **“The peace of God, which passeth all understanding.”**

4. Love And Obedience

John 14:15 — **“If ye love me, keep my commandments.”**
John 14:21 — **“He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.”**
1 John 5:3 — **“This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments.”**
2 John 6 — **“This is love, that we walk after his commandments.”**
John 15:10 — **“If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love.”**

5. Love Includes Correction

Revelation 3:19 — **“As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.”**
Hebrews 12:6 — **“Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth.”**
Proverbs 3:12 — **“Whom the LORD loveth he correcteth.”**
Psalm 94:12 — **“Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest.”**
Proverbs 27:6 — **“Faithful are the wounds of a friend.”**

6. Fulness In Christ

Colossians 2:9 — **“All the fulness of the Godhead bodily.”**
Colossians 2:10 — **“Ye are complete in him.”**
Ephesians 1:23 — **“The fulness of him that filleth all in all.”**
Colossians 1:19 — **“In him should all fulness dwell.”**
John 1:16 — **“Of his fulness have all we received.”**

7. Filled By God

Ephesians 5:18 — **“Be filled with the Spirit.”**
Colossians 1:9 — **“Filled with the knowledge of his will.”**
Philippians 1:11 — **“Filled with the fruits of righteousness.”**
Romans 15:13 — **“Fill you with all joy and peace in believing.”**
2 Corinthians 9:8 — **“Abound to every good work.”**

8. Growth Toward Spiritual Maturity

Ephesians 4:13 — **“The stature of the fulness of Christ.”**
2 Peter 3:18 — **“Grow in grace.”**

Colossians 1:10 — **“Increasing in the knowledge of God.”**
1 Peter 2:2 — **“Desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.”**
Philippians 3:12 — **“Not as though I had already attained.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 3:19 gives us a needed correction to the shallow idea that once a person is saved there is little left to pursue except waiting for heaven. Paul is writing to people who are already in Christ, already sealed, already accepted, already made alive, already seated in heavenly places, and already members of one body. Yet he still prays that they might **“know the love of Christ”** and **“be filled with all the fulness of God.”** Salvation is complete, but spiritual growth is not. The believer does not need another justification, another adoption, or another new birth, but he does need deeper understanding, stronger inward life, greater obedience, and fuller conformity to Christ. **Eternal security is not the finish line of discipleship; it is the secure ground from which discipleship begins.**

The love of Christ also needs to become more authoritative than our changing circumstances. It is easy to say Christ loves us when prayers are answered quickly, health is good, doors are open, and trouble stays on somebody else’s street. The doctrine is tested when life gets quiet, hard, confusing, or painful. Romans 8 does not prove Christ’s love by promising believers exemption from tribulation; it proves His love by declaring that tribulation cannot separate them from Him. That distinction matters. Christ’s love is not a thermometer registering the temperature of our comfort. It is an objective reality demonstrated at Calvary and secured in Him. **The cross is a better measure of Christ’s love than the easiest week of your life or the hardest.**

Then Paul says this love **“passeth knowledge.”** That ought to keep us humble no matter how long we have studied. We can know real doctrine, defend real truth, rightly divide Scripture, and grow tremendously in understanding without ever reaching the point where Christ becomes small enough to fit inside our system. There is always more to see in His grace, sacrifice, holiness, wisdom, and love. That should make the mature Christian more teachable rather than less. The deeper the well proves to be, the less sensible it becomes to brag about the cupful we have drawn. **Spiritual maturity is not reaching the point where nothing surprises you about Christ; it is reaching the point where you expect His riches to remain larger than your understanding.**

Finally, being **“filled with all the fulness of God”** should challenge the believer who is content with spiritual emptiness so long as he can still say he is saved. God’s aim is not merely to empty the life of obvious sin while leaving the heart vacant. He intends to fill the believer with truth, love, holiness, wisdom, fruit, and the Spirit’s governing influence. The

Christian life should increasingly show what Christ has put inside it. That growth is gradual, and nobody reaches sinless perfection in this present body, but stagnation should never be mistaken for humility. We are complete in Christ positionally and still called to grow practically. **God did not save us merely to prove He could get us out of hell; He saved us to show what the life of Christ can fill when grace takes possession of a yielded heart.**

Ephesians 3:20 Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,"
Ephesians 3:20

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"Now unto him that is able to do"

The word **"Now"** carries Paul from prayer into praise. He has just prayed that believers might be strengthened by the Spirit in the inner man, that Christ might dwell in their hearts by faith, that they might comprehend the dimensions of divine love, know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, and **"be filled with all the fulness of God"** (Ephesians 3:16–19). Having asked for things beyond human manufacture, Paul turns immediately toward the One capable of accomplishing them: **"Now unto him that is able to do."** The prayer would be impossible if its answer depended upon human strength. Paul asks largely because he knows God is able greatly.

The phrase does not merely say God is willing to discuss possibilities. He is **"able to do."** Scripture repeatedly joins divine ability with divine action. Romans 4:21 says Abraham was **"fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform."** Hebrews 7:25 says Christ **"is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him."** Jude 24 speaks of Him **"that is able to keep you from falling."** Second Timothy 1:12 says God **"is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."** God's ability is not theoretical power displayed in a theological museum. He acts according to His wisdom, will, promises, and purpose.

That truth must not be converted into the prosperity preacher's blank check. God's ability does not mean He has promised to perform every desire the flesh can attach to a prayer request. First John 5:14 says, **"if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us."**

Paul himself asked three times for the thorn in his flesh to depart, yet Christ answered, **“My grace is sufficient for thee”** (2 Corinthians 12:9). God was fully able to remove the thorn; He chose instead to display greater strength through Paul’s weakness. **Divine ability is never obligated to become the servant of human preference.**

“exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think”

Paul now piles language upon language because ordinary language nearly runs out of room: **“exceeding abundantly above all.”** He does not say God can barely reach the edge of our requests. God’s capability exceeds the believer’s asking and even surpasses the believer’s thinking. Isaiah 55:8–9 gives the principle: **“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD.”** As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are His ways and thoughts higher than ours. Human imagination may be large compared with another human mind, but it is tiny beside the wisdom and power of God.

The immediate context should govern how we understand this abundance. Paul has not been praying for Ephesian mansions, business expansion, bodily comfort, luxurious travel, or larger bank accounts. He has been praying for inward strength, Christ-centered hearts, deep love, spiritual comprehension, and divine fullness. Therefore the **“exceeding abundantly”** of verse 20 belongs first to God’s ability to accomplish spiritual realities that surpass human calculation. The believer may ask for strength and discover God gives endurance that survives years of pressure. He may ask for understanding and find Scripture opening into depths he never expected. He may ask merely to survive a trial and later discover that God used the trial to mature him, strengthen others, and redirect his service. **We often ask God to remove the mountain while He intends to build a stronger man in front of it.**

The words **“above all that we ask”** naturally include prayer. Prayer asks. Yet Scripture does not teach that bigger vocabulary forces bigger answers. Matthew 6:7 warns against **“vain repetitions.”** James 4:3 warns, **“Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.”** God can exceed what we ask while still rejecting what we ask wrongly. Sometimes the exceeding answer is not more of the thing requested but something spiritually better than the request itself.

Then Paul adds **“or think.”** God’s power reaches beyond articulated prayer into territory our minds have not even mapped. Joseph could not have designed the route from the pit to the palace. Ruth could not have calculated herself into the lineage of David. The disciples watching Christ die could not have imagined all that resurrection morning would mean. Paul himself once breathed out threatenings against the Church and certainly did not

spend that morning imagining he would become the apostle of the Gentiles. **God has written some of His finest chapters beyond the edge of what His servants thought possible.**

This should produce expectation without presumption. Faith does not dictate the script to God and then call every deviation unbelief. Faith knows God is capable of far more than we can see while allowing Him to decide what "more" actually means. Ephesians has already shown that His wisdom is **"manifold"** and His riches **"unsearchable."** Our requests are measured in sentences; His purpose is measured in eternity.

"according to the power that worketh in us"

Paul now tells us something astonishing about where this power is operating: **"according to the power that worketh in us."** The power belongs to God, but it is actively working within believers. This connects directly to Ephesians 3:16, where Paul prayed that they might **"be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man."** It also reaches back to Ephesians 1:19, which speaks of **"the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe."** The Christian life is not sustained merely by external commandments pressing upon the believer; God works inwardly by His Spirit.

The word **"worketh"** matters. Divine power is not decorative doctrine. Philippians 2:13 says, **"For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."** Colossians 1:29 speaks of **"his working, which worketh in me mightily."** First Thessalonians 2:13 says the word of God **"effectually worketh also in you that believe."** God's work within the believer affects desires, understanding, conviction, perseverance, service, holiness, prayer, love, and obedience. The power is real because its effects become real.

Again, this must be distinguished from spectacular religious claims. Spiritual power is not proved merely by volume, emotion, physical displays, crowds, unusual experiences, or somebody announcing that an atmosphere has changed. Ephesians locates tremendous power in the **inner man**, in spiritual understanding, love, faith, and practical Christian growth. A believer quietly resisting temptation through the Spirit may be displaying more genuine divine power than a room full of religious noise. **God's power does not need theatrics to prove that it is power.**

The phrase also preserves human responsibility. God works in us, but Paul still commands believers to walk worthy, put away sin, speak truth, forgive, labor honestly, resist the devil, and put on the whole armour of God. Philippians 2:12 says, **"work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,"** immediately followed by **"For it is God which worketh in you."** God's inward working does not make obedience unnecessary; it makes obedience

spiritually possible. **Grace does not turn the believer into a passenger—it supplies the power for him to walk.**

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 3:20 magnifies the unlimited ability of God without turning prayer into a license for self-centered demands. God is able to do **"exceeding abundantly above"** what believers ask or think, but the context concerns spiritual strength, comprehension, love, and fullness rather than guaranteed earthly prosperity. His answers remain governed by His will, wisdom, and eternal purpose.

The verse also emphasizes divine power working **within** the believer. This is not merely outward miracle language but inward spiritual power—the Spirit strengthening the inner man and producing real Christian growth. Standing remains secure in Christ, while practical maturity develops as God works within the believer and the believer responds in obedient faith.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. God Is Able

Romans 4:21 — **"What he had promised, he was able also to perform."**
Hebrews 7:25 — **"Able also to save them to the uttermost."**
Jude 24 — **"Able to keep you from falling."**
2 Timothy 1:12 — **"Able to keep that which I have committed unto him."**
Daniel 3:17 — **"Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us."**

2. God Exceeds Human Thought

Isaiah 55:8 — **"My thoughts are not your thoughts."**
Isaiah 55:9 — **"So are my ways higher than your ways."**
Romans 11:33 — **"How unsearchable are his judgments."**
Psalm 139:6 — **"Such knowledge is too wonderful for me."**
Job 42:3 — **"Things too wonderful for me, which I knew not."**

3. Asking According To God's Will

1 John 5:14 — **"If we ask any thing according to his will."**
Matthew 6:10 — **"Thy will be done."**
James 4:3 — **"Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss."**
John 15:7 — **"Ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."**
1 John 3:22 — **"We keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight."**

4. God Gives Better Than Expected

Genesis 50:20 — **“God meant it unto good.”**
2 Corinthians 12:9 — **“My grace is sufficient for thee.”**
Philippians 1:12 — **“Unto the furtherance of the gospel.”**
Romans 8:28 — **“All things work together for good.”**
Psalm 84:11 — **“No good thing will he withhold.”**

5. Power Working In Believers

Ephesians 1:19 — **“The exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe.”**
Philippians 2:13 — **“God which worketh in you.”**
Colossians 1:29 — **“His working, which worketh in me mightily.”**
1 Thessalonians 2:13 — **“Effectually worketh also in you that believe.”**
Ephesians 3:7 — **“The effectual working of his power.”**

6. Strength In The Inner Man

Ephesians 3:16 — **“Strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man.”**
2 Corinthians 4:16 — **“The inward man is renewed day by day.”**
Romans 7:22 — **“I delight in the law of God after the inward man.”**
Psalm 73:26 — **“God is the strength of my heart.”**
2 Timothy 2:1 — **“Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.”**

7. God’s Power In Weakness

2 Corinthians 12:9 — **“My strength is made perfect in weakness.”**
2 Corinthians 4:7 — **“The excellency of the power may be of God.”**
Isaiah 40:29 — **“He giveth power to the faint.”**
Isaiah 40:31 — **“They that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength.”**
Philippians 4:13 — **“Through Christ which strengtheneth me.”**

8. Divine Power And Human Obedience

Philippians 2:12 — **“Work out your own salvation.”**
Philippians 2:13 — **“For it is God which worketh in you.”**
Galatians 5:16 — **“Walk in the Spirit.”**
Ephesians 6:10 — **“Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.”**
Colossians 2:6 — **“As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 3:20 is frequently quoted as though God had handed every Christian a blank check and promised to exceed whatever amount the flesh writes upon it. The context says something far richer. Paul has been praying for believers to be strengthened in the inner man, governed by Christ, rooted in love, enlarged in understanding, and filled with spiritual fullness. Then he says God can do **"exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think."** That means the verse is first about God's limitless sufficiency for His spiritual purpose, not about guaranteeing every ambition we can baptize with religious language. God may give more than we requested, but He may also give something entirely different because His wisdom sees what our request cannot. **The God who exceeds our asking is not obligated to obey our imagination.**

That truth should encourage prayer rather than shrink it. We should ask boldly because God is able, but we should ask humbly because God is wiser. There is no contradiction between those attitudes. A child can confidently ask a good father while trusting that the father knows more than the child. Paul prayed for his thorn to leave, and Christ gave sufficient grace instead. From the standpoint of comfort, Paul did not receive what he requested; from the standpoint of spiritual power, he received something greater. Sometimes the larger answer is not the changed circumstance but the transformed believer walking through it. **We ask God to make the road easier; He may answer by making the traveler stronger.**

The phrase **"according to the power that worketh in us"** should also correct the hunger for outward spectacle. God certainly can work publicly and dramatically, but Ephesians keeps pressing power into the inner man. His power teaches a bitter believer to forgive, gives courage to a fearful Christian, strengthens a saint to endure suffering, helps a tempted believer say no to the flesh, enables a servant to keep preaching when applause disappears, and builds spiritual understanding where ignorance once ruled. Those victories may never trend, fill an auditorium, or produce impressive video clips. Heaven does not need a camera angle to recognize power. **A life quietly conquered by the Spirit is a greater miracle than religious excitement that disappears before the parking lot empties.**

Finally, this verse should destroy both despair and pride. Despair says, "God cannot do enough with someone as weak as I am." Paul answers, **"unto him that is able."** Pride says, "Look what my discipline, intelligence, personality, or ministry accomplished." Paul answers, **"according to the power that worketh in us."** The power is His. The working is His. Yet He chooses to work in people who believe, surrender, obey, pray, study, serve, and walk by faith. That gives the Christian confidence without self-importance. We are not sufficient in ourselves, but we are not abandoned to ourselves either. **The believer's hope**

is not that he can finally become strong enough for God; it is that God is already more than able to work through a surrendered weakness beyond anything that weakness could have asked or imagined.

Ephesians 3:21 Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

"Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."
Ephesians 3:21

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"Unto him be glory"

Paul ends the chapter where all sound doctrine ought to end: with God receiving the glory. Ephesians 3 has carried us through the mystery, the one body, the unsearchable riches of Christ, the manifold wisdom of God, the eternal purpose, bold access, inward strengthening, the love of Christ, and the power of God working in believers. After all that, Paul does not congratulate the Church for being important. He does not congratulate himself for having explained the mystery. He does not turn the closing sentence into a celebration of apostolic brilliance. He says, **"Unto him be glory."** Everything returns to God.

That is the proper conclusion of grace. Ephesians 2:8–9 already removed human boasting from salvation: **"For by grace are ye saved through faith… not of works, lest any man should boast."** If man did not originate salvation, did not earn salvation, did not create the one body, did not reveal the mystery, did not supply the power, and did not produce the love, then man has remarkably little material left for a victory speech. First Corinthians 1:29 says God has arranged matters **"That no flesh should glory in his presence."** Verse 31 gives the only safe direction: **"He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." Grace is God doing so much that the flesh eventually runs out of things it can honestly take credit for.**

The word **"glory"** also reminds us that doctrine is not merely about getting facts technically correct. Correct doctrine should enlarge our view of God. If Bible study consistently makes us more impressed with our cleverness than with Christ, something has gone crooked. Paul has just described divine power that exceeds what we ask or think, and the natural

response is praise. Romans 11:33–36 follows the same pattern: after discussing the depth of God's wisdom, Paul concludes, **"For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever."** Truth is meant to terminate in worship, not ego.

"in the church"

Paul becomes very specific about where this glory is to be manifested: **"in the church."** The Church is the body of Christ, not the building where Christians meet. Ephesians 1:22–23 says Christ is **"the head over all things to the church, Which is his body."** Colossians 1:18 likewise says, **"he is the head of the body, the church."** The glory Paul speaks of is therefore connected with redeemed people joined to Christ by the Spirit.

That fact gives the Church tremendous dignity without making the Church divine. The Church does not possess glory independently of God. Ephesians 3:10 already said that **"the manifold wisdom of God"** is made known **"by the church."** The Church is the display case, not the treasure. The Church is the body, not the Head. The Church is God's workmanship, not God Himself. **Whenever the Church begins worshipping its own importance, the mirror has been mistaken for the light it reflects.**

The phrase also helps distinguish the Church from Israel. Paul does not say **"unto him be glory in Israel"** here because his subject in this chapter is the revealed mystery of the body of Christ. That does not cancel Israel's future or national promises. Romans 11:26 still says, **"And so all Israel shall be saved,"** and verse 29 says, **"the gifts and calling of God are without repentance."** Right division allows God to receive glory in His present work through the Church while still keeping every promise He made to Israel. **God does not need to erase one purpose in order to glorify Himself through another.**

There is also practical responsibility in the phrase. If God intends glory **"in the church,"** then the Church ought not live in a way that brings reproach upon the One whose name it bears. Ephesians 4 will move immediately into the believer's walk. Doctrine comes first; conduct follows. The Church does not earn its position by holy living, but its position gives holy living a reason. Titus 2:10 speaks of believers **"adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things."** The Church glorifies God when truth is believed, Christ is exalted, saints walk worthy, sinners hear the gospel, and the body functions under its Head.

"by Christ Jesus"

The glory in the Church is **"by Christ Jesus."** Christ is the Mediator, Head, Saviour, foundation, and center of everything Ephesians has described. Ephesians 1:3 says God has blessed us **"with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."** Ephesians 2:13 says those once far off are **"made nigh by the blood of Christ."** Ephesians 2:16 says Jew and Gentile are reconciled **"unto God in one body by the cross."** Ephesians 3:12 says **"In**

whom we have boldness and access with confidence." The entire epistle keeps dragging attention back to Christ.

That means the Church glorifies God only in connection with Christ. Human tradition cannot replace Him. Religious systems cannot improve Him. Personalities cannot compete with Him. First Corinthians 3:11 says, **"For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."** Colossians 1:18 says He is to have **"the preeminence."** Preeminence does not mean Christ gets first place on a long list and then quietly waits while everything else gets equal attention. It means He is above all.

The wording **"by Christ Jesus"** also guards the gospel. Sinners do not glorify God by bypassing the Son and approaching through general religion. John 14:6 says, **"no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."** First Timothy 2:5 says there is **"one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."** Salvation, access, service, worship, and the Church's glory all stand upon Christ. **Any Christianity that can function just as well after Christ is pushed to the side has stopped being Christianity and become religious machinery with His name painted on it.**

"throughout all ages"

Paul now stretches the statement beyond the present generation: **"throughout all ages."** God's glory in Christ and through the Church is not a temporary project designed only for Paul's lifetime. The phrase reaches forward. Ephesians 2:7 had already spoken of **"the ages to come"** in which God would show **"the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."** The Church's relationship to Christ has eternal implications.

This does not mean every dispensational administration becomes identical throughout eternity. The Bible distinguishes ages, covenants, peoples, judgments, resurrection, kingdom, and eternity. But the glory of God through Christ does not expire. Hebrews 13:8 says, **"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever."** Revelation 5:13 records creation saying, **"Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."** Christ's worth does not diminish as ages change.

The phrase also humbles our fixation on the present moment. Churches rise and fall. Buildings are erected and later demolished. Ministries become known and eventually forgotten. Names that seem large in one century may be entirely unknown in the next. Yet God's glory continues. **Men spend entire lives trying to become unforgettable, while Scripture quietly reminds them that only one Name needs to survive every age.**

"world without end. Amen."

Paul closes with **“world without end.”** The phrase pushes beyond temporary history into enduring eternity. God’s glory is not headed toward expiration. His purpose does not run out. His grace does not become obsolete. His Son does not surrender His worth when the present world changes. Psalm 90:2 says, **“from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.”** Revelation 11:15 says Christ **“shall reign for ever and ever.”**

The words also give perspective to suffering. Paul is writing as a prisoner, yet his closing view extends beyond Rome, Caesar, chains, and the present age. Rome had an expiration date. Paul’s God did not. The empire that looked permanent is gone; the words **“world without end”** are still being read. That is one of Scripture’s recurring ironies. Men build monuments to temporary power while saints hold promises tied to eternity.

Finally comes **“Amen.”** That is more than a decorative closing. It is affirmation: so be it; truly. Paul has prayed, praised, and concluded with agreement toward God’s glory. The Church should do the same. **A fitting response to everything in Ephesians 3 is not merely “interesting,” but “Amen.”**

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 3:21 closes the chapter by directing all glory to God **in the Church, by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages**. The verse gathers the entire chapter into one doxology. The mystery, the one body, the riches of Christ, the Church’s witness before heavenly powers, inward strengthening, spiritual understanding, and divine power all exist ultimately for God’s glory.

The verse also keeps Christ at the center and history in perspective. The Church matters because it belongs to Christ, not because it possesses independent glory. Israel remains distinct in God’s prophetic purpose, while the Church presently displays His grace and wisdom. Human institutions pass away, but God’s glory through Christ continues **“world without end.”**

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. Glory Belongs To God

Romans 11:36 — **“To whom be glory for ever.”**
1 Corinthians 10:31 — **“Do all to the glory of God.”**
1 Peter 4:11 — **“That God in all things may be glorified.”**
Psalm 115:1 — **“Not unto us, O LORD… but unto thy name give glory.”**
Jude 25 — **“To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty.”**

2. The Church Is Christ’s Body

Ephesians 1:22–23 — **“The church, Which is his body.”**
Colossians 1:18 — **“The head of the body, the church.”**
1 Corinthians 12:27 — **“Ye are the body of Christ.”**
Ephesians 4:4 — **“There is one body.”**
Colossians 1:24 — **“His body's sake, which is the church.”**

3. Christ Has The Preeminence

Colossians 1:18 — **“That in all things he might have the preeminence.”**
Philippians 2:9 — **“God also hath highly exalted him.”**
Ephesians 1:21 — **“Far above all principality, and power.”**
Revelation 19:16 — **“KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.”**
Hebrews 1:4 — **“Being made so much better than the angels.”**

4. Everything Comes Through Christ

John 14:6 — **“No man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”**
1 Timothy 2:5 — **“One mediator… the man Christ Jesus.”**
Ephesians 2:18 — **“Through him we both have access.”**
Romans 5:1 — **“Peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”**
Ephesians 2:13 — **“Made nigh by the blood of Christ.”**

5. The Church Displays God’s Wisdom

Ephesians 3:10 — **“By the church the manifold wisdom of God.”**
Ephesians 2:10 — **“For we are his workmanship.”**
Ephesians 2:22 — **“An habitation of God through the Spirit.”**
1 Peter 2:9 — **“That ye should shew forth the praises of him.”**
Philippians 2:15 — **“Shine as lights in the world.”**

6. Glory Through The Ages

Ephesians 2:7 — **“In the ages to come.”**
Hebrews 13:8 — **“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.”**
Psalm 145:13 — **“Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom.”**
Revelation 5:13 — **“Glory, and power… for ever and ever.”**
Revelation 11:15 — **“He shall reign for ever and ever.”**

7. Human Glory Must Decrease

1 Corinthians 1:29 — **“That no flesh should glory in his presence.”**
Galatians 6:14 — **“God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross.”**
Jeremiah 9:24 — **“Let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and**

knoweth me."
John 3:30 — **"He must increase, but I must decrease."**
1 Corinthians 3:7 — **"Neither is he that planteth any thing."**

8. God's Glory Is Eternal

Psalm 90:2 — **"From everlasting to everlasting, thou art God."**
1 Timothy 1:17 — **"Unto the King eternal… be honour and glory for ever and ever."**
Revelation 4:11 — **"Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory."**
Revelation 7:12 — **"Glory… be unto our God for ever and ever."**
Jude 25 — **"Both now and ever. Amen."**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 3:21 gives the proper ending to everything Paul has been teaching: **God gets the glory.** That sounds obvious until the flesh gets involved. Men can turn grace into a platform for boasting, doctrine into a contest for superiority, ministry into a personality cult, and church life into an exercise in protecting human reputations. Paul does the opposite. After explaining truths enormous enough to occupy generations of study, he directs the attention away from himself and says, **"Unto him be glory."** That is where sound doctrine should always land. If our study of the Bible makes us more impressed with ourselves than with God, we have managed to carry water from the well and still die of thirst. **The test of great doctrine is not how large it makes the student appear, but how impossible it becomes for him to keep God small.**

The phrase **"in the church"** should also deepen our view of what the Church is for. The Church is not an entertainment venue, political machine, business franchise, social club, or monument to whoever occupies the pulpit. It is Christ's body. God intends His wisdom, grace, holiness, truth, and power to be displayed through redeemed people joined to His Son. That gives church life dignity, but it also creates responsibility. A church that becomes obsessed with itself is failing at the very thing for which it exists. The body is supposed to display the Head, not become fascinated with its own reflection. **The Church is at its greatest when Christ is most visible and the Church itself has forgotten to demand applause.**

The words **"by Christ Jesus"** keep every spiritual blessing in its proper channel. We do not reach God by human religion, national heritage, ceremonial merit, or ecclesiastical authority. Everything comes through Christ. Salvation comes through Him. Access comes through Him. The one body exists in Him. The Church's glory is by Him. That truth also protects the believer from celebrity Christianity. If Christ is the channel through which God receives glory, then no preacher, pastor, teacher, ministry, or denomination should become

indispensable in the minds of God's people. Useful servants matter, but Christ alone remains the foundation. **The quickest way for a ministry to become spiritually crooked is for the messenger to start occupying space reserved for the Saviour.**

Finally, Paul lifts our eyes beyond the present age: **"throughout all ages, world without end."** That perspective shrinks the things we are tempted to fear and magnifies the things we are tempted to neglect. Governments pass. Cultures change. Institutions collapse. Famous names fade. Bodies age. Churches close. Yet the glory of God in Christ does not expire. The believer therefore does not have to build an eternal reputation for himself; he is called to spend a temporary life pointing toward an eternal Lord. There is great freedom in that. **When the goal is God's glory world without end, it becomes easier to let our own name disappear from the headline. Amen.**

The Ages That Cannot Exhaust His Glory

Key Passage: Ephesians 3:21

"Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen." — Ephesians 3:21

There is something wonderfully humiliating about watching a man sitting in a Roman prison write a sentence that reaches farther into eternity than anything the Roman Empire ever dreamed of accomplishing. Rome had its emperors, its armies, its monuments, its laws, its military roads, and enough political arrogance to convince itself that civilization would fall apart if Caesar ever stopped giving orders. The Romans built their empire as though history had been waiting for them to arrive and eternity would need their permission to continue. Yet somewhere within that empire sat a prisoner named Paul, writing about a glory that would continue "throughout all ages, world without end." Think about that for a minute. The empire that held Paul captive could not guarantee its own existence for another thousand years, but the prisoner was writing about something that would never expire. Rome had the authority to lock a door. Paul knew the God who had opened eternity. Rome could count its territories, its soldiers, and its prisoners, but it could not put a number on the glory of Jesus Christ. The men who thought they owned the world could not even keep their own empire, while the prisoner they held in chains was writing about a kingdom that would never end.

Ephesians 3:21 is not a decorative religious expression placed at the end of a chapter because Paul needed something impressive to finish his prayer. It is a tremendous declaration concerning the eternal purpose of Almighty God. Everything Paul has been

unfolding throughout Ephesians 3 comes together in this final sentence. The mystery once hidden and now revealed, the calling of the Gentiles, the formation of one body in Christ, the manifold wisdom of God displayed before heavenly powers, the strengthening of the inner man, the indwelling of Christ, the love that passes knowledge, and the power that works exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think—all of it leads to one conclusion. God gets the glory. Not Paul. Not the apostles. Not the Jewish religious establishment. Not the Gentile world. Not some institution with a magnificent building and an expensive sign out front. God gets it, and He receives that glory "in the church by Christ Jesus." But Paul does not stop with the present Church Age. He pushes the declaration across the boundaries of earthly generations and into ages yet to come. Ephesians 2:7 had already announced, "That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." There are riches of grace still to be displayed, purposes still to be fulfilled, and glories still to be manifested. God has not exhausted His purpose simply because man has reached the end of his imagination.

And here is where a great deal of modern Christianity demonstrates that it has spent more time studying religious machinery than studying the Book. We have people who can describe church-growth programs, explain denominational histories, debate worship preferences, and identify every fashionable movement that has appeared in the last fifty years, but ask them about the ages to come and suddenly the lights go dim. They speak about eternity as though it were one enormous Sunday afternoon in which everybody sits around doing nothing forever. They confuse the present Church Age with the coming Millennium, the Millennium with the eternal state, Israel with the Church, and the New Jerusalem with whatever symbolic religious arrangement their favorite theological system happens to require. Then they call the confusion spiritual maturity. No, friend. The King James Bible gives us a Church Age, a coming catching away of the saints, a period of divine judgment, the visible return of Jesus Christ, a literal thousand-year reign, a final rebellion, a great white throne judgment, and new heavens and a new earth. Those events do not all mean the same thing merely because a preacher has run out of room on his prophetic chart. God has an eternal purpose, and the proper way to understand it is not to erase the distinctions He placed in His own Book, but to believe what He said, where He said it, and to whom He said it.

1. The Glory Belongs To The One Who Planned It

The first words of Ephesians 3:21 settle an issue that human nature has been trying to reopen since the Garden of Eden: "Unto him be glory." Paul does not begin with the Church. He begins with God. That order matters because the flesh has an extraordinary talent for taking something God accomplishes and turning it into a testimonial advertisement for

itself. God saves a sinner, and before long somebody wants to know which preacher deserves the credit. God blesses a ministry, and somebody starts calculating how much of the accomplishment should be attributed to leadership. God opens a door, and men rush forward to congratulate the fellow who happened to be standing nearest the handle. But Romans 11:36 brings the entire discussion to a screeching halt: “For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.” There is the source, the means, and the destination. Everything originates with God, operates under His authority, and ultimately returns to His glory. Man is a recipient of grace, not the inventor of it. The trouble with human boasting is that the flesh keeps trying to collect royalties on work that God performed without its assistance.

Consider the plan itself. Before Paul ever stood on the Damascus road, before Peter preached at Pentecost, before the apostles understood the mystery of the one body, before Israel received the law at Sinai, and before Abraham heard the promise of God, the Lord already knew what He intended to accomplish through His Son. Ephesians 3:11 calls it “the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.” The word eternal ought to stop a man before he begins talking as though God has been improvising His way through history. The Lord did not discover that Israel would reject her Messiah and then hurriedly establish the Church because His first arrangement had gone wrong. Neither did He begin eternity with one idea and arrive at Calvary needing a replacement. Acts 2:23 speaks of Christ being delivered by “the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God,” while 1 Peter 1:20 says He “verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world.” God's knowledge preceded man's rebellion, and His purpose was not overthrown by it. That does not eliminate human responsibility or turn wickedness into righteousness. It establishes that the eternal God cannot be surprised into abandoning His eternal purpose. History is not God scrambling to repair yesterday's mistakes; it is God carrying forward a purpose that human rebellion has never possessed the power to cancel.

This also explains why the glory continues throughout all ages. God's purpose is larger than any single generation appointed to witness one portion of it. The patriarchs saw certain promises. Moses received the law. Israel received covenants and prophetic assurances. The prophets spoke of a coming Messiah and kingdom. The apostles witnessed the risen Christ. Paul received revelation concerning the mystery of the body of Christ. The present Church Age displays the riches of grace in ways not previously revealed. Yet no generation has stood at the edge of eternity and announced that God has nothing more to accomplish. Isaiah 46:9–10 declares, “I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning,” and the Lord continues, “My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.” That is not the language of a deity hoping history cooperates with His ambitions. It is the language of the Lord who knows the end before man understands the beginning. You and I

may not comprehend every detail of the ages ahead, and Scripture does not authorize us to manufacture information God has not supplied. But we know who rules them. God does not need to explain every page of eternity before He can be trusted with the next chapter.

2. The Church Was Built For Glory, Not Applause

Paul becomes exceedingly specific when he writes, “Unto him be glory in the church.” The Church is not an accidental development in the history of organized religion. It is the body of Jesus Christ. Ephesians 1:22–23 identifies Christ as “the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.” That makes the Church something altogether different from a religious corporation, a denominational headquarters, or a building constructed with stained glass and a mortgage extending into the grandchildren's lifetime. A local assembly may occupy a building, but bricks do not become members of Christ's body simply because somebody dedicates them with a prayer. Colossians 1:18 declares, “And he is the head of the body, the church.” The body belongs to its Head. It receives its life through Him. It exists under His authority. There is no ecclesiastical arrangement by which the body may vote to replace the Head when His instructions become inconvenient. A church that makes itself the center of attention has committed the spiritual absurdity of a body demanding applause while pretending it no longer needs its head.

The Church also reveals something about God's wisdom that the world could never have produced through its own religion. Ephesians 3:6 explains that believing Gentiles are “fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel.” The Jew possessed the covenants, promises, and historical privileges belonging to Israel, while the Gentiles had been described in Ephesians 2:12 as “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise.” Yet through the blood of Jesus Christ, those once far off are brought near. God did not require the Gentile to become a national Jew before receiving salvation through Christ. Neither did He abolish the historical existence of Israel and hand her earthly promises over to a Gentile religious institution. He created one new man in Christ, bringing believing Jews and Gentiles together in one spiritual body. First Corinthians 12:13 says, “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles.” There is the mystery made manifest, the wisdom of God revealed, and grace triumphing over man's religious boasting. The Church is not Israel wearing a different uniform; it is the body of Christ, created through a work of God that neither Jew nor Gentile could have accomplished.

But the privilege of belonging to Christ's body carries a responsibility that modern Christianity would do well to recover. If God's glory is to be manifested in the Church, then the Church ought to behave as though the Lord actually matters. Ephesians 4:1

immediately follows Paul's doxology with the exhortation, “that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.” Notice the connection. Chapter 3 declares the glory of God; chapter 4 demands a worthy walk. That is not a coincidence. A saved man does not live right to purchase salvation, but because salvation has placed him in a relationship that ought to affect his conduct. A ministry may have impressive attendance, remarkable technology, attractive programs, and a financial report that would make a banker smile, yet still fail in its fundamental responsibility if Jesus Christ is pushed to the margins. First Corinthians 10:31 says, “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.” That includes preaching, teaching, giving, serving, correcting, witnessing, and every ordinary duty of Christian life. God does not need a religious advertising agency to manufacture His glory. He desires a people who believe His word and walk accordingly. The Church does not glorify God by becoming impressive to the world; it glorifies God by making Christ unmistakable in the world.

3. Christ Is The Channel Through Which Glory Continues

Paul does not merely say that God receives glory in the Church. He adds three words that destroy every attempt to manufacture an independent system of access to God: “by Christ Jesus.” Those words belong exactly where the Holy Ghost placed them. The glory is God's, the Church is the body in which that glory is displayed, and Jesus Christ is the One through whom it comes. There is no salvation apart from Him, no acceptable approach to the Father that bypasses Him, and no eternal purpose that leaves Him standing outside the door. John 14:6 records His declaration, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” First Timothy 2:5 adds, “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.” One mediator! That does not leave room for a committee of secondary redeemers, a religious hierarchy distributing access according to institutional membership, or a ceremonial system that makes the finished work of Calvary insufficient. If somebody wants to approach God without Jesus Christ, he is attempting to enter a building after rejecting the only door God provided. The man who believes he can reach the Father without the Son has mistaken religious ambition for spiritual authority.

The eternal significance of Christ is established long before the Church appears in the New Testament. John 1:1 declares, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Verse 3 continues, “All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.” Colossians 1:16 says that all things were created “by him, and for him.” That means Jesus Christ is not some temporary instrument introduced into history to solve a problem and then quietly retired when the problem is settled. He is the eternal Word who became flesh, the Creator through whom all things

were made, the Redeemer who shed His blood, and the risen Lord who possesses authority over heaven and earth. Hebrews 13:8 states, “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.” His unchanging character does not mean that every divine administration throughout history is identical. The law given through Moses was not the revealed mystery committed to Paul, and the present Church Age is not the coming Millennium. But Christ remains the same Lord through them all. Ages may change, covenants may have different administrations, and earthly arrangements may disappear, but the Son of God never becomes yesterday's obsolete solution.

Now consider where that brings us in eternity. Revelation 5:12 records the heavenly declaration, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.” Notice that He is still identified as the Lamb that was slain. Calvary has not become irrelevant because the resurrection occurred. His wounds did not purchase a temporary arrangement that expired when the first generation of Christians died. The redemption accomplished by His blood possesses eternal significance. Revelation 5:13 extends the worship throughout creation: “Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.” There is glory continuing into eternity, and there is the Lamb receiving it. Human religions spend their time constructing ladders to heaven, while God has already provided the Saviour through whom sinners are reconciled to Him. No age will produce a superior mediator. No future revelation will discover a replacement for Calvary. No eternal assembly will find a more worthy object of worship. The glory of Jesus Christ will not wear out because His finished work was never designed with an expiration date.

4. God's Ages Must Be Rightly Divided, Not Blended Together

The expression “throughout all ages” deserves more careful attention than it commonly receives. Paul does not write as though history is an endless collection of interchangeable religious experiences. Scripture contains distinct dealings of God with mankind, and those distinctions must be respected if we intend to understand what the Lord has revealed. Second Timothy 2:15 commands the believer to study, “rightly dividing the word of truth.” That does not mean cutting the Bible into unrelated fragments until half of Scripture becomes useless. Neither does it mean gathering every promise, warning, covenant, judgment, kingdom prophecy, and Church doctrine into one great theological stew and declaring that everything applies to everybody in exactly the same manner. Israel received a literal land promise. The Church is described as seated in heavenly places in Christ. The prophets spoke of a coming earthly reign of the Messiah. Paul revealed the mystery of one body composed of believing Jews and Gentiles. Those distinctions are present because

God placed them there. Right division does not divide God's truth against itself; it prevents man's confusion from making different truths contradict one another.

Consider Israel's position in the prophetic purpose of God. Romans 11:25 speaks of "blindness in part" happening to Israel "until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in." Verse 26 declares, "And so all Israel shall be saved," and verse 29 adds, "For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." God has not forgotten the nation merely because He is presently calling out a people for His name through the gospel. Jeremiah 31:35–37 ties Israel's continued national existence to the fixed ordinances of creation and God's faithfulness. The promises made to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David were not worthless decorations waiting for a later theologian to explain that God never intended to fulfill them as spoken. Luke 1:32–33 declares concerning Jesus Christ that "the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David," and that "he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever." Those statements concern a real Messiah, a real throne, and a real people. The Church's spiritual blessings in Christ are glorious enough without confiscating Israel's national inheritance. God is not so poor in promises that He must break His word to one people in order to bless another.

The distinction becomes especially important when we consider the termination of the present Church Age and the fulfillment of future prophecy. First Thessalonians 4:16–17 describes the Lord descending from heaven, the dead in Christ rising first, and living believers being caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air. First Corinthians 15:51–52 calls attention to the mystery of the believer's bodily change. Those passages concern the hope of Christ's Church, not the Church establishing the kingdom through political conquest. Revelation then describes divine judgments, the visible triumph of Jesus Christ, His reign, the final judgment, and the eternal state. In the premillennial, pretribulational understanding of these passages, the Church is caught away before the coming Tribulation, while God's prophetic dealings with Israel proceed toward their promised fulfillment. We must not pretend every interpretive question has been answered merely because a chart contains a straight line. Yet we must equally refuse to erase the revealed distinctions. Ephesians 1:10 speaks of "the dispensation of the fulness of times" and God's purpose to gather together all things in Christ. His purposes converge under the authority of His Son without making every people, promise, and historical administration identical. The unity of God's eternal purpose does not require the destruction of the distinctions by which He has chosen to reveal it.

5. The Thousand-Year Kingdom Is Glorious, But It Is Not The End

One of the great prophetic events awaiting fulfillment is the literal reign of Jesus Christ upon the earth. Revelation 19 presents the returning Christ as the conquering King. Verse

16 identifies Him as “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.” Zechariah 14:4 describes His feet standing upon the mount of Olives, and verse 9 declares, “And the LORD shall be king over all the earth.” That is considerably more definite than the fashionable religious notion that Christ returns whenever enough people become civilized, enough governments adopt agreeable policies, or enough churches cooperate in solving the world's problems. Man has spent thousands of years developing systems of government, and the result is a magnificent collection of wars, corruption, oppression, vanity, and broken promises. Yet every new political movement arrives announcing that this time mankind has finally discovered the solution. The Bible gives another answer. Jesus Christ Himself will return and reign. Isaiah 2:4 describes the nations learning war no more, while Revelation 11:15 declares, “The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.” The kingdoms of men will not graduate into the kingdom of Christ through better management; they will surrender their place to the King whom they have repeatedly rejected.

Revelation 20 is equally plain about the duration of that coming earthly reign. Verse 4 speaks of those who “lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.” Verse 6 declares, “they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.” A thousand years means something. The Holy Ghost did not repeatedly provide a numerical duration because He expected Christians to disregard it whenever literal interpretation became uncomfortable. The Millennium is not an indefinite spiritual improvement program presently operating under the supervision of religious institutions. It is a future kingdom associated with Christ's victorious return, Satan's restraint, the fulfillment of prophetic promises, and the righteous government of the Messiah. Isaiah 9:7 declares, “Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.” The thousand-year period therefore marks a particular stage in the administration of His kingdom, not an expiration date for His royal authority. The Lord who reigns for a thousand years does not become an unemployed monarch when the thousand years have passed. The calendar may mark the completion of a kingdom administration, but it cannot mark the completion of the King's authority.

And here is a matter that many readers overlook: the Millennium itself is not the eternal state. Revelation 20:7 declares, “And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison.” A final rebellion follows, and God brings judgment upon those who gather against His people. Then comes the great white throne, the final judgment of the dead, and the casting of death and hell into the lake of fire. These events occur after the thousand years, not before them and not as merely another description of the same event. First Corinthians 15:24 speaks of Christ delivering up the kingdom to God, even the Father, and verse 28 concludes “that God may be all in all.” This describes the consummation of

the kingdom's appointed work, not the extinction of the Son's deity or His everlasting reign. Revelation 22:5 still declares that God's servants “shall reign for ever and ever.” The glory of the Millennium is therefore tremendous, but it does not exhaust the glory of what follows. The world has yet to witness a thousand years of righteous government under Jesus Christ, and even after that glorious period, God's eternal purpose continues. A thousand years with Christ reigning upon the earth is not the last chapter of glory; it is part of the unfolding purpose of the God whose glory has no final chapter.

6. When This World Passes Away, God's Glory Remains

There is another reason Ephesians 3:21 must be studied carefully. Paul says “world without end,” yet other passages plainly declare that the present heavens and earth will pass away. Some people encounter those statements and immediately conclude that the Bible contradicts itself. That is what happens when a man mistakes a failure of his own understanding for a failure in the words of God. Second Peter 3:10 declares, “the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat,” and continues that the earth and its works “shall be burned up.” Verse 13 then states, “Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.” Revelation 21:1 agrees: “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.” Therefore, the eternal glory promised in Ephesians 3:21 cannot depend upon the present order of creation remaining unchanged forever. The expression announces the everlasting continuation of God's glory, not the impossibility of His bringing the present world to its appointed conclusion. The God who created the world does not lose His glory when He replaces what sin has corrupted with what righteousness will permanently inhabit.

The passing away of the present world ought to give every Christian a much healthier opinion of earthly accomplishments. Second Peter 3:11 asks, “Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness.” Notice the question. Peter does not say that because the world will pass away, the believer should become careless, irresponsible, and indifferent. He says the coming dissolution of this present order ought to produce holiness. That is quite a different response from the man who spends his entire life accumulating possessions as though the undertaker has promised to install a luggage compartment underneath his coffin. Houses, investments, monuments, political achievements, technological marvels, and every earthly possession have their appointed limitations. There is nothing inherently sinful about earning a living, providing for a family, building a business, or maintaining the property God has entrusted to us. The sin begins when temporary things become the governing purpose

of life. First John 2:17 declares, “And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.” That is the eternal perspective the flesh continually resists. A man who lives only for what this world can offer is spending his eternal opportunities purchasing merchandise already scheduled for destruction.

Now turn your attention to the eternal state itself. Revelation 21:3 announces, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them.” Verse 4 declares that God shall wipe away all tears and that there shall be no more death, sorrow, crying, or pain. Verse 5 records the Lord's declaration, “Behold, I make all things new.” There is no need to convert these statements into vague religious feelings or symbolic poetry detached from future reality. The Bible describes an actual new creation, the New Jerusalem, the throne of God and of the Lamb, and the removal of the curse. Revelation 21:23 says of the city, “for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.” There it is again—God's glory and the Lamb. The world known to Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Paul, and every generation since will have passed through its appointed history, but the glory of God will remain. Revelation 22:3 declares, “his servants shall serve him.” Eternity is not presented as meaningless inactivity but as everlasting life in the presence of God. When the last funeral has been forgotten, the last tear has been wiped away, and the last curse has disappeared, the glory of God will still be there without a wrinkle of age upon it.

7. Eternity Cannot Exhaust The Riches Of Grace

Now we arrive at one of the most magnificent connections in the entire epistle. Ephesians 3:21 declares God's glory “throughout all ages,” while Ephesians 2:7 tells us what He intends to display in the ages to come: “the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.” Read those words carefully. The ages to come are not described merely as a period in which God reminds redeemed people that they once received grace. He intends to show the exceeding riches of that grace. There is a difference between possessing a blessing and comprehending the full greatness of what has been given. A believer presently knows that his sins are forgiven through the blood of Christ. He knows he has eternal life, is sealed by the Holy Spirit, and belongs to the body of Christ. He knows these things because the Book declares them. But who among us fully comprehends everything involved in being made a joint-heir with Christ, sharing in His resurrection, possessing an eternal inheritance, and dwelling forever in the presence of Almighty God? We know the promises, but we have not yet experienced the fullness of their future manifestation. Salvation is complete in Christ, but the believer has not finished discovering the greatness of what Christ has given him.

This is where eternal security becomes more than an argument against people who believe salvation can be lost. It becomes a testimony to the enduring purpose of grace. Ephesians

1:13 says that believers are sealed “with that holy Spirit of promise,” while Ephesians 4:30 declares they are “sealed unto the day of redemption.” Romans 8:23 identifies the future bodily hope as “the redemption of our body.” First John 3:2 declares, “Beloved, now are we the sons of God,” and continues, “when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.” The believer's standing in Christ is already established, yet the resurrection and glorification of his body remain ahead. God has not saved the soul merely to abandon the body to everlasting corruption. Neither has He promised eternal life as a temporary benefit subject to cancellation whenever the flesh stumbles. The new birth comes through the work of God, and the glorification of the believer completes what He has promised. That does not excuse sin, remove chastening, or guarantee that an unfaithful Christian will receive the same reward as a faithful servant. First Corinthians 3:15 makes clear that a man's work may be burned while “he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.” Eternal security is not permission to waste a Christian life; it is assurance that the God who saved us will finish His work even while holding us accountable for the life we lived.

And then comes the astonishing prospect of eternity itself. Scripture does not tell us everything that redeemed people will learn, experience, or accomplish throughout everlasting ages, and we should resist the temptation to furnish heaven with imaginary details God never revealed. The Bible gives us enough to establish its glory without borrowing inventions from religious entertainment. We shall be with the Lord. We shall see His face. We shall serve Him. We shall reign forever and ever. The curse will be removed, death will be destroyed, and God's presence will be the everlasting joy of His people. Revelation 22:4 declares, “And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads.” Think about the greatness of that statement. Moses was told in Exodus 33:20, “Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live.” Yet the redeemed in the eternal state are promised the sight of God's face. What grace has accomplished is almost beyond our present comprehension. John 17:24 records the Lord Jesus praying that His people might be with Him and “behold my glory.” The ages ahead will provide the everlasting setting in which the riches of God's kindness are displayed. Eternity will not make grace ordinary; it will remove the limitations that presently keep us from appreciating how extraordinary grace truly is.

Conclusion

Ephesians 3:21 begins with God receiving glory, places that glory in the Church through Jesus Christ, and carries it beyond every boundary of earthly history. It begins with “Unto him” and ends with “Amen.” Between those two expressions lies a declaration larger than the Roman Empire, greater than the present Church Age, broader than the coming Millennium, and enduring beyond the dissolution of the present heavens and earth. Paul

was not writing a religious farewell designed to make the Ephesians feel impressed with their spiritual privileges. He was stating the destination of everything God had revealed throughout the chapter. The mystery of the one body, the bringing together of believing Jews and Gentiles, the manifestation of divine wisdom before heavenly powers, the strengthening of believers by the Spirit, and the love of Christ that passes knowledge all point back to the glory of Almighty God. The Church is not the author of the plan. Paul was not its inventor. Christ is not merely one important participant among several. God established the purpose, Christ accomplished the redemption, the Holy Spirit forms and strengthens the body, and God receives the glory. The ages to come will demonstrate that the Lord has not exhausted His resources, His wisdom, or His gracious purposes. Man spends his life trying to build something that will outlast him, but God has already established a glory that will outlast everything man has ever built.

There is also a personal question here that every believer ought to consider before closing his Bible. If God's glory continues throughout all ages, why are we so easily distracted by things that will not survive this present life? Why do Christians become consumed with recognition, possessions, reputation, influence, arguments, personal grievances, and the approval of people whose own days are numbered? Why do churches compete to become impressive when their very existence is supposed to direct attention toward Jesus Christ? Why do preachers become offended when somebody else receives recognition for serving the same Lord? Why do we spend so much energy defending our own importance when Scripture repeatedly reminds us that our importance comes entirely from belonging to Him? Galatians 6:14 gives Paul's answer: “But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” That is the proper ambition of Christian ministry. Preach the Book. Exalt the Saviour. Win the lost. Strengthen the saints. Keep the faith. Endure hardship. Walk worthy. Leave the accounting of human recognition to the Lord who judges righteously. There is nothing wrong with desiring that your life accomplish something worthwhile, but the purpose must be greater than your own reputation. If a man must have his name remembered in order to believe his life mattered, he has not yet understood whose glory gives Christian service its eternal value.

And finally, consider the man who wrote the words. Paul was confined, suffering, opposed, and surrounded by the uncertainties of Roman imprisonment, yet he could see beyond them all. His body was within the jurisdiction of an earthly empire, but his confidence rested upon the eternal purpose of Jesus Christ. The Church he served would continue after his death. The gospel he preached would reach nations he had never visited. The Lord who saved him would return. The body of Christ would be glorified. Israel's prophetic promises would not fail. The King would reign. The present heavens and earth would pass away. The new creation would appear. The redeemed would dwell with God. And through

every unfolding stage of divine purpose, God's glory would remain. Psalm 90:2 declares, “from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.” That is the answer to man's arrogance, the cure for the believer's short-sightedness, and the foundation of our everlasting hope. Dear Christian, whatever burdens you are carrying today, whatever opposition you are facing, whatever work the Lord has entrusted to your hands, and however little the world may recognize your faithfulness, remember that your life is joined to a purpose larger than the age in which you live. You are not serving a temporary Saviour, believing a temporary gospel, or awaiting a temporary inheritance. You belong to the Lord whose glory cannot be measured by clocks, calendars, kingdoms, generations, or centuries. The ages will keep unfolding, the purposes of God will keep being fulfilled, and eternity itself will never arrive at a morning when the redeemed have exhausted the glory of Jesus Christ. Unto him be glory throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

Chapter 4

Ephesians 4:1 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 4:1

“I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,”

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

“I therefore”

Paul opens the fourth chapter with a word that connects everything he is about to command with everything he has already established. “Therefore” is not an ornamental transition. It carries the entire doctrinal weight of Ephesians 1–3 into the practical responsibilities of Ephesians 4–6. The believer has been blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ (Ephesians 1:3), accepted in the beloved (Ephesians 1:6), redeemed through His blood (Ephesians 1:7), sealed with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13), and made alive together with Christ (Ephesians 2:5). He has been raised up and seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:6). Jew and Gentile believers have been

reconciled unto God in one body by the cross (Ephesians 2:16). After announcing these magnificent truths, Paul now tells the Christian how he ought to live. The order is deliberate: God establishes the believer's position before instructing him concerning his conduct.

This distinction is fundamental to understanding salvation by grace. Paul does not spend three chapters explaining what Christ has accomplished and then suddenly announce that Christians must earn those blessings by good behavior. Ephesians 2:8–9 has already settled salvation as God's gift, not the product of human works. Verse 10 then explains that believers are created in Christ Jesus unto good works. The works follow salvation; they do not purchase it. The man who reverses that order has missed the meaning of “therefore.” He is trying to turn the Christian walk into an entrance examination for a salvation that God has already freely provided. Ephesians 4:1 concerns the conduct of people already called into Christ, not a religious method for converting lost sinners into saved ones. Grace does not eliminate Christian responsibility; it establishes the proper reason for fulfilling it.

“the prisoner of the Lord”

Paul identifies himself as “the prisoner of the Lord,” although the immediate circumstances of his imprisonment involved Roman authority. There is tremendous spiritual significance in that choice of words. In Ephesians 3:1 he calls himself “the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles,” and in Ephesians 6:20 he declares that he is “an ambassador in bonds.” Rome could restrict Paul's movement, but it could not remove his commission from Jesus Christ. The apostle refused to interpret his calling merely through the conditions of his prison cell. His imprisonment was connected with his testimony and ministry to the Gentiles, not with some criminal enterprise deserving punishment. Philippians 1:12 explains that the things which happened unto him had fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel. A man may lose his freedom of movement without losing his freedom to serve God faithfully.

Neither should this statement be twisted into the notion that every suffering Christian is automatically righteous or that every imprisoned religious figure must be suffering for the truth. First Peter 4:15 warns believers against suffering as evildoers, while verse 16 distinguishes suffering as a Christian. Paul could identify himself with the Lord in his imprisonment because he was suffering in connection with obedience to his calling. That is quite different from a man making foolish decisions and then blaming God when the consequences arrive. Yet Paul's language also corrects the assumption that adverse circumstances necessarily indicate divine displeasure. The apostle who revealed the mystery of the Church was sitting in bonds while writing instructions concerning Christian conduct. His authority did not come from worldly prestige, financial success, or

comfortable surroundings. Rome saw a troublesome prisoner; God had a faithful ambassador whose chains could not silence the truth he carried.

“beseech you”

The word “beseech” reveals the manner in which Paul addresses these believers. He is not presenting an invitation to lost sinners to purchase eternal life through improved conduct. He is earnestly appealing to people who already belong to Jesus Christ. Romans 12:1 uses the same approach: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice.” The appeal rests upon mercies already received. Paul possesses apostolic authority, but he addresses the Christian conscience through the truth of God's word. His appeal is neither a casual suggestion nor an attempt to manipulate men through religious fear. He is calling saved people to recognize the responsibility that accompanies their calling. The gospel gives the believer a new standing before God, and apostolic instruction teaches him how to live consistently with that standing.

There is also a pastoral lesson here that modern religious leadership frequently overlooks. Paul did not need to invent an additional plan of salvation to encourage holiness. Neither did he threaten believers with the loss of eternal life every time their conduct failed to meet the standard of Christian maturity. He understood that obedience should arise from gratitude, love, faith, and submission to the Lord. Second Corinthians 5:14 declares, “For the love of Christ constraineth us.” That is a more biblical motive than frightening believers into outward conformity while leaving their hearts untouched. A preacher may obtain visible compliance through intimidation, but intimidation cannot produce the fruit of the Spirit. Biblical exhortation confronts sin without confusing salvation with discipleship. The purpose of sound preaching is not to make the Christian afraid that Christ will abandon him, but to make him ashamed of living as though Christ has done nothing for him.

“that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called”

The command to “walk worthy” concerns the believer's daily conduct. Throughout Ephesians, walking describes the practical manner of life. Ephesians 2:2 describes the former walk according to the course of this world. Ephesians 2:10 declares that believers should walk in good works. Ephesians 5:2 commands them to walk in love, while Ephesians 5:8 instructs them to walk as children of light. These passages establish a contrast between the old manner of life and the new responsibilities of those who belong to Jesus Christ. Walking worthy does not mean becoming worthy of salvation through personal achievement. It means conducting oneself in a manner consistent with the calling already received. A soldier does not earn his commission every morning by polishing his boots, but his conduct should reflect the responsibility of the uniform he wears. The

Christian walk does not create the believer's relationship with Christ; it reveals whether he is living in accordance with that relationship.

The word “vocation” identifies a calling, not merely a secular occupation or religious profession. Paul is addressing all believers, not exclusively pastors, evangelists, missionaries, or teachers. Ephesians 4:4 speaks of “one hope of your calling,” while 2 Timothy 1:9 describes God as the One “Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling.” Salvation places a person into a relationship with Christ that carries a continuing responsibility to live for Him. A Christian may earn his living as a farmer, merchant, mechanic, physician, or laborer, but his earthly employment does not exhaust his spiritual calling. Every saved individual belongs to Christ and is expected to glorify Him through faithful obedience. This does not mean that every believer possesses the same spiritual gifts or ministry responsibilities. Ephesians 4:11–12 subsequently explains that Christ gives particular ministers for the perfecting of the saints. Not every Christian is called to occupy a pulpit, but every Christian is called to conduct himself as someone who belongs to Jesus Christ.

The closing words, “wherewith ye are called,” establish the source of this responsibility. The believer's calling originates with God, not with a human institution assigning spiritual importance according to education, influence, or public recognition. First Corinthians 1:26–29 reminds believers that God has called people whom the world does not consider impressive, so that no flesh should glory in His presence. The Christian therefore has no legitimate reason to become proud of his calling, and no excuse for treating it lightly. The verses immediately following Ephesians 4:1 explain what a worthy walk looks like: lowliness, meekness, longsuffering, forbearance, and the unity of the Spirit. These are not the characteristics ordinarily celebrated by religious showmanship. They are qualities produced through spiritual maturity and submission to God's word. A worthy walk is not measured by how loudly a man announces his calling, but by how faithfully he obeys the Lord who called him.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 4:1 marks the major transition from the doctrinal foundations of the first three chapters to the practical instruction of the final three. Paul has established the believer's salvation by grace, spiritual position in Christ, relationship to the one body, and participation in God's revealed purpose. He now demands conduct consistent with those blessings. The passage establishes the proper relationship between standing and state, salvation and service, grace and responsibility. The believer's standing is secured in Christ; his daily state must increasingly conform to that standing. The call to holiness is not an

additional requirement for receiving eternal life but an obligation arising from life already received.

Paul's imprisonment also demonstrates that Christian faithfulness cannot be evaluated merely through outward prosperity or favorable circumstances. A faithful servant may suffer while remaining obedient to the Lord. The apostle's appeal emphasizes earnest exhortation rather than religious manipulation, while the believer's vocation encompasses his entire Christian life rather than only formal ministry. The following verses establish that worthy walking involves humility, patience, love, and spiritual unity. The central doctrine is that the believer must live consistently with what God has already made him in Jesus Christ. Grace supplies the foundation, Christ supplies the life, Scripture supplies the instruction, and the Christian is responsible to walk accordingly.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

Theme 1: Salvation And The Divine Calling

Ephesians 2:8 — “For by grace are ye saved through faith”; Ephesians 2:10 — “created in Christ Jesus unto good works”; 2 Timothy 1:9 — “Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling”; Romans 8:30 — “whom he called, them he also justified”.

These passages establish that salvation originates with God, while good works follow as the intended fruit of His saving grace.

Theme 2: Walking Worthy Of The Lord

Colossians 1:10 — “That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing”; 1 Thessalonians 2:12 — “That ye would walk worthy of God”; Philippians 1:27 — “Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ”; Ephesians 5:8 — “walk as children of light”.

A worthy walk is the practical expression of a believer's relationship with Christ, demonstrated through conduct consistent with the gospel.

Theme 3: Faithfulness Despite Imprisonment

Ephesians 3:1 — “the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles”; Ephesians 6:20 — “For which I am an ambassador in bonds”; Philippians 1:12 — “the furtherance of the gospel”; 2 Timothy 2:9 — “but the word of God is not bound.”

Paul's physical restrictions did not cancel his calling, and his sufferings demonstrate that God's word remains powerful even when His servants encounter opposition.

Theme 4: Christian Holiness And Service

Romans 12:1 — “present your bodies a living sacrifice”; Titus 2:12 — “we should live soberly, righteously, and godly”; 1 Peter 1:15 — “be ye holy in all manner of conversation”; Galatians 5:13 — “by love serve one another.”

God's grace does not encourage careless living but teaches believers to pursue holiness, obedience, and loving service.

Theme 5: Humility And Spiritual Unity

Ephesians 4:2 — “With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love”; Ephesians 4:3 — “Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”; Philippians 2:3 — “in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves”; Colossians 3:13 — “Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another”.

A worthy Christian walk includes humility and patience toward fellow believers without sacrificing biblical truth to obtain outward religious agreement.

Theme 6: Standing In Christ And Accountability

Ephesians 1:6 — “accepted in the beloved”; Colossians 2:10 — “And ye are complete in him”; 1 Corinthians 3:15 — “he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire”; 2 Corinthians 5:10 — “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ”.

The believer's eternal acceptance rests upon Christ, while his earthly service remains subject to divine examination and the possibility of reward or loss.

Theme 7: Walking Through The Spirit And The Word

Galatians 5:16 — “Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh”; Ephesians 5:18 — “be filled with the Spirit”; Ephesians 5:15 — “See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise”; Psalm 119:105 — “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.”

The Christian cannot produce spiritual maturity through fleshly determination alone but must walk under the Spirit's direction according to the truth of God's word.

5. Reflection

Ephesians 4:1 ought to settle a great deal of religious confusion before it gets started. Paul is not addressing lost sinners and telling them to straighten up their lives so that God will finally consider saving them. He is writing to people who have already received redemption, forgiveness, and spiritual life through Jesus Christ. The first three chapters establish what God has accomplished, and the fourth chapter begins explaining how believers should respond. That order protects the gospel from every religious system that

attempts to make human conduct part of the purchase price of salvation. Water baptism, church membership, ceremonial observance, moral improvement, and religious enthusiasm cannot accomplish what Christ's blood has already accomplished for the believer. The Christian does not walk worthy to become saved; he walks worthy because he has been saved. Once that distinction is understood, holiness becomes an expression of gratitude rather than a desperate effort to earn God's acceptance.

Consider also the remarkable circumstances surrounding Paul's exhortation. Here is a man sitting in prison, urging Christians who possess ordinary freedom to live faithfully for Jesus Christ. He is not complaining that his circumstances have made obedience impossible, nor is he demanding sympathy before fulfilling his responsibility. His imprisonment demonstrates that Christian calling is not cancelled when circumstances become unfavorable. That ought to correct the modern notion that God's blessing can always be measured through wealth, comfort, popularity, or professional advancement. Paul possessed none of the outward advantages that religious entertainers often advertise as evidence of divine approval, yet he remained faithful to his commission. He understood that the Lord's authority extended beyond Rome's prison walls. A Christian who can serve God only when circumstances are pleasant has confused comfortable living with faithful discipleship.

The expression “walk worthy” also brings Christianity into the ordinary activities of daily life. A believer does not become spiritually responsible only when he enters a church building or opens his Bible before an audience. His conduct matters in his home, employment, conversation, finances, relationships, and private decisions. Ephesians 4 will address speech, anger, honesty, bitterness, kindness, and forgiveness because these are the places where Christian profession encounters everyday reality. A man may discuss dispensational truth with considerable confidence while treating his family with unnecessary harshness. He may defend sound doctrine publicly while privately cultivating pride, jealousy, or dishonesty. The Bible does not permit him to excuse that contradiction by pointing to how much Scripture he knows. Sound doctrine must govern the life of the person who professes to believe it, or his knowledge becomes a testimony against his conduct.

The word “vocation” deserves equal attention because it prevents Christians from dividing life into sacred employment and supposedly insignificant occupations. Paul is not suggesting that only ministers have a calling worthy of serious attention. Every saved believer belongs to Jesus Christ, and every believer has responsibilities within the life God has entrusted to him. The mother raising children, the father providing for his household, the employee fulfilling his obligations, and the elderly saint quietly praying for others all

possess opportunities to honor the Lord. This does not erase differences in spiritual gifts, offices, or particular ministry responsibilities. It simply recognizes that service to Christ extends beyond a pulpit. The Christian who thinks his calling begins only when somebody gives him a title has mistaken public recognition for spiritual responsibility. God is interested in faithfulness long before another human being notices it.

The immediate context also corrects a popular misunderstanding concerning Christian unity. Paul follows his command to walk worthy with lowliness, meekness, longsuffering, and the unity of the Spirit. He does not command believers to manufacture unity by pretending that doctrinal differences do not exist. Neither does he authorize endless quarrelling over personalities, preferences, and insignificant disagreements. Biblical unity arises from the spiritual relationship believers possess in Christ and must be maintained through truth, patience, and love. A man who abandons sound doctrine for outward harmony has not obeyed Ephesians 4:3, and a man who enjoys unnecessary conflict has hardly demonstrated the lowliness of Ephesians 4:2. The worthy walk demands both doctrinal conviction and personal humility. Truth without love becomes an excuse for pride, while love without truth becomes an invitation to compromise.

Finally, remember that Paul's exhortation concerns a life that will eventually be examined by Jesus Christ. Second Corinthians 5:10 establishes the judgment seat of Christ, where believers must give account concerning their earthly conduct. That judgment does not overturn the salvation purchased by Christ, but it makes Christian service a matter of eternal importance. Our opportunities are temporary even though our relationship with the Lord is everlasting. The years available for obedience, witness, sacrifice, and faithful service will not continue indefinitely. Therefore, the Christian ought to examine his priorities while he still possesses the opportunity to change them. There is no reason to postpone obedience until life becomes easier or circumstances finally arrange themselves according to personal preference. The Lord who called us is worthy of more than leftover time, convenient obedience, and occasional religious enthusiasm. Paul wrote from prison that believers should walk worthy of their calling, and that instruction remains just as necessary for Christians living in freedom today.

Ephesians 4:2 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 4:2

“With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;”

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

“With all lowliness and meekness”

Paul begins describing the worthy walk of Ephesians 4:1 by identifying two characteristics that human nature finds particularly offensive: lowliness and meekness. Notice that he says “with all lowliness and meekness,” not with occasional humility when circumstances make it convenient. The command demands a settled attitude governing the believer's relationships with others. This follows directly from the doctrinal revelations of Ephesians 1–3, where Paul establishes that salvation, spiritual blessings, membership in Christ's body, and access to the Father are entirely dependent upon God's grace. A man who has been saved by grace has absolutely no biblical foundation for strutting around like he personally financed Calvary. Philippians 2:3 commands believers, “in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.” That does not require pretending that every person possesses greater knowledge, wisdom, or spiritual maturity. It requires abandoning the self-important attitude that demands personal recognition and preferential treatment. The man who understands how much grace it took to save him ought to have considerable difficulty convincing himself that he is God's greatest accomplishment.

Lowliness concerns the believer's estimation of himself, while meekness concerns the spirit in which he responds to others. These characteristics belong together, but they are not identical. A man may speak softly while secretly considering himself superior to everybody in the congregation. Another may acknowledge his shortcomings while remaining harsh, argumentative, and unpleasant toward anyone who disagrees with him. Biblical lowliness recognizes personal dependence upon God, while meekness governs the exercise of strength, authority, and conviction. Jesus Christ declared in Matthew 11:29, “I am meek and lowly in heart.” Nobody who has read the four Gospels can reasonably conclude that Christ's meekness meant cowardice, doctrinal uncertainty, or an unwillingness to confront wickedness. He rebuked hypocrisy, exposed false teachers, and spoke with divine authority. Yet He remained completely submitted to the Father's will. Meekness is not the absence of conviction; it is conviction governed by submission to God rather than the appetites of the flesh.

The inclusion of these qualities at the beginning of Paul's practical instructions is especially significant because the Church contains believers from different backgrounds, levels of maturity, and circumstances of life. Ephesians 2:14–16 has already established that Christ reconciled believing Jews and Gentiles unto God in one body by the cross. Their spiritual unity does not mean every believer instantly possesses identical knowledge, judgment, or

conduct. The strong must learn patience with the weak, the knowledgeable must avoid arrogance, and those entrusted with spiritual responsibility must never confuse authority with personal superiority. Galatians 6:1 instructs spiritual believers to restore an overtaken brother “in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.” That last warning removes the pedestal from underneath the self-righteous Christian. The same flesh that brought another believer into trouble remains capable of troubling him. A Christian may possess enough knowledge to correct another man's error while lacking enough humility to correct his own attitude.

“with longsuffering”

The next expression addresses the believer's willingness to endure difficulty without surrendering to anger, resentment, or retaliation. “Longsuffering” is not mere inactivity, nor is it a sentimental attitude that pretends wrongdoing does not exist. It describes patience exercised under continued provocation, particularly when dealing with people whose conduct or weaknesses test the believer's endurance. The word itself should be plain enough for anyone willing to read it: suffering that continues without immediately giving way to sinful reaction. Colossians 3:12 commands believers to put on “bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering.” Paul is describing characteristics of the new Christian walk, not requirements for obtaining the new birth. Salvation by grace does not excuse an explosive temper, and eternal security does not make bitterness acceptable. The Christian who claims to be spiritually mature while losing control whenever another person inconveniences him has confused theological knowledge with spiritual character. A man who can explain eternal security but cannot endure five minutes of personal irritation still has some practical Bible learning to do.

Longsuffering also reflects something of God's dealings with sinful humanity. Romans 2:4 speaks of “the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering,” while 2 Peter 3:9 declares that the Lord “is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” God's patience must never be mistaken for approval of sin or indifference toward judgment. Scripture repeatedly demonstrates that divine longsuffering operates alongside holiness, righteousness, and truth. The same principle applies to Christian relationships. A believer may patiently endure another person's faults while still recognizing that those faults require correction. A pastor may exercise considerable patience with a struggling Christian without changing sound doctrine to accommodate rebellion. Parents may patiently instruct their children without abandoning necessary discipline. Biblical longsuffering delays fleshly retaliation; it does not repeal the moral standards of Almighty God.

The practical necessity of longsuffering becomes apparent whenever Christians actually begin living and working together. It is comparatively easy to admire Christian fellowship from a distance; the difficulty begins when people must cooperate despite differences in temperament, understanding, habits, and maturity. One believer speaks too quickly, another becomes offended too easily, another struggles with discouragement, and another requires repeated instruction concerning something that seems perfectly obvious to everybody else. Without longsuffering, these ordinary weaknesses become fuel for division. First Corinthians 13:4 declares, “Charity suffereth long, and is kind.” Notice that patience and kindness appear together. The believer is not merely commanded to endure another person while maintaining a private collection of grievances. He is instructed to demonstrate the love of Christ through his treatment of others. Longsuffering does not mean keeping a pleasant face while sharpening a knife behind your back; it means refusing to let another person's imperfections dictate the condition of your own heart.

“forbearing one another in love”

The final expression brings Paul's instruction from the inward condition of the believer to the outward treatment of fellow Christians. “Forbearing one another in love” means exercising patient restraint toward the weaknesses, shortcomings, and personal difficulties encountered in Christian fellowship. The word “forbearing” carries the practical idea of bearing with another person rather than immediately surrendering to irritation, condemnation, or retaliation. Colossians 3:13 explains the principle further: “Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any.” Notice that Paul does not assume believers will never encounter disagreements. He anticipates them and provides the proper response. Christian unity does not require pretending that everybody possesses identical judgment, personality, experience, or spiritual maturity. It requires believers to remember that they belong to the same Saviour and must treat one another accordingly. If a Christian cannot endure the ordinary imperfections of other Christians, he is going to find fellowship a rather difficult business until the resurrection.

The expression “one another” makes this a mutual responsibility rather than an obligation imposed upon one group while another claims exemption. Pastors must exercise patience toward their congregations, but congregations must also exercise patience toward their pastors. Mature believers should help weaker Christians without treating them as nuisances, while younger believers must remain teachable rather than assuming that every correction is personal persecution. Romans 15:1 states, “We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.” Galatians 6:2 adds, “Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.” These commands concern actual Christian relationships, where patience costs time, forgiveness requires humility, and

helping others frequently interrupts personal convenience. Nevertheless, forbearance does not abolish biblical accountability or require tolerating continuing abuse, unrepentant wickedness, or destructive false teaching. Christian love is willing to bear another person's burden, but it is not commanded to carry his rebellion while pretending that rebellion is righteousness.

The controlling expression is “in love.” Without biblical love, outward patience can become nothing more than suppressed anger waiting for a convenient opportunity to explode. First Corinthians 13:6 declares concerning charity, “Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth.” That statement destroys the argument that loving people requires withholding necessary correction or abandoning doctrinal convictions. Ephesians 4:15 subsequently commands believers to speak “the truth in love.” Truth and love are therefore partners, not enemies. The Christian who claims to love someone while deliberately concealing destructive error has misunderstood love, while the man who delights in embarrassing others under the excuse of defending truth has misunderstood the spirit of Christian correction. The believer must exercise compassion without surrendering conviction and maintain conviction without cultivating cruelty. Biblical love has enough backbone to stand for truth and enough humility to remember that the person being corrected is not the enemy merely because he needs correction.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 4:2 identifies the essential spiritual characteristics required for the worthy walk commanded in Ephesians 4:1. Lowliness confronts pride, meekness governs strength, longsuffering restrains fleshly impatience, and forbearance expresses love through practical relationships. These qualities arise from the believer's standing in Christ but must be demonstrated through his daily conduct. Paul is not introducing additional requirements for obtaining or maintaining salvation. He is addressing redeemed people who have already received the blessings described in Ephesians 1–3 and are responsible to live consistently with their calling. The distinction between salvation and discipleship remains essential: good works do not purchase eternal life, but eternal life should produce good works.

The passage also prepares the reader for Ephesians 4:3, which commands believers to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. That unity cannot be maintained through pride, harshness, selfishness, or continual retaliation. Neither does biblical unity require doctrinal compromise or treating false teaching as harmless. The one body of Christ is established through the work of God, while its members are commanded to demonstrate spiritual maturity in their relationships. The central lesson is that sound doctrine should produce Christlike conduct, and Christian love must remain governed by biblical truth.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

Theme 1: Lowliness And Humility Before God

Philippians 2:3 — “in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.”

James 4:6 — “God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.”

Romans 12:3 — “not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think”.

1 Peter 5:5 — “be clothed with humility”.

These passages establish that spiritual humility recognizes dependence upon God's grace and rejects the pride that destroys Christian fellowship.

Theme 2: Meekness Without Weakness

Matthew 11:29 — “for I am meek and lowly in heart”.

Galatians 6:1 — “restore such an one in the spirit of meekness”.

2 Timothy 2:25 — “In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves”.

Proverbs 15:1 — “A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.”

Biblical meekness governs the believer's response to others without requiring him to abandon truth, correction, or godly conviction.

Theme 3: Longsuffering And Patient Endurance

Colossians 3:12 — “humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering”.

1 Corinthians 13:4 — “Charity suffereth long, and is kind”.

2 Timothy 4:2 — “reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.”

2 Peter 3:9 — “but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish”.

Longsuffering reflects patient endurance under provocation while maintaining holiness and the responsibility to teach and correct.

Theme 4: Forbearance And Bearing One Another's Burdens

Colossians 3:13 — “Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another”.

Romans 15:1 — “We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak”.

Galatians 6:2 — “Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.”

Ephesians 4:32 — “And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another”.

Christian forbearance requires practical patience, mutual assistance, forgiveness, and compassion toward believers struggling with weakness.

Theme 5: Love Governed By Biblical Truth

Ephesians 4:15 — “speaking the truth in love”.

Romans 12:9 — “Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.”

1 Corinthians 13:6 — “Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth”.

2 John 1:6 — “And this is love, that we walk after his commandments.”

Genuine Christian love cannot be separated from truth, obedience, holiness, and the correction of destructive error.

Theme 6: The Unity Of Christ's Body

Ephesians 4:3 — “Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

Ephesians 4:4 — “There is one body, and one Spirit”.

1 Corinthians 12:13 — “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body”.

Ephesians 2:16 — “reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross”.

Spiritual unity originates through Christ's work and the Holy Spirit, while believers are responsible to preserve fellowship through truth and godly conduct.

Theme 7: Grace Producing Christian Character

Ephesians 2:8 — “For by grace are ye saved through faith”.

Ephesians 2:10 — “created in Christ Jesus unto good works”.

Galatians 5:22 — “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith”.

Ephesians 5:2 — “And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us”.

Salvation by grace establishes the believer's position in Christ, while spiritual growth should produce the character described in Ephesians 4:2.

5. Reflection

Ephesians 4:2 exposes a peculiar weakness in modern Christianity: many believers want the privileges of belonging to Christ without the inconvenience of behaving like Him. They

gladly rejoice that they are accepted in the beloved, seated in heavenly places, and sealed unto the day of redemption, but the moment another Christian crosses their preferences, their supposed maturity disappears. Paul does not permit that contradiction to pass unnoticed. He begins the practical portion of Ephesians with lowliness, meekness, longsuffering, and love because these qualities are necessary whenever redeemed sinners live together in the same body. A congregation may possess sound doctrine and still become spiritually miserable through pride. The problem is not that the Bible failed to provide instruction; the problem is that the flesh prefers winning arguments to obeying Scripture.

Lowliness is particularly offensive to the religious flesh because it leaves so little room for personal importance. Some believers will defend salvation by grace with tremendous enthusiasm and then conduct themselves as though they deserve special recognition for understanding it. But the sinner who was dead in trespasses and sins brought no personal righteousness to Calvary. Everything he possesses in Christ came through the mercy of God. That truth ought to govern how he treats inexperienced believers, elderly saints, struggling families, and people who cannot repay his kindness. Spiritual knowledge is valuable, but knowledge used to humiliate another Christian is hardly evidence of maturity. God did not rescue us from self-righteousness so that we could establish a more respectable version of it.

Meekness is not surrender to false doctrine, a distinction badly needed in an age when religious silence is frequently advertised as Christian love. Jesus Christ was meek and lowly in heart, yet He did not flatter the Pharisees or amend truth to prevent offense. Paul himself confronted error whenever the gospel was compromised. Nevertheless, this same apostle required believers to exercise meekness when correcting others. There is a difference between exposing dangerous teaching and enjoying the humiliation of the person who believes it. A man may be completely right about a passage while demonstrating an entirely wrong spirit in handling another person's soul. The Bible commands us to speak truth, but it never gives the flesh permission to turn every disagreement into a personal war.

Longsuffering brings these instructions into the home, workplace, and local assembly, where patience receives an examination more demanding than any written theology test. It is easy to speak about grace until somebody needs grace from us. Husbands and wives discover this during disagreements, parents discover it while raising children, and pastors encounter it while helping believers who repeatedly struggle with familiar problems. Patience does not require abandoning correction or allowing mistreatment to continue. It requires restraint, wisdom, and a willingness to provide opportunities for repentance and

growth. God's patience with us is never an excuse for treating His holiness lightly. The faults of another Christian do not authorize us to surrender control of our own testimony.

The command to forbear one another in love must also be distinguished from religious demands for unity without doctrinal agreement. The unity described in Ephesians 4:3 is the unity of the Spirit, not a negotiated arrangement between competing gospels. The Church is one body in Christ, and that relationship originates with God rather than denominational cooperation. Believers should exercise patience concerning differences in maturity and matters of personal judgment without pretending that all teachings are equally biblical. Ephesians 4:15 still commands speaking the truth in love, while Romans 16:17 warns against those who cause divisions contrary to learned doctrine. The answer is neither a quarrelsome spirit nor careless compromise, but conviction governed by charity.

Finally, this verse ought to make every believer examine his own conduct rather than merely compiling a list of people who need correction. Where has pride made instruction difficult to receive? Where has harshness disguised itself as courage, or impatience damaged an otherwise faithful testimony? These questions concern believers already redeemed through Christ's blood and responsible to honor Him. When a Christian fails, he should acknowledge the sin, seek forgiveness where necessary, and continue walking according to God's word rather than defending his flesh. The Lord has given us more than doctrines to recite and arguments to win. He has given us a calling that should transform our treatment of others. The Christian who truly understands grace ought to become more humble, not more impressed with himself.

Ephesians 4:3 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 4:3

"Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"Endeavouring to keep"

Paul begins this verse with a word that exposes the difference between possessing spiritual blessings and faithfully maintaining Christian fellowship. "Endeavouring" describes deliberate effort, earnest attention, and continuing responsibility. This is not a casual suggestion to be agreeable whenever circumstances happen to cooperate. The word

follows the command of Ephesians 4:1 to walk worthy of the believer's calling and the instructions of verse 2 concerning lowliness, meekness, longsuffering, and forbearance. Those qualities do not appear in the passage as attractive decorations for a religious personality. They are necessary for the responsibility Paul now introduces. Believers who possess the same Saviour, the same Holy Spirit, and membership in the same body are commanded to conduct themselves accordingly. Spiritual unity is God's accomplishment, but maintaining peaceful fellowship requires the believer's obedience. The Lord has already provided the spiritual relationship; the Christian must not allow pride, selfishness, or carnality to damage its practical expression.

Notice carefully that Paul says “to keep,” not to create. This distinction is essential to understanding the passage. The Christian does not manufacture the unity of Christ's body through religious conferences, denominational agreements, or carefully negotiated statements of cooperation. First Corinthians 12:13 declares, “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles.” That work belongs to the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 2:16 establishes that Christ reconciled believing Jews and Gentiles unto God in one body by the cross. Consequently, the unity exists because God established it through Jesus Christ. Christians are commanded to preserve its practical expression, not invent a substitute for it. The word “keep” also prevents us from confusing this instruction with the preservation of salvation itself. The believer is sealed unto the day of redemption according to Ephesians 4:30. Paul is addressing the maintenance of spiritual fellowship, not instructing Christians to keep themselves saved through sufficiently pleasant behavior.

The practical difficulty appears whenever redeemed people begin dealing with one another's imperfections. It is easy to announce a desire for Christian unity while everybody agrees, nobody feels overlooked, and no personal preferences are challenged. The real examination begins when someone receives correction, another believer exercises poor judgment, or a disagreement threatens to become personal. Proverbs 13:10 declares, “Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised is wisdom.” That verse explains a tremendous amount of trouble among Christians without requiring a committee to investigate it. Many disagreements that appear doctrinal on the surface are actually fueled by wounded pride underneath. Nevertheless, the command to endeavor does not require surrendering biblical convictions to maintain outward harmony. God never commanded Christians to preserve peace by sacrificing truth, but neither did He authorize them to sacrifice peace merely to satisfy their pride.

“the unity of the Spirit”

The expression “the unity of the Spirit” identifies the source and character of the unity Paul commands believers to maintain. The capitalized “Spirit” refers to the Holy Spirit, not

merely a shared emotional attitude or organizational enthusiasm. Ephesians 4:4 immediately explains, “There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling.” The unity is spiritual because it originates through the Holy Spirit's work in bringing saved individuals into Christ's body. Ephesians 2:18 declares, “For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.” The believing Jew and believing Gentile possess the same access to God through Jesus Christ. Their unity does not depend upon shared nationality, identical cultural backgrounds, or membership in the same earthly institution. The Holy Spirit unites them in Christ. The Church is not one body because human beings finally learned how to cooperate; it is one body because God accomplished what human religion could never accomplish.

This distinction also safeguards the proper division between Israel and the Church. The formation of one spiritual body does not eliminate Israel's national identity or cancel the promises God made concerning her future. Romans 11:25–29 establishes that God's prophetic dealings with Israel have not been permanently abandoned. Within the present Church Age, however, believing Jews and Gentiles share an equal spiritual standing in Jesus Christ. Ephesians 3:6 describes the Gentiles as “fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel.” This is the revealed mystery concerning the Church, not permission to transfer every earthly promise made to Abraham's physical descendants into a symbolic religious arrangement. Neither does spiritual unity mean that every distinction in earthly life disappears. The body contains different members, gifts, responsibilities, and degrees of maturity. Unity in Christ establishes a common spiritual standing without erasing every distinction God has established elsewhere in Scripture.

The unity of the Spirit must also be distinguished from religious uniformity and from the developing “unity of the faith” described in Ephesians 4:13. The first is grounded in the Spirit's work of placing believers into Christ; the second concerns their growth toward shared doctrinal understanding and maturity. Paul continues in Ephesians 4:11–16 by explaining that Christ gave ministers for the perfecting of the saints and the edifying of His body. Sound doctrine therefore strengthens spiritual fellowship rather than becoming an unnecessary obstacle to it. Yet the religious world frequently attempts to establish unity by reducing biblical truth to whatever different organizations are willing to tolerate. That may produce cooperation, publicity, and an impressive gathering, but agreement manufactured by ignoring the gospel is not the unity Paul describes. Galatians 1:8 warns against another gospel, while Ephesians 4:15 requires “speaking the truth in love.” The Holy Spirit does not unite believers by persuading them that His own revealed words no longer matter.

“in the bond of peace”

Paul concludes by identifying the atmosphere in which spiritual unity must be maintained: “in the bond of peace.” A bond joins things together, providing a connection that resists separation. Here the bond is peace, not intimidation, religious manipulation, or compulsory agreement. The foundation of that peace has already been established in Ephesians 2:14, where Paul declares concerning Jesus Christ, “For he is our peace, who hath made both one.” Verse 16 explains that reconciliation came through the cross, and verse 17 describes the preaching of peace to those afar off and those nigh. Before believers can maintain proper fellowship with one another, they must possess the spiritual relationship established through Christ. Romans 5:1 declares, “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Peace with God rests upon justification through faith, while peace among believers ought to reflect the reconciliation they already share. The cross establishes the foundation of Christian peace; the Christian walk determines whether believers conduct themselves consistently with it.

Peace must never be confused with the absence of necessary correction. Romans 12:18 instructs believers, “If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.” Notice the qualifications. Paul recognizes that peaceful relationships are not always possible because another person may refuse truth, continue in wrongdoing, or deliberately provoke conflict. The believer remains responsible for his own response, but he cannot guarantee another person's obedience. Likewise, Romans 16:17 commands Christians to mark and avoid those causing divisions contrary to learned doctrine. Such instruction would be meaningless if keeping peace required accepting every teaching and tolerating every error. Biblical peace is governed by righteousness and truth, not purchased through doctrinal surrender. A church may boast that nobody ever disagrees because nobody is permitted to question anything. That is not necessarily spiritual unity; it may simply be a well-organized arrangement for keeping everybody quiet. Silence can be enforced by authority, but biblical peace must be maintained through truth, love, and willing obedience.

The bond of peace also carries immediate practical responsibilities. Ephesians 4:2 has already commanded lowliness, meekness, longsuffering, and loving forbearance. Those characteristics prevent ordinary differences from developing into destructive conflicts. Colossians 3:13 commands believers to forgive one another when quarrels arise, while verse 14 declares that charity is “the bond of perfectness.” Love and peace therefore operate together in maintaining Christian fellowship. The believer must learn when to correct, when to forgive, when to remain silent concerning a harmless preference, and when a matter is sufficiently serious to require separation from error. These decisions demand prayer, Scriptural judgment, and a willingness to deny the flesh. A Christian may possess enough Bible knowledge to win an argument while lacking enough spiritual

maturity to recognize that the argument never needed to occur. Not every disagreement deserves a battle, but every genuine issue of biblical truth deserves faithfulness.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 4:3 establishes the distinction between spiritual unity created by God and peaceful fellowship maintained through Christian obedience. The Holy Spirit places saved individuals into the one body of Christ, while believers are commanded to preserve the practical expression of that unity through humility, love, patience, and peace. The passage does not teach salvation by human cooperation, the maintenance of eternal life through good works, or the formation of a universal religious organization by institutional agreement. The unity belongs to the Spirit because He establishes it through Christ. The responsibility to keep that unity belongs to believers because their attitudes and conduct can either strengthen or damage earthly fellowship.

The verse also teaches that biblical peace cannot be separated from biblical truth. The one body contains believers with different levels of maturity and responsibilities, making patience and forbearance essential. Nevertheless, Christian charity does not require accepting false gospels, abandoning doctrinal distinctions, or confusing Israel's national promises with the Church's spiritual blessings. Ephesians 4:15 joins truth with love, while Ephesians 4:13 identifies doctrinal maturity as an important objective of Christian growth. The central lesson is that believers must preserve the fellowship God has established without compromising the truth upon which that fellowship rests.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

Theme 1: The Holy Spirit Establishes One Body

1 Corinthians 12:13 — “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body”; Ephesians 4:4 — “There is one body, and one Spirit”; Ephesians 2:16 — “reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross”; Ephesians 2:18 — “For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.”

These passages establish that the unity of Christ's body originates through the work of God rather than human religious organization.

Theme 2: Maintaining Unity Requires Christian Effort

Ephesians 4:3 — “Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”; Philippians 2:2 — “being of one accord, of one mind”; Romans 14:19 — “follow after the things which make for peace”; Colossians 3:14 — “put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.”

Christians must actively cultivate relationships that reflect the spiritual unity they already possess through Jesus Christ.

Theme 3: Humility Protects Christian Fellowship

Ephesians 4:2 — “With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering”; Philippians 2:3 — “in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves”; Proverbs 13:10 — “Only by pride cometh contention”; Colossians 3:13 — “Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another”.

Pride produces unnecessary contention, while humility, patience, and forgiveness protect fellowship from the destructive impulses of the flesh.

Theme 4: Biblical Peace Must Remain Joined To Truth

Ephesians 4:15 — “speaking the truth in love”; Ephesians 4:13 — “Till we all come in the unity of the faith”; 2 Timothy 2:15 — “rightly dividing the word of truth”; Jude 1:3 — “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.”

Genuine Christian unity requires both charitable conduct and faithfulness to the doctrines revealed in God's word.

Theme 5: False Doctrine Cannot Be Excused As Unity

Romans 16:17 — “mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned”; Galatians 1:8 — “preach any other gospel unto you”; 1 John 4:1 — “believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God”; 2 Corinthians 6:14 — “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers”.

These warnings establish that Christian fellowship must not be purchased through cooperation with unbelief or the acceptance of destructive doctrinal error.

Theme 6: Christ Himself Is The Foundation Of Peace

Ephesians 2:14 — “For he is our peace, who hath made both one”; Romans 5:1 — “we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ”; Colossians 1:20 — “having made peace through the blood of his cross”; Ephesians 2:17 — “And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.”

The peace believers share originates through Christ's redemptive work and reconciliation, not through human religious negotiation.

Theme 7: The Body Must Grow Together In Love

1 Corinthians 12:27 — “Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular”; Ephesians 4:16 — “maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love”; Galatians 6:2 — “Bear ye one another's burdens”; Hebrews 10:25 — “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together”.

Christian fellowship should produce mutual assistance, spiritual growth, faithful assembly, and practical concern for other members of Christ's body.

5. Reflection

Ephesians 4:3 exposes one of the great contradictions of modern Christianity: believers frequently speak about unity while conducting themselves in ways that make peaceful fellowship nearly impossible. They possess the same Saviour, belong to the same spiritual body, and have received the same Holy Spirit, yet personal preferences and wounded pride can become more important than the relationship God established through Calvary. Paul does not instruct these Christians to organize a movement for creating unity because the Spirit has already accomplished that work. He commands them to keep what God has established. That distinction removes both human boasting and religious manipulation from the discussion. The Christian who approaches fellowship as an opportunity to promote himself has already misunderstood the purpose of the body. God did not make believers members of one body so that each member could spend his life demanding to become the head.

The command to endeavor should also correct the notion that spiritual fellowship requires no deliberate effort. Christian unity is not maintained by occasional expressions of affection while resentment, gossip, jealousy, and selfishness continue operating underneath. It requires believers to examine their conduct, confess wrongdoing, forgive offenses, and resist the flesh's appetite for retaliation. A congregation may agree concerning sound doctrine while suffering terrible division because its members refuse to practice the elementary instructions of Ephesians 4:2. There is nothing impressive about possessing a correct position on the body of Christ while treating another member of that body with contempt. The believer must learn to distinguish between a genuine doctrinal problem and an injured personal preference. Sometimes the greatest threat to fellowship is not an elaborate theological heresy but a saved sinner who cannot tolerate being told that he is wrong.

Nevertheless, biblical unity must never be confused with the modern religious demand that Christians abandon doctrinal distinctions for the sake of institutional cooperation. The Holy Spirit who forms the body of Christ is the same Spirit who inspired the Scriptures and directs believers into truth. He does not contradict His own revelation by commanding

Christians to accept another gospel merely because its advocates desire religious friendship. Scripture establishes the difference between salvation by grace and salvation by works, between Israel and the Church, and between spiritual union with Christ and membership in an earthly institution. These distinctions are not unnecessary obstacles invented by men who enjoy arguments. They are part of the truth revealed by Almighty God. An agreement that requires Christians to ignore Scripture may produce an impressive religious organization, but it cannot manufacture the unity of the Spirit.

The bond of peace also deserves examination because peace is often misunderstood as an obligation to remain silent regardless of circumstances. Romans 12:18 recognizes that peaceful relationships are not always possible, and Romans 16:17 requires separation from those producing division through doctrinal error. Therefore, the believer must exercise biblical judgment rather than allowing either fear or anger to govern his conduct. Some matters require patient explanation, others require forgiveness, and serious doctrinal corruption may require public correction or separation. The difference is determined by Scripture, not by the believer's desire to appear agreeable or prove himself courageous. There is no spiritual virtue in starting unnecessary quarrels, and there is no biblical courage in avoiding necessary confrontation. Peace becomes compromise when truth must be sacrificed to preserve it, but correction becomes carnality when personal pride supplies its motive.

This verse also reminds us that the Church is a living body rather than a collection of independent religious personalities. First Corinthians 12 explains that the members possess different functions while belonging to the same body. The believer who imagines that his gifts make him unnecessary to others has misunderstood the very relationship in which God placed him. Likewise, the Christian who considers another believer worthless because his abilities appear less impressive has substituted worldly judgment for spiritual understanding. God gives different gifts and responsibilities for the benefit of the entire body, not to establish competing kingdoms of personal importance. The faithful pastor, the praying widow, the quiet servant, and the believer struggling toward maturity all deserve treatment governed by Scriptural charity. The body of Christ is not strengthened when its members spend more energy criticizing one another than helping one another grow.

Finally, every Christian should examine whether his own conduct strengthens or weakens the fellowship of believers. It is comparatively easy to identify the pride, impatience, and doctrinal carelessness of somebody else, but the command in Ephesians 4:3 requires personal obedience. The believer must ask whether he is seeking peace through truth, exercising patience toward weakness, and refusing to turn unnecessary disagreements into lasting grievances. He must also remain faithful when others refuse correction or attempt

to purchase agreement through compromise. This balance cannot be maintained through the flesh's natural strength because the flesh is precisely what produces much of the trouble. The Christian must walk in the Spirit, submit to God's word, and remember that the unity he has been commanded to maintain was purchased through the blood of Jesus Christ. The Lord did not command us to invent unity, advertise unity, or compromise truth in the name of unity. He commanded us to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, and that responsibility begins with our own obedience to His word.

Ephesians 4:4 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 4:4

"There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;"

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"There is one body"

Paul begins with a declaration that knocks the foundation out from underneath every religious system claiming exclusive ownership of Christ's Church. "There is one body." He does not say there are several competing bodies, each possessing its own spiritual headquarters, its own exclusive salvation, and its own private arrangement with Almighty God. The statement follows Ephesians 4:3, where believers are commanded to keep the unity of the Spirit. Paul now explains why such unity exists. Ephesians 1:22–23 identifies the Church as Christ's body, while Colossians 1:18 declares, "And he is the head of the body, the church." The Head is Jesus Christ. Not a pope, denominational president, religious council, or particularly impressive preacher who has decided that the body cannot function without his personal supervision. Christ purchased the Church with His blood and possesses authority over it. The Church does not belong to the man who holds the microphone; it belongs to the Saviour who shed His blood. Once that fact is settled, religious ambition loses much of its opportunity for boasting.

The composition of this body must be understood through Ephesians 2:14–16 and Ephesians 3:6. Jesus Christ reconciled believing Jews and Gentiles unto God in one body through the cross. First Corinthians 12:13 explains the spiritual operation: "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles." This is not a declaration

that every person attending a religious service automatically belongs to Christ. A local congregation may contain saved people, unsaved professors, mature believers, and those who understand very little Scripture. Membership in the spiritual body, however, comes through salvation and the Holy Spirit's work. Neither does the union of believing Jews and Gentiles erase Israel's national identity or cancel the covenants and promises concerning her earthly future. Romans 11:1 asks whether God has cast away His people and answers, “God forbid.” The Church is one spiritual body without becoming a replacement nation that confiscates Israel's prophetic inheritance. God does not need to break His promises to Israel in order to fulfill His purpose in the Church.

The practical meaning becomes apparent when we consider the many members who belong to this one body. Romans 12:5 declares, “So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.” Different believers possess different gifts, levels of understanding, responsibilities, and opportunities for service. Yet none possesses a superior form of salvation because his congregation has a larger building or his minister has more impressive credentials. The quiet Christian serving faithfully in obscurity belongs to the same spiritual body as the evangelist preaching before thousands. This does not eliminate the importance of local assemblies, biblical pastoral oversight, or doctrinal separation from false teaching. It simply establishes that the spiritual body of Christ cannot be manufactured, owned, or exclusively controlled by an earthly organization. A denomination may print its name on the church sign, but it cannot print itself into the Lamb's book of life.

“and one Spirit”

The second expression identifies the divine Person responsible for uniting believers in Christ. Paul writes “one Spirit,” referring to the Holy Spirit, not some vague atmosphere of religious enthusiasm. The connection is deliberate: one body and one Spirit. The Holy Spirit places saved individuals into the body of Christ, indwells them, and seals them unto the day of redemption. Ephesians 1:13 declares concerning believers, “ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise.” Romans 8:9 establishes that possession of the Spirit is essential to belonging to Christ: “Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” This means a saved person does not possess an inferior salvation while waiting for a particular religious organization to complete what God neglected to accomplish. The Holy Spirit is not a prize awarded to advanced Christians who have learned the proper religious performance. He indwells those who belong to Jesus Christ.

This truth demands a careful distinction between the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and the believer's practical filling with the Spirit. Ephesians 5:18 commands saved people to “be filled with the Spirit,” while Ephesians 4:30 warns them not to grieve Him. A Christian may

fail to walk in the Spirit without thereby proving that he never received the Spirit at salvation. Neither does Scripture teach that every believer must speak in tongues to demonstrate possession of the Holy Ghost. First Corinthians 12:30 asks, “do all speak with tongues?” The answer expected by the passage is plainly negative. The same chapter explains that the Spirit distributes different gifts according to His will. A man who turns one particular spiritual gift into a universal requirement for salvation has confused the distribution of gifts with the new birth. God never instructed Christians to prove their salvation by displaying a gift that He did not promise to give every member of the body. Spiritual filling concerns submission and practical Christian living, not the purchase of an additional portion of eternal life.

The expression “one Spirit” must also be interpreted within its context. It does not deny the existence of evil spirits, the spirit of man, or other spiritual beings mentioned elsewhere in Scripture. First John 4:1 commands believers to “try the spirits whether they are of God,” while First Timothy 4:1 warns concerning “seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.” Paul is identifying the one Holy Spirit who unites and indwells Christ's people. That unity does not remove personal responsibility or guarantee that every believer will exercise good judgment. Christians must examine teaching by Scripture and walk according to the Spirit rather than the flesh. First Corinthians 12:4 states, “Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.” Here is divine unity without artificial uniformity. Different members serve in different capacities while depending upon the same divine Person. The Spirit who makes believers one does not require them all to become identical; He requires them to serve faithfully under the authority of the same Lord.

“even as ye are called in one hope of your calling”

Paul now connects the believer's present spiritual position with his future expectation. The expression “one hope of your calling” does not describe several competing destinations for different classes of saved people within Christ's body. Every genuine believer possesses the same fundamental hope through Jesus Christ. Colossians 1:27 identifies that hope as “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” This is not uncertain optimism, as though the Christian must spend his life wondering whether God will eventually decide to keep His promises. Ephesians 2:8–9 has already established salvation as the gift of God through grace and faith. Ephesians 1:13 establishes the sealing of the believer through the Holy Spirit. The hope of the saved concerns the glorious completion of God's redemptive purpose, particularly the future redemption of the body. The Christian does not hope that Christ might someday become a sufficient Saviour; he confidently expects the Lord to complete what His saving grace has already secured.

Romans 8:23 identifies the future expectation as “the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.” The believer's spiritual salvation is already a present possession, but his physical body remains subject to weakness, corruption, suffering, and death. That condition will not continue forever. First Corinthians 15:51 declares, “Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.” First Thessalonians 4:16–17 describes the Lord descending from heaven, the dead in Christ rising first, and living believers being caught up together with them. This is the blessed hope of the Church, distinguished from the judgments of the Tribulation and the visible establishment of Christ's earthly kingdom. Titus 2:13 directs believers to look for “that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.” The Church is not waiting for human governments to establish righteousness through legislation before Christ can accomplish His promises. The believer's hope rests upon the return of Jesus Christ, not the political improvement of a world that has repeatedly demonstrated its hostility toward Him.

This one hope also places earthly differences into their proper perspective. A wealthy believer and an impoverished believer share the same promised transformation. An elderly saint approaching death and a newly saved young Christian possess the same Saviour and anticipate the same ultimate victory over bodily corruption. Philippians 3:21 declares that Christ “shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body.” First John 3:2 adds, “when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.” Such promises do not eliminate differences in rewards for faithful service at the judgment seat of Christ, nor do they excuse spiritual laziness. They establish the common future of those belonging to His body. The Church's unity reaches beyond present fellowship into its glorious destiny. A believer may have little in this present world, but if he belongs to Jesus Christ, he possesses a future that no earthly kingdom could purchase and no human enemy can cancel.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 4:4 establishes three inseparable foundations of Christian unity: one body, one Spirit, and one hope. The one body identifies the Church as the spiritual body of Jesus Christ, composed of individuals saved through the gospel rather than merely enrolled in an earthly religious organization. The one Spirit identifies the Holy Ghost as the divine Person who brings believers into Christ's body, indwells them, and seals them unto the day of redemption. The one hope identifies the glorious expectation shared by redeemed believers, particularly the return of Jesus Christ and the future redemption of their bodies. These truths explain why Paul commands believers to preserve the unity of the Spirit in Ephesians 4:3. Christian unity originates with God's saving work, not with man's ability to organize religious cooperation.

The passage also requires careful doctrinal distinctions. Spiritual union between believing Jews and Gentiles does not abolish Israel's national promises. Possession of the Holy Spirit does not guarantee that every Christian receives identical gifts or consistently walks in obedience. Likewise, the Church's blessed hope must not be confused with the world's expectation of political peace or the promised restoration of Israel's earthly kingdom. The spiritual standing of believers in Christ is secure, while their daily condition and faithfulness may differ considerably. The central lesson is that every genuinely saved believer belongs to the same body, possesses the same Holy Spirit, and awaits the same glorious Saviour.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. The Church Is One Body In Christ

Ephesians 1:23 — “Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.”

Colossians 1:18 — “And he is the head of the body, the church”

Romans 12:5 — “So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.”

1 Corinthians 12:27 — “Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.”

2. Jews And Gentiles United In One Body

Ephesians 2:16 — “reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross”

Ephesians 3:6 — “the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body”

Galatians 3:28 — “for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.”

1 Corinthians 12:13 — “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles”

Romans 11:1 — “Hath God cast away his people? God forbid.”

3. The Holy Spirit Indwells Every Believer

Ephesians 1:13 — “ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise”

Romans 8:9 — “Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.”

1 Corinthians 6:19 — “your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you”

Ephesians 4:30 — “whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.”

4. One Spirit Distributes Different Gifts

1 Corinthians 12:4 — “Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.”

1 Corinthians 12:11 — “But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit”

Galatians 5:16 — “Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.”

Ephesians 5:18 — “be filled with the Spirit”

5. The Believer's One Hope In Christ

Colossians 1:27 — “Christ in you, the hope of glory”

Titus 2:13 — “Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ”

1 Thessalonians 4:17 — “to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

Romans 8:23 — “waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.”

Philippians 3:21 — “Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body”

6. Salvation And Assurance Rest Upon Grace

Ephesians 2:8 — “For by grace are ye saved through faith”

Ephesians 2:9 — “Not of works, lest any man should boast.”

Romans 5:1 — “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ”

1 John 5:13 — “that ye may know that ye have eternal life”

7. Spiritual Unity Requires Truth And Maturity

Ephesians 4:3 — “Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

Ephesians 4:13 — “Till we all come in the unity of the faith”

Ephesians 4:15 — “speaking the truth in love”

Colossians 3:14 — “And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.”

2 Timothy 2:15 — “rightly dividing the word of truth.”

5. Reflection

Ephesians 4:4 ought to settle a great deal of religious foolishness before anybody begins organizing another conference to discover how Christians can become one. Paul did not say the Church might eventually become one body if enough denominations signed an agreement. He declared that there is one body already. That body belongs to Jesus Christ, and membership comes through salvation rather than religious paperwork. A man may join a congregation, contribute faithfully, occupy an impressive office, and receive recognition from every religious organization in the county without ever experiencing the new birth. Conversely, a poor believer with no earthly recognition may belong completely to Christ. God does not consult denominational membership records to determine who belongs to His Son. The question is whether the individual has trusted Jesus Christ according to the gospel, not whether some religious institution approves of his credentials.

The distinction between the spiritual body of Christ and earthly church organizations is especially important because religious leaders continually confuse spiritual authority with institutional control. Scripture recognizes local congregations, pastoral oversight, doctrinal accountability, and the responsibility of believers to assemble faithfully. Those responsibilities are legitimate, but they do not replace Jesus Christ as the Head of His body. A pastor may oversee a congregation without becoming the owner of its members' souls, and a denomination may organize churches without acquiring authority to redefine salvation. Furthermore, recognizing one spiritual body does not mean overlooking false doctrine or pretending every professing Christian has been born again. The Lord never commanded His people to abandon discernment simply because somebody attached the word Christian to a religious organization. Genuine unity is established through Christ, and legitimate fellowship must remain governed by His word.

The declaration concerning one Spirit also corrects the confusion surrounding spiritual experiences. Every saved believer possesses the Holy Spirit, although not every believer walks consistently under His influence. That distinction explains why Paul can declare the unity of the Spirit while commanding Christians to endeavor to maintain peaceful fellowship. Their spiritual union is established, but their practical conduct frequently requires correction. Religious excitement, impressive testimonies, and extraordinary claims cannot replace the plain statements of Scripture concerning the Spirit's indwelling. Neither should believers assume that spiritual maturity consists of possessing the same gifts or displaying identical outward emotions. The Holy Spirit distributes gifts according to His will, while the Christian remains responsible to walk in obedience. A man may produce considerable religious noise without demonstrating much spiritual maturity, and another may quietly serve Christ while exhibiting genuine evidence of the Spirit's work.

The one hope of our calling is equally important because it directs believers beyond the temporary circumstances of earthly life. Christians possess different incomes, occupations, health conditions, responsibilities, and levels of spiritual maturity, yet their future expectation rests upon the same Saviour. The believer's body remains subject to suffering and death, but the Lord has promised its redemption. The catching away of the Church and the transformation of the believer's body are not merely religious expressions intended to comfort frightened people. They are revealed promises that establish the certainty of our future with Christ. This hope should encourage holiness rather than spiritual laziness. A Christian who expects to meet Jesus Christ ought to consider how he is presently living for Him. The certainty of future glory provides strength for present obedience.

The passage also demonstrates why proper dispensational distinctions must be maintained. Believing Jews and Gentiles are united spiritually in one body, but that truth does not erase the national promises made to Israel. Likewise, the Church's heavenly calling must not be confused with the future establishment of Christ's earthly kingdom. Romans 11 preserves God's faithfulness toward Israel, while Ephesians explains the mystery of the one body. These truths complement one another when Scripture is rightly divided. The same principle governs the believer's salvation and service. His standing is secured through Christ, while his conduct remains subject to correction, chastening, and eventual examination at the judgment seat. Confusion begins when men take two biblical truths, erase their distinctions, and then congratulate themselves for producing a theological system that contradicts both. Sound doctrine requires believing the whole counsel of God.

Finally, Ephesians 4:4 should encourage every believer to remember both his spiritual privileges and his personal responsibilities. Membership in Christ's body means that no saved individual is spiritually insignificant, regardless of earthly recognition. Possession of the Holy Spirit means that the Christian has divine help for faithful living and no legitimate excuse for surrendering continually to the flesh. The one hope of our calling means that present suffering and earthly disappointment do not determine our final destiny. These blessings should produce humility, gratitude, steadfastness, and practical concern for fellow believers. We do not need to manufacture another body, seek another Holy Spirit, or invent another hope to improve what God has already provided. There is one body, one Spirit, and one hope, and all three direct the believer away from human boasting and toward the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the foundation of Christian unity, the assurance of our calling, and the glorious future awaiting those who belong to Him.

Ephesians 4:5 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 4:5

"One Lord, one faith, one baptism,"

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"One Lord"

Paul begins this verse with two words that establish the supreme authority governing the entire body of Christ: "One Lord." He does not say one denomination, one earthly religious headquarters, one bishop over the entire Christian world, or one collection of influential preachers deciding what every believer must accept. He says "One Lord," and that Lord is Jesus Christ. First Corinthians 8:6 declares, "But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him." The Lordship of Jesus Christ is not an ecclesiastical appointment granted by some organization that has decided to recognize His authority. He possesses that authority independently of human approval. Acts 2:36 declares that God has made the crucified and risen Jesus "both Lord and Christ." Philippians 2:11 looks forward to the acknowledgment of His authority when every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. The Church has one Lord because the Lord Jesus Christ has never offered His throne for election, negotiation, or denominational management.

This statement must also be understood in its immediate context. Ephesians 4:4 has already established "one body, and one Spirit," and now Paul identifies the one Lord over that body. The same Jesus Christ who reconciled believing Jews and Gentiles unto God through the cross remains the sovereign Head of His Church. Colossians 1:18 declares, "And he is the head of the body, the church." The believer's spiritual relationship with Christ is therefore more fundamental than his membership in any earthly religious institution. A local congregation may possess biblical pastors and legitimate responsibilities, but no pastor possesses the right to replace the authority of Jesus Christ. A denomination may organize churches, but it cannot appoint another mediator between God and men. First Timothy 2:5 settles that matter with the declaration, "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." The Church does not need a substitute head, a substitute Lord, or an additional mediator. When a religious leader begins behaving as though Christ must obtain his permission before governing His own people, somebody has confused the servant with the Master.

The practical meaning of “One Lord” reaches directly into the believer's daily conduct. Jesus Christ is not merely the Lord of formal worship services, public testimonies, or theological discussions. His authority extends over the Christian's thoughts, words, relationships, decisions, and service. Luke 6:46 records His searching question: “And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” That question exposes the emptiness of religious profession without practical obedience. Nevertheless, we must distinguish the sinner's salvation through faith from the believer's subsequent responsibility to obey. Salvation is not purchased by achieving a sufficient level of personal submission, nor is it preserved by maintaining flawless conduct. Ephesians 2:8–9 has already established salvation as God's gift rather than the product of works. Yet the Christian who possesses that gift is obligated to honor the Lord who saved him. We are not saved because we have made ourselves perfect servants, but having been saved by a perfect Saviour, we have no legitimate excuse for refusing His authority.

“one faith”

The second expression identifies the common faith belonging to those who are united in Christ. “One faith” does not mean that every religious opinion circulating under the name of Christianity is equally acceptable. Neither does it mean that every saved believer possesses identical knowledge, spiritual maturity, or strength of personal faith. Paul is identifying the common foundation of Christian belief and salvation. Jude 1:3 speaks of “the faith which was once delivered unto the saints,” while Ephesians 4:13 looks forward to believers coming into “the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God.” The distinction is important. The unity of the Spirit is established through God's work in salvation, while believers must grow toward greater unity in their understanding of revealed truth. The Christian faith possesses an objective doctrinal foundation; it is not a collection of private religious preferences. There may be thousands of competing religious opinions, but the existence of a thousand opinions does not mean God has revealed a thousand contradictory gospels.

The saving foundation of this faith is the finished work of Jesus Christ. First Corinthians 15:3–4 declares that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, was buried, and rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. That is the gospel Paul preached, and it must never be replaced with a religious arrangement requiring human works to complete what Christ accomplished. Romans 3:28 declares, “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.” Ephesians 2:8–9 agrees that salvation is by grace through faith and not of works. Consequently, “one faith” cannot be used to endorse several contradictory plans of salvation under the excuse that everyone is sincerely religious. One system declares that Christ's blood is sufficient; another insists that

ceremonies, law-keeping, sacraments, or personal achievements must contribute to the sinner's justification. Those messages are not interchangeable. Galatians 1:8 warns against another gospel because the gospel of God's grace is not subject to religious revision. When a man adds human merit to the finished work of Christ, he has not improved the gospel; he has advertised his unbelief in its sufficiency.

At the same time, “one faith” does not eliminate the distinction between the common Christian faith and the varying measure of faith exercised by individual believers. Romans 12:3 speaks of God dealing to every man “the measure of faith,” while Romans 14:1 instructs believers concerning those who are weak in the faith. A newly saved Christian may possess the same Saviour as a mature believer who has studied Scripture for decades, yet the two will not necessarily possess the same understanding or spiritual stability. The purpose of biblical instruction is to strengthen believers in the truth, not to convince them that doctrinal ignorance is a spiritual virtue. Nor does faith require surrendering the distinction between Israel's national promises and the Church's present position in Christ. Second Timothy 2:15 commands believers to study, “rightly dividing the word of truth.” Faith believes what God has said according to the audience, context, and divine administration involved. The answer to religious disagreement is not to throw away doctrine until everyone agrees, but to study the Book until our beliefs are governed by what God actually said.

“one baptism”

The final expression introduces one of the most frequently misunderstood subjects in the entire New Testament: “one baptism.” The immediate context has already declared one body and one Spirit, making First Corinthians 12:13 the natural doctrinal explanation: “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.” This baptism concerns the Holy Spirit placing the saved believer into the spiritual body of Jesus Christ. It is not performed by a preacher, priest, or religious institution. It is not dependent upon the depth of a baptismal pool or the particular words pronounced by a human minister. Galatians 3:27 declares, “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” Romans 6:3 connects baptism into Jesus Christ with His death, while Colossians 2:12 associates the believer's identification with Christ with “the faith of the operation of God.” The subject is a divine spiritual operation accomplished through salvation. A man can place another man beneath the water, but only the Holy Ghost can place a redeemed sinner into Jesus Christ.

Now the Bible student must be careful not to turn “one baptism” into the absurd claim that Scripture contains no other baptism anywhere. First Corinthians 10:2 says that Israel was

baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea. Matthew 3:11 distinguishes John's baptism with water from baptism with the Holy Ghost and with fire. Matthew 20:22 speaks of the baptism associated with Christ's coming suffering. Acts 2:38 records Peter's baptismal command to the Jews at Pentecost, while Acts 10 records the Holy Ghost coming upon believing Gentiles before they were baptized in water. These are not identical events merely because the word baptism appears in the discussion. The Bible must be compared with the Bible, and each passage must be understood in its setting. Ephesians 4:5 identifies the one baptism relevant to the spiritual unity of Christ's body; it does not repeal every historical reference to another baptism. The fellow who sees the word baptism and automatically imagines a tank of water has allowed one familiar religious practice to do the thinking that Scripture requires of his mind.

Yet another error waits on the opposite side of the discussion. Having correctly identified Spirit baptism as the operation placing believers into Christ's body, some conclude that water baptism must therefore be useless, forbidden, or unscriptural for Christians. But Acts 10:47 records Peter asking, “Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?” Those Gentiles had already received the Holy Ghost, yet water baptism followed as an outward act of obedience and testimony. First Peter 3:21 specifically identifies baptism as a “like figure” and distinguishes it from the removal of fleshly filth, directing attention toward a good conscience and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Water baptism does not regenerate the sinner, wash away sin through the physical properties of water, or place the soul into Christ. Neither should it be despised merely because it cannot accomplish salvation. The proper order is faith in Christ, salvation through His finished work, and the outward testimony appropriate to the believer. Water baptism is a meaningful picture of salvation, but a picture cannot accomplish the work of the Saviour it portrays.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 4:5 establishes three essential foundations of Christian unity: one Lord, one faith, and one baptism. The one Lord identifies Jesus Christ as the supreme authority and only Saviour of His people. The one faith identifies the common foundation of Christian salvation and revealed doctrine, centered upon the finished work of Jesus Christ rather than human religious achievement. The one baptism identifies the Holy Spirit's operation of placing believers into Christ's spiritual body. These truths explain why the Church is one body despite differences in nationality, spiritual maturity, local assembly, and individual gifts. God establishes unity through the Lord Jesus Christ, the true gospel, and the work of the Holy Spirit—not through denominational organization or religious compromise.

The passage also requires careful dispensational distinctions. The existence of one saving baptism into Christ's body does not deny the other baptisms described throughout Scripture, nor does it make water baptism an instrument of regeneration. Likewise, one faith does not make every religious system equally biblical or eliminate the need to rightly divide God's word. The one Lord remains the Head of the Church, and every earthly minister is accountable to Him. The central doctrine is that salvation rests upon one Lord, is received through faith in His finished work, and brings the believer into one spiritual body through the operation of the Holy Spirit.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. Jesus Christ Is The One Lord

1 Corinthians 8:6 — “and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.”

Acts 2:36 — “God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

Philippians 2:11 — “And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Revelation 19:16 — “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.”

2. Christ's Authority Over His Church

Colossians 1:18 — “And he is the head of the body, the church”

John 13:13 — “Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am.”

Luke 6:46 — “And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?”

1 Corinthians 6:20 — “For ye are bought with a price”

3. The One Gospel Received By Faith

1 Corinthians 15:3 — “how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures”

1 Corinthians 15:4 — “And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures”

Ephesians 2:8 — “For by grace are ye saved through faith”

Romans 3:28 — “a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.”

4. The Faith Must Be Preserved In Truth

Jude 1:3 — “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.”

Galatians 1:8 — “preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.”

Ephesians 4:13 — “Till we all come in the unity of the faith”

2 Timothy 2:15 — “rightly dividing the word of truth.”

5. Spirit Baptism Into The Body Of Christ

1 Corinthians 12:13 — “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body”

Galatians 3:27 — “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”

Romans 6:3 — “so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?”

Colossians 2:12 — “Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him”

6. Different Baptisms In Their Biblical Contexts

1 Corinthians 10:2 — “And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea”

Matthew 3:11 — “he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire”

Matthew 20:22 — “and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?”

Acts 10:44 — “While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.”

7. Water Baptism And The Believer's Testimony

Acts 10:47 — “Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?”

Acts 8:36 — “See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?”

1 Peter 3:21 — “not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God”

Acts 10:48 — “And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord.”

5. Reflection

Ephesians 4:5 is one of those short verses that exposes an astonishing amount of religious confusion with very few words. Paul does not give the Church three different lords, several competing gospels, or a collection of saving ceremonies from which a sinner may select according to personal preference. He declares one Lord, one faith, and one baptism. Yet

religious history is crowded with institutions that have attempted to place human authority between the believer and Jesus Christ. Some have treated church membership as salvation, while others have made the acceptance of particular ceremonies the deciding factor in obtaining eternal life. The King James Bible points the sinner directly to Jesus Christ. A religious organization may have authority to administer its own affairs, but it has never possessed authority to rewrite the terms upon which Almighty God saves a soul.

The declaration of one faith ought to be especially comforting to believers who have been troubled by contradictory religious teachings. Salvation does not require a sinner to master every theological controversy before he can trust Jesus Christ. The gospel is plainly declared in First Corinthians 15:1–4, and justification by faith apart from the deeds of the law is established in Romans 3:28. The believer must continue studying Scripture and growing in doctrinal understanding, but his assurance rests upon the finished work of Christ rather than the extent of his education. This does not mean doctrine is unimportant or every religious teaching is acceptable. It means the foundation of salvation is Christ Himself. A man who knows very little Scripture may nevertheless be genuinely saved, while a religious scholar who rejects the finished work of Christ remains lost despite possessing an impressive collection of academic credentials.

The expression one baptism also demands a return to careful Bible study rather than inherited religious assumptions. First Corinthians 12:13 explains the Holy Spirit's operation of placing saved individuals into Christ's body. That is something water cannot accomplish, regardless of who administers it or how carefully the ceremony is performed. Acts 10 demonstrates that believing Gentiles received the Holy Ghost before their water baptism, establishing an important distinction during the transitional history of Acts. Consequently, salvation cannot depend upon the physical application of water. Nor should Christians be persuaded that speaking in tongues supplies an additional requirement for membership in Christ's body. When the Holy Ghost places a believer into Jesus Christ, no earthly institution needs to finish the spiritual operation by supplying what God supposedly forgot.

Nevertheless, recognizing the saving operation of the Holy Spirit does not make water baptism meaningless. The New Testament contains genuine instructions and examples concerning the outward baptism of believers. Scripture also contains different baptisms belonging to distinct historical circumstances, and those passages must be compared carefully rather than forced into one interpretation. The Bible student should resist both the legalist who makes water necessary for salvation and the extreme dispensationalist who insists that water baptism has no legitimate place in Christian testimony. In Acts 10, the same Gentiles who had received the Holy Ghost were afterward commanded to be baptized. That order is worth remembering. The outward testimony should follow the

inward reality, and the symbol must never be permitted to replace the salvation it was intended to represent.

The practical significance of one Lord reaches beyond the question of salvation into the believer's daily responsibilities. Jesus Christ is not merely the name announced at the beginning of a church service or printed across the front of a religious building. He is the Head of His body and the Master to whom His servants must answer. The Christian should therefore examine whether his conduct reflects genuine submission to His word. A man may defend biblical doctrine in public while refusing to practice honesty, humility, forgiveness, or faithfulness in private. Such inconsistency does not improve merely because he can explain dispensations or argue successfully about baptism. Biblical knowledge should produce obedient living rather than religious arrogance. The Lord who saved us deserves more than correct doctrinal vocabulary from people who refuse to obey the very Scriptures they claim to defend.

Finally, the great comfort of Ephesians 4:5 is that the believer's spiritual future rests upon the work of God rather than the achievements of human religion. There is one Lord who died for our sins and rose again, one faith centered upon His finished work, and one saving baptism through which the Holy Spirit places believers into Christ's body. These truths should produce confidence without arrogance, separation from error without unnecessary cruelty, and obedience without legalism. The saved man has no reason to spend his life chasing competing religious authorities when the Lord has already supplied His word. Neither should he treat spiritual unity as an excuse to tolerate another gospel. He must remain faithful to Christ, study the Scriptures, and walk worthy of his calling. The Church does not need another Lord, another gospel, or another means of spiritual union. It needs believers who understand the Lord they serve, the faith they profess, and the salvation they have received through Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 4:6 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 4:6

“One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

“One God and Father of all”

Paul concludes the sevenfold declaration of spiritual unity in Ephesians 4:4–6 by identifying the divine Father who stands behind the entire arrangement. The passage begins with “one body,” continues through “one Spirit,” “one Lord,” “one faith,” and “one baptism,” and reaches its conclusion with “One God and Father of all.” This is not an invitation to religious universalism, nor is it a declaration that every human being automatically possesses a saving relationship with Almighty God. The context concerns the body of Christ, composed of people who have been saved through the gospel and united by the Holy Spirit. First Corinthians 8:6 declares, “But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him.” Paul identifies the same Father who has blessed believers with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ according to Ephesians 1:3. The Christian's relationship with the Father is not established through nationality, institutional membership, or religious inheritance. God becomes the believer's Father through the new birth, not through the accident of human birth.

The expression “Father of all” must therefore be interpreted according to the people Paul is addressing. God is unquestionably the Creator of mankind, but creation and spiritual sonship are not interchangeable doctrines. John 1:12 declares, “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.” Galatians 3:26 confirms, “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.” If every person were already God's child in the saving sense, there would be no need to become a son of God through faith. John 8:44 records Jesus Christ telling certain unbelieving religious men, “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do.” Those men possessed religious knowledge, national privileges, and a history connected with Abraham, yet they lacked the spiritual relationship produced through faith in Christ. The modern doctrine that everybody is already a child of God may sound wonderfully charitable, but it leaves the new birth standing outside the door wondering why the Saviour bothered to mention it.

The unity described here also reveals the work of the three Persons of the Godhead. Ephesians 4:4 identifies “one Spirit,” verse 5 identifies “One Lord,” and verse 6 identifies “One God and Father of all.” These statements do not divide God into competing deities, nor do they erase the personal distinctions between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Second Corinthians 13:14 names the Lord Jesus Christ, God, and the Holy Ghost together, while Matthew 28:19 commands baptism in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. The biblical doctrine of the Godhead must not be sacrificed to an interpretation that makes Jesus Christ merely another title for the Father or treats the Holy Spirit as an impersonal religious force. One God does not mean one Person pretending to be three; Scripture reveals the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost without abandoning the truth that God is one.

“who is above all”

The next expression establishes the Father's supremacy: “who is above all.” Paul is not describing a deity competing with earthly governments for influence or attempting to maintain control over a universe that has somehow escaped His management. God's position is supreme, His authority is ultimate, and His purposes are not subject to approval from human institutions. Psalm 103:19 declares, “The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all.” Isaiah 46:10 records the Lord's declaration, “My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.” This supremacy supplies the foundation for the believer's confidence. The Father who established the spiritual body of Christ is not threatened by changing political circumstances, religious opposition, or the temporary accomplishments of men. The powers of this world may possess genuine earthly authority, but their authority remains subordinate to Almighty God. The most powerful ruler on earth cannot extend his own life by one hour merely by issuing an executive order against death.

The Father's supremacy must also be understood without confusing His relationship to the Son or denying the deity of Jesus Christ. First Corinthians 15:24–28 describes the consummation of Christ's kingdom administration, when all things are brought into their appointed order under God. That passage concerns divine purpose and order, not the suggestion that Jesus Christ is a created being or possesses an inferior divine nature. Colossians 2:9 declares concerning Christ, “For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.” The Father is above all, yet the Son remains fully divine, and the Holy Ghost remains fully divine. The Scriptures reveal distinctions of Person and operation without presenting rival gods. Ephesians 1:20–22 also describes the exaltation of Jesus Christ above principalities, powers, and dominions, identifying Him as Head over all things to the Church. The Father does not lose His supremacy because the Son possesses divine authority, and the Son does not lose His deity because He accomplishes the Father's will.

This truth should produce genuine humility in the believer. If the Father is above all, then human ambition, religious titles, personal influence, and denominational prestige must remain beneath His authority. A Christian may be entrusted with leadership, knowledge, wealth, or spiritual gifts, but none of these privileges provides permission to behave as though God must accommodate his personal preferences. Romans 12:3 warns every man “not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think.” Ephesians 4:2 has already commanded lowliness and meekness, and verse 6 explains why such attitudes are appropriate. Every member of Christ's body is accountable to the same Father. No preacher becomes exempt from the Scriptures because his congregation grows, and no believer becomes spiritually superior because his ministry attracts public attention. The

man who spends his life climbing the religious ladder ought to remember that the highest rung still remains infinitely beneath the throne of God.

“and through all”

Paul continues by declaring that the Father is not merely above His people but works “through all.” This expression concerns divine operation and activity. The context is the one body of Christ, where different members possess different gifts and responsibilities while sharing the same spiritual source. First Corinthians 12:6 provides an illuminating comparison: “And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.” God does not establish spiritual unity and then leave His people to accomplish His purposes entirely through natural ability. He works through the members of Christ's body according to His wisdom, equipping them for service and producing spiritual results through their obedience. Philippians 2:13 declares, “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” The believer is responsible to act, but divine power supplies what fleshly effort cannot produce. God does not need human greatness to accomplish His purposes; He works through ordinary believers who are willing to obey an extraordinary Lord.

This statement must not be twisted into the claim that every human activity represents God's moral approval. The Father possesses sovereign authority over creation, but His working through His people does not make their sins righteous or their foolish decisions spiritually inspired. Ephesians 2:10 identifies saved believers as God's workmanship, “created in Christ Jesus unto good works.” Those good works are consistent with His revealed will, not contrary to it. The Christian who acts dishonestly cannot defend his behavior by announcing that God was working through him. Neither can a religious leader justify false doctrine merely because his organization has enjoyed financial success or public recognition. Scripture remains the standard by which Christian conduct must be examined. The Holy Spirit does not inspire a man to contradict the word He has given. A successful religious enterprise is not automatically a divine enterprise, and impressive results do not sanctify unscriptural methods.

The expression also corrects the temptation to divide Christian service into important and insignificant categories according to public recognition. God works through pastors and teachers, but He also works through ordinary believers faithfully exercising their responsibilities. First Corinthians 12:18 declares, “But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.” The hand does not possess the responsibilities of the foot, and the eye does not perform the work of the ear, yet every member contributes to the body according to its appointed purpose. The Christian who quietly ministers to another believer may accomplish something of lasting spiritual value

without ever appearing before an audience. Meanwhile, the man who possesses a prominent public ministry may accomplish very little of eternal worth if his service is governed by pride. God measures faithfulness according to His will, not according to the size of the crowd gathered to applaud the servant.

“and in you all”

The final expression brings the matter of divine unity directly into the believer's personal spiritual life: “and in you all.” Notice the wording carefully. Paul does not merely repeat that God is above all or through all. He identifies the divine presence within the people he is addressing. The word “you” is decisive because it directs attention to the saved believers composing Christ's body. This is not a statement that God indwells every unbelieving person in the same saving relationship. Ephesians 2:22 describes believers as being built together “for an habitation of God through the Spirit.” First Corinthians 3:16 asks, “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?” The presence of God among and within His redeemed people is a tremendous spiritual privilege. The Christian does not need to search for God's saving presence in a distant religious institution when Scripture declares that God dwells in His redeemed people through the Holy Spirit.

This indwelling must be distinguished from the omnipresence of God. The Lord is present throughout His creation, as Psalm 139:7–10 demonstrates, but His omnipresence does not mean that every person has been regenerated, justified, and sealed by the Holy Spirit. Romans 8:9 establishes the distinction: “Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” The believer possesses a spiritual relationship that the unsaved person does not. John 14:23 records Jesus Christ declaring concerning the one who loves Him and keeps His words, “we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.” These passages reveal the divine presence in redeemed people without confusing the Persons of the Godhead. The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are not interchangeable names for one Person, although their divine working is inseparably united. God's presence everywhere establishes His supremacy over creation; His indwelling presence in believers establishes the extraordinary privilege of their relationship with Him.

Finally, the phrase “in you all” provides a compelling reason for Christian unity, holiness, and mutual respect. If God dwells in His redeemed people, then believers must not treat one another as worthless merely because they possess different gifts, backgrounds, or degrees of maturity. Neither should they treat their own bodies as instruments for deliberate sin. First Corinthians 6:19–20 reminds Christians that their bodies are temples of the Holy Ghost and that they are bought with a price. Ephesians 4:30 subsequently warns believers against grieving the Holy Spirit of God. These instructions make sense

because God's indwelling presence establishes an ongoing spiritual relationship. The believer's conduct does not create that relationship, but it should reflect it. A Christian who knows that Almighty God dwells within him ought to think carefully before allowing his mouth, mind, and members to become servants of the very sins from which Christ redeemed him.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 4:6 brings Paul's sevenfold declaration of Christian unity to its doctrinal conclusion by identifying one God and Father who is above all, through all, and in all the believers addressed. The Father is the common spiritual Father of those who belong to Jesus Christ, the supreme authority over His people, the divine source of their service, and the One whose presence operates within their spiritual lives. This passage must be understood in connection with Ephesians 4:4–5, where Paul identifies one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, and one baptism. Together, these statements establish the divine foundation of Christian unity rather than presenting a program for manufacturing unity through institutional cooperation.

The verse also preserves several essential doctrinal distinctions. God is the Creator of all mankind, but only those who receive Jesus Christ become His children in the saving sense. The Father's supremacy does not deny the deity of the Son or the personal distinction of the Holy Spirit. His working through believers does not excuse sin or make every religious activity divinely approved. His indwelling presence must not be confused with the general truth of His omnipresence throughout creation. The central lesson is that the Father who rules above His people also works through them and dwells within them, giving every believer a common spiritual relationship that should produce humility, obedience, and genuine Christian fellowship.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. One God And Father

1 Corinthians 8:6 — “But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him”

Deuteronomy 6:4 — “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD:”

1 Timothy 2:5 — “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;”

Ephesians 3:14 — “For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,”

2. The Father, Son, And Holy Ghost

Ephesians 4:4 — “There is one body, and one Spirit”

Ephesians 4:5 — “One Lord, one faith, one baptism,”

Matthew 28:19 — “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:”

2 Corinthians 13:14 — “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all.”

3. Becoming Children Of God Through Faith

John 1:12 — “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God”

Galatians 3:26 — “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.”

Romans 8:15 — “ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.”

John 1:13 — “Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

4. God's Supreme Authority Over All

Psalm 103:19 — “The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all.”

Isaiah 46:10 — “My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure:”

Isaiah 45:5 — “I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me:”

Acts 17:24 — “God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth”

5. God Working Through His People

1 Corinthians 12:6 — “And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.”

Philippians 2:13 — “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”

Ephesians 2:10 — “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works”

2 Corinthians 3:5 — “but our sufficiency is of God;”

6. God's Indwelling Presence In Believers

Ephesians 2:22 — “In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.”

1 Corinthians 3:16 — “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?”

1 Corinthians 6:19 — “your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you”

John 14:23 — “we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.”

7. The Father's Presence And Christian Conduct

Ephesians 4:1 — “walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,”

Ephesians 4:2 — “With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;”

Ephesians 4:3 — “Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

Romans 12:5 — “So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.”

5. Reflection

Ephesians 4:6 confronts one of the most popular religious errors of our time: the assumption that everybody is already a child of God simply because everybody was created by Him. That may sound compassionate, but Scripture makes a distinction between creation and regeneration that human sentiment cannot erase. God created mankind, yet John 1:12 declares that those receiving Jesus Christ are given power to become the sons of God. Galatians 3:26 identifies faith in Christ Jesus as the means by which believers possess that relationship. A person may be religious, respectable, generous, and sincerely convinced that God accepts everyone without distinction, but sincerity cannot accomplish the new birth. The gospel exists because sinners need salvation, not because they merely need reassurance that they were already saved. The Fatherhood of God is a glorious blessing to the redeemed, but it becomes a dangerous deception when preached as an unconditional possession of the unconverted.

The declaration that the Father is above all should also correct the pride that frequently accompanies religious authority. Christian history contains enough examples of ambitious men building personal kingdoms to demonstrate that the flesh can turn even legitimate ministry into an instrument of self-importance. Yet the Father remains supreme over every pastor, church, denomination, and spiritual institution. No earthly office allows a man to disregard Scripture or place himself beyond accountability. The believer who possesses spiritual gifts should remember that those gifts originated with God and were given for

service rather than personal exaltation. Likewise, the Christian who lacks public recognition should not imagine that his place in Christ's body is insignificant. God's approval is not measured by human popularity, and His authority does not increase or decrease according to the size of a congregation. The Father's throne remains above every earthly ministry, including those that have become so impressed with themselves that they occasionally forget to look upward.

The expression “through all” reminds us that genuine Christian service depends upon divine working rather than fleshly determination. A saved person certainly possesses responsibilities, and Scripture repeatedly commands believers to labor faithfully. Nevertheless, spiritual fruit cannot be manufactured through natural talent alone. A preacher may possess an impressive vocabulary, a commanding personality, and the ability to entertain an audience without necessarily accomplishing anything of lasting spiritual value. Another Christian may possess little education or public influence while faithfully witnessing, praying, teaching, and serving according to God's word. Philippians 2:13 establishes that God works within believers both to will and to do of His good pleasure. The believer must therefore seek the Lord's strength while refusing to confuse outward success with divine approval. God can accomplish more through a humble servant who obeys His word than through an impressive religious personality who has learned how to operate without Him.

The phrase “in you all” brings an even more personal responsibility into view. Almighty God does not merely watch His redeemed people from a distant throne; He dwells within them through the Spirit. This truth should influence how Christians speak, think, behave, and treat one another. The believer who deliberately entertains bitterness, dishonesty, corrupt communication, or other fleshly sins is not merely violating a religious rule. He is acting contrary to the spiritual relationship established through salvation. Ephesians 4:30 warns believers against grieving the Holy Spirit, demonstrating that divine indwelling does not eliminate the Christian's responsibility to obey. The same believer who has been sealed unto the day of redemption can still damage his fellowship and testimony through disobedience. Eternal security guarantees that Christ will complete His saving work, but it never gives the Christian permission to make his earthly conduct an embarrassment to the Lord who saved him.

This verse also establishes a proper foundation for Christian fellowship. The members of Christ's body possess different gifts, personalities, experiences, and responsibilities, yet they share the same heavenly Father. That relationship should produce humility rather than competition and mutual concern rather than contempt. Christians may disagree about matters of personal judgment, but they should not allow every difference to become an

excuse for bitterness. Neither should the desire for unity persuade them to abandon biblical doctrine or participate in religious arrangements that contradict the gospel. The unity described in Ephesians is established through God, maintained through obedience, and governed by truth. A congregation cannot improve upon that arrangement by replacing Scriptural authority with popular opinion. Real Christian unity does not require every believer to become identical; it requires believers to remember that they belong to the same Lord and answer to the same Father.

Finally, Ephesians 4:6 ought to leave every saved person with both assurance and responsibility. The Father is above His people, possessing supreme authority over their lives and circumstances. He works through them, providing the spiritual strength necessary for faithful service. He dwells within them, establishing a relationship far greater than anything an earthly institution could manufacture. These blessings do not arise through law-keeping, religious ceremonies, or personal achievements, but through salvation in Jesus Christ. Therefore, the proper response is gratitude, humility, obedience, and a genuine desire to glorify God. The believer should examine whether his daily conduct reflects the relationship Scripture declares he possesses. The God who rules above us is the God who works through us and dwells within us. If that truth cannot humble our pride, strengthen our faith, and correct our walk, then the trouble is not that the Bible has failed to speak clearly, but that we have failed to take seriously what Almighty God has said.

Ephesians 4:8 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 4:8

"Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men."

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"Wherefore he saith"

Paul begins this remarkable verse by directing attention to the written Scriptures. The word "Wherefore" connects the statement to Ephesians 4:7, where every believer is said to receive grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Paul is about to explain why the risen and ascended Lord possesses the authority to distribute gifts among the members of His body. Rather than constructing a theological theory out of religious imagination, he

appeals to something God had already placed in His word. The primary Old Testament passage is Psalm 68:18: “Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them.” The connection is deliberate. Paul identifies the ascended Christ as the victorious Lord and applies the language of divine triumph to His provision for the Church. The New Testament does not require us to abandon the Old Testament; it requires us to recognize how God reveals further truth through the Scriptures He has already given.

The original setting of Psalm 68 must not be discarded merely because Paul uses its language in Ephesians. The psalm celebrates the LORD's victories, His power over enemies, and His glorious relationship with Israel. It belongs to the Hebrew Scriptures and possesses a genuine historical and prophetic significance within God's dealings with that nation. Yet the Holy Ghost now applies its triumphant language to the ascended Jesus Christ, who has accomplished redemption and become Head over all things to the Church. Notice also that Psalm 68:18 speaks of receiving gifts, while Ephesians 4:8 speaks of giving gifts. The difference is not something to conceal or correct. The Old Testament portrays divine victory and its attendant gifts; Paul explains the victorious Christ's distribution of gifts to His people. Rightly dividing Scripture means respecting what God said to Israel while also receiving what He subsequently revealed concerning the Church, without pretending that the two settings are identical.

“When he ascended up on high”

The expression “When he ascended up on high” identifies the victorious Lord as Jesus Christ following His resurrection. Ephesians 4:7 has already named Christ as the source of the gift, and verse 10 confirms that the One who descended is the same One who ascended “far above all heavens.” Acts 1:9 records the historical event: “And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.” The ascension was not a symbolic expression for the disciples' growing appreciation of Jesus. It was a genuine event witnessed by men who had seen Him alive after His resurrection. Hebrews 4:14 identifies Him as the great high priest who “is passed into the heavens.” The same Lord who suffered on Calvary, was buried, and rose bodily from the dead ascended into heaven. Christianity does not worship the memory of a dead religious teacher; it proclaims a living Saviour who conquered death and ascended into glory.

The ascension also establishes the connection between Christ's completed redemptive work and His present ministry toward His Church. Ephesians 1:20–22 declares that God raised Christ from the dead, seated Him at His own right hand in heavenly places, and placed all things under His feet. Hebrews 9:24 states that Christ entered “into heaven

itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." His exaltation does not mean He has retired from concern for His redeemed people. Romans 8:34 identifies Him as the One who makes intercession for us, while Ephesians 4 explains His provision of gifts for the strengthening of His body. His position is above earthly governments, religious hierarchies, and the powers of darkness. Consequently, the Church receives its authority and spiritual provision from its exalted Head. The risen Christ does not need permission from a religious headquarters to distribute what belongs to Him, and no earthly institution possesses the authority to overrule the Lord who sits at the Father's right hand.

"he led captivity captive"

Here we encounter one of the most profound expressions in Paul's discussion of Christ's victory: "he led captivity captive." The language resembles the triumph of a victorious conqueror who has overcome the power that previously held others in bondage. Judges 5:12 contains a related expression concerning Barak's victory: "arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam." Psalm 68:18 places similar triumphant language within a celebration of the LORD's victories. Paul now applies the expression to Jesus Christ. Hebrews 2:14 declares that through death Christ would "destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." Colossians 2:15 further describes Christ as having spoiled principalities and powers, triumphing over them. The cross was not Satan's victory over Christ. It was the appointed sacrifice through which the Lord dealt with sin and secured the triumph revealed in His resurrection. The devil may have celebrated when Christ died, but three days later the empty tomb exposed just how badly the enemy had misunderstood the battle.

The phrase also opens an important study concerning Christ's descent and the condition of the righteous dead before His resurrection. Ephesians 4:9 says that Christ "descended first into the lower parts of the earth," while Matthew 12:40 speaks of the Son of man being "in the heart of the earth." Luke 16:22–26 describes Abraham's bosom and a great gulf separating the righteous dead from those in torment, while Luke 23:43 records Christ's promise to the believing thief that he would be with Him in paradise. These passages have led to the understanding that Christ's victory involved the liberation of the righteous dead who awaited the completion of redemption. That is a substantial interpretation drawn from comparing passages, and it deserves serious consideration. Nevertheless, Ephesians 4:8 itself does not identify every captive, enumerate the persons involved, or describe every movement between Christ's death and ascension. The doctrine must therefore be distinguished from details Scripture does not expressly supply. There is enough revealed about Christ's victory over death to preach with confidence without inventing an elaborate itinerary for events God has not described in detail.

“and gave gifts unto men”

The final expression reveals the purpose of Paul's quotation within the immediate discussion: “and gave gifts unto men.” The ascended Christ is not merely celebrated as a victorious King; He is presented as the divine Giver who provides for His redeemed people. Ephesians 4:7 established that grace is given according to the measure of Christ's gift. Verse 8 identifies the victorious Lord distributing gifts, and verse 11 names the provisions under consideration: “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.” These are gifts involving people entrusted with particular responsibilities for the benefit of the Church. Verse 12 immediately explains their purpose: “For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” They are not intended to provide religious celebrities with impressive titles. Christ supplies ministries for the spiritual development of His people. The ascended Lord gave gifts to build His Church, not to establish a collection of personal kingdoms governed by ambitious men.

These gifts must also be distinguished from the various spiritual gifts identified in First Corinthians 12 and the fruit of the Spirit described in Galatians 5. The passages concern related aspects of the Spirit's work, but they do not present identical lists or emphasize identical purposes. First Corinthians 12 describes diversities of gifts distributed by the Spirit, including manifestations associated with the apostolic period. Ephesians 4 particularly emphasizes Christ's provision of persons entrusted with ministries that equip His people. Careful study must also distinguish the foundational role of apostles and prophets from the continuing responsibilities of evangelists, pastors, and teachers, without pretending that every extraordinary sign associated with the apostles must be reproduced in every generation. Ephesians 2:20 identifies apostles and prophets in connection with the Church's foundation, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone. The proper emphasis is the sufficiency of Christ's provision for His body. A spiritual gift is not a medal for personal greatness; it is equipment entrusted to a servant for the benefit of somebody else.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 4:8 presents Jesus Christ as the victorious, ascended Lord who has overcome the powers associated with sin and death and possesses the authority to distribute gifts to His Church. Paul's use of Psalm 68:18 connects the triumph celebrated in the Hebrew Scriptures with the accomplished victory and exaltation of Jesus Christ. His ascension was a literal event following His bodily resurrection, not a symbolic statement or religious legend. The expression “he led captivity captive” emphasizes His triumph, while the

surrounding passages concerning His descent invite careful comparison without permitting unsupported details to be presented as explicit revelation.

The central purpose of the verse is to explain the source of the gifts introduced in Ephesians 4:7 and described in Ephesians 4:11–12. Christ gives these gifts for the edification, service, and spiritual maturity of His body. The gifts belong to His authority and must be administered according to His word rather than human ambition. The central lesson is that the Lord who conquered death and ascended into glory now supplies His Church with the gifts necessary to accomplish His purposes.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. The Old Testament Foundation Of Christ's Triumph

Psalm 68:18 — “Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men”

Judges 5:12 — “arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam.”

Luke 24:27 — “And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.”

Luke 24:44 — “all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.”

2. Christ's Descent Before His Ascension

Ephesians 4:9 — “that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?”

Matthew 12:40 — “so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”

Acts 2:27 — “Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.”

Luke 23:43 — “Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.”

3. The Literal Ascension Of Jesus Christ

Acts 1:9 — “he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.”

Acts 2:33 — “Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted”

Hebrews 4:14 — “seeing that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God”

Ephesians 4:10 — “He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.”

4. Christ's Victory Over Death And The Devil

Hebrews 2:14 — “that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;”

Colossians 2:15 — “And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.”

1 Corinthians 15:54 — “Death is swallowed up in victory.”

Revelation 1:18 — “I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.”

5. Deliverance From Captivity And Bondage

Luke 4:18 — “he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives”

Isaiah 61:1 — “to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;”

John 8:36 — “If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.”

Hebrews 2:15 — “And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”

6. The Ascended Christ Gives Gifts To His Church

Ephesians 4:7 — “But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.”

Ephesians 4:11 — “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;”

Ephesians 4:12 — “For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:”

Romans 12:6 — “Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us”

7. Spiritual Gifts Must Serve The Body Of Christ

1 Corinthians 12:4 — “Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.”

1 Corinthians 12:7 — “But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.”

1 Corinthians 12:18 — “But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.”

1 Peter 4:10 — “As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”

5. Reflection

Ephesians 4:8 presents one of the most magnificent pictures of Jesus Christ found in Paul's epistles: the crucified Saviour becomes the risen Conqueror, ascends into glory, and distributes gifts to His redeemed people. The world saw Him condemned under Pontius Pilate, mocked by religious leaders, and crucified between criminals. His enemies imagined that placing Him in a tomb would permanently settle the matter. Yet the resurrection demonstrated that death had not conquered Him, and the ascension established His exalted position at the Father's right hand. The gospel is therefore not merely an invitation to admire the moral teachings of an extraordinary man. It is the proclamation of a Saviour who died for our sins, was buried, rose again, and now lives in glory. The religious world may produce impressive monuments to dead teachers, but Christianity proclaims a living Lord who requires neither a replacement nor a successor to His throne.

The connection with Psalm 68 also teaches an important lesson about rightly dividing the Scriptures. God revealed genuine truths concerning His victories and dealings with Israel long before Paul wrote to the Church at Ephesus. Those Old Testament passages must not be stripped of their original setting merely because later revelation connects them with Jesus Christ. Yet neither should the believer ignore the inspired application Paul makes concerning the ascended Lord. The same God who revealed His purposes through Israel has now revealed the spiritual position and responsibilities of the body of Christ. Consequently, a careful Bible student must consider both the original passage and its New Testament application. The answer is not to collapse Israel and the Church into one undifferentiated religious institution, nor to refuse legitimate connections between the Testaments. Right division does not mean cutting the Bible into disconnected pieces; it means understanding where each passage belongs while allowing Scripture to explain Scripture.

The expression “he led captivity captive” deserves equally serious consideration because it concerns the victory of Jesus Christ over the bondage associated with sin and death. Hebrews 2:14–15 establishes that Christ's death was directed against the power of the

devil and the fear of death that held mankind in bondage. The passages concerning Abraham's bosom, paradise, and Christ's descent provide additional material for examining the condition of the righteous dead before the completion of redemption. Nevertheless, the student must resist the temptation to convert every reasonable inference into an explicit statement of Scripture. Christ's victory is certain because the Bible declares it. The detailed identity and movements of every captive are not established by Ephesians 4:8 alone. A man does not strengthen biblical doctrine by adding details God never supplied, even when those details make an interesting sermon illustration. Truth remains stronger than imagination.

The gifts distributed by the ascended Christ provide a necessary correction to the modern obsession with religious personalities. Ephesians 4:11 identifies ministries given for the benefit of Christ's body, while verse 12 explains that their purpose is to perfect the saints and edify the Church. These gifts were never intended to establish a spiritual aristocracy in which certain men receive applause while ordinary Christians remain permanently dependent upon their personalities. A genuine minister should direct believers toward spiritual maturity, biblical understanding, and faithful service rather than cultivating admiration for himself. The Lord supplies gifts because His people require instruction and strengthening, not because His Church needs another collection of religious celebrities. That principle applies to pastors, teachers, evangelists, and every believer entrusted with opportunities for ministry. The usefulness of a servant is measured by faithfulness to Christ, not by his ability to convince an audience that heaven could scarcely operate without him.

There is tremendous encouragement here for Christians who wonder whether the Lord has provided what His Church needs to remain faithful. The ascended Christ has not abandoned His people to survive upon human cleverness or religious organization. He has supplied His word, established His authority, and provided gifts for the strengthening of His body. Those gifts must be exercised according to Scripture, which means the Church should neither despise legitimate ministry nor manufacture extraordinary offices and signs without biblical warrant. The believer's responsibility is to recognize the authority of Christ, receive sound instruction, and faithfully exercise whatever service the Lord has entrusted to him. Spiritual maturity does not come from collecting impressive experiences while neglecting ordinary obedience. It comes through growth in biblical truth, dependence upon the Lord, and faithful participation in the life of His body. The Church does not become spiritually strong by advertising greater power than Scripture promises, but by faithfully using the provision Christ has actually given.

Finally, Ephesians 4:8 should direct every believer's attention away from earthly religious competition and toward the victorious Lord Jesus Christ. The One who conquered death is the same One who provides for His Church, and His authority remains greater than every institution established in His name. His resurrection secures the believer's hope, His ascension establishes His exaltation, and His gifts demonstrate His continuing concern for His redeemed people. Therefore, Christian service should be conducted with confidence rather than fear, humility rather than arrogance, and obedience rather than ambition. No believer needs to invent a new source of spiritual authority when the Scriptures already identify the risen and ascended Christ as Head of the body. The proper response is to believe His word, honor His finished work, and faithfully serve according to His provision. The cross reveals the price of redemption, the empty tomb declares the victory of the Redeemer, and the ascension displays the authority of the King. The Church's responsibility is not to replace that King, but to serve Him faithfully until He comes again.

Ephesians 4:9 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 4:9

"(Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?"

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"Now that he ascended"

Paul begins this remarkable statement by returning to the ascension of Jesus Christ, which he introduced in Ephesians 4:8. The previous verse declared, "When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." Now Paul explains that the One who ascended had first descended. Notice that he is not introducing some mysterious individual whose identity must be discovered through religious speculation. The subject is the Lord Jesus Christ, whose victory over death and exaltation into heaven provide the foundation for His gifts to the Church. Acts 1:9 records the literal ascension: "he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight." That was not a spiritual metaphor, a vision produced by excited disciples, or an imaginative description of Christ becoming more influential after His death. The resurrected Lord departed bodily from the earth. The same Jesus Christ who walked out of the tomb went up into heaven, and the men who watched Him depart were not witnessing an illustration. They were witnessing history.

The words “Now that he ascended” also direct attention to Christ's exalted position following His completed work of redemption. Philippians 2:8–9 explains that Jesus Christ humbled Himself, became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, and was subsequently highly exalted by God. Hebrews 1:3 declares that after Christ had “by himself purged our sins,” He “sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.” Notice the order. The sacrifice precedes the exaltation, and the completed redemption precedes His heavenly ministry. The ascension is therefore not an isolated miracle disconnected from Calvary. It belongs to the entire redemptive accomplishment of Jesus Christ. His humiliation was real, His suffering was real, His death was real, and His exaltation is equally real. The Lord who bowed His head beneath the judgment deserved by sinners now occupies a position no earthly king, religious institution, or fallen angel can challenge.

The practical significance of this truth is tremendous. The Church does not serve a departed religious teacher whose followers must somehow preserve his influence through human organization. It serves a living Saviour who has ascended into heaven and continues His ministry on behalf of His redeemed people. Romans 8:34 declares that Christ “is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.” Hebrews 4:14 identifies Him as our great high priest who has passed into the heavens. Consequently, the believer's confidence must rest upon the authority and sufficiency of Jesus Christ rather than upon religious ceremonies, earthly representatives, or human claims of spiritual superiority. The ascended Lord remains the Head of His body, and the Church receives its spiritual provision from Him. Christ did not ascend into heaven to surrender the government of His Church to a committee of religious professionals who occasionally consult the Scriptures when convenient.

“what is it but that he also descended first”

The second expression introduces Paul's explanation of the relationship between Christ's ascension and His descent. “What is it but that he also descended first” is a searching question that requires the reader to consider what took place before the Lord's exaltation. The word “first” establishes the order: the descent preceded the ascension under discussion. Paul is not presenting Jesus Christ as a heavenly visitor who appeared momentarily upon earth before returning to His original position without accomplishing anything significant. He is directing attention to the profound humiliation and redemptive work that came before Christ's exaltation. Philippians 2:7 declares that the Lord “made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.” John 1:14 likewise declares, “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.” The eternal Son genuinely entered human history. Before the crown of

exaltation came the humiliation of the incarnation, and before the public triumph came the suffering of the cross.

However, the descent described in Ephesians 4:9 should not be examined apart from the language Paul uses in the remainder of the verse. Some understand the descent as referring principally to Christ's incarnation, His coming down from heaven to earth. That understanding properly recognizes the great humiliation involved in the Son of God becoming man. Yet Matthew 12:40 supplies additional language concerning what followed His death: “so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” Acts 2:31 also declares concerning Christ's resurrection “that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption.” Those statements invite the student to examine a descent associated not merely with Bethlehem but with the period between Christ's death and resurrection. Ephesians 4:9 does not provide an exhaustive account of that period, but its wording fits naturally within a broader study of Christ's descent and triumph. A man who wants to dismiss the entire matter with a quick reference to Bethlehem still has to explain why Scripture speaks of Christ's soul, His flesh, and the heart of the earth in connection with His resurrection.

The order of descent and ascension also preserves the completeness of Christ's saving work. The Lord did not ascend because He escaped death before facing its reality. He entered death, was buried, and rose again according to the Scriptures. First Corinthians 15:3–4 establishes the gospel upon those historical facts. Hebrews 2:14 explains that Christ partook of flesh and blood “that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.” That is a remarkable statement because the means of Christ's triumph included the very death His enemies imagined would secure their victory. The resurrection then declared that death could not retain Him. Acts 2:24 says God raised Him up, “having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.” The sequence matters because the victory was not obtained by avoiding the appointed sacrifice. Jesus Christ conquered death by entering it and rising victorious, not by obtaining an exemption from the very judgment He came to overcome.

“into the lower parts of the earth?”

Now we reach the expression that has produced considerable disagreement among Bible students: “into the lower parts of the earth.” Paul does not merely say that Christ came into the world, although the incarnation is certainly taught elsewhere. He describes a descent into the lower parts of the earth, language that must be compared carefully with Matthew 12:40 and Acts 2:27–31. In Matthew, Christ identifies the sign of Jonas with His being in the heart of the earth. In Acts, Peter applies Psalm 16 to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, distinguishing His soul not being left in hell from His flesh not seeing corruption. The King

James Bible uses the word “hell” in that passage, and the student should not simply erase it because it introduces difficulties into a preferred theological arrangement. Neither should he assume the word automatically means that Christ suffered the eternal punishment of the damned. The Scriptures require us to recognize the reality of His death and descent without inventing additional suffering after the cross to complete an atonement He had already finished.

Luke 16:19–31 provides important background concerning the condition of the dead before Christ's completed redemption. The rich man is described as being in torment, while Lazarus is carried into Abraham's bosom, with a great gulf separating the two conditions. Luke 23:43 adds Christ's promise to the believing thief: “To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.” Taken together with Matthew 12:40, Acts 2:31, and Ephesians 4:8–9, these passages form the basis for understanding Christ's descent as involving the realm of the departed, including the place where the righteous dead awaited the fulfillment of God's redemptive promises. On this interpretation, Christ's triumph included leading those captives into the liberty made possible through His accomplished redemption. The connection is substantial, especially when read alongside “he led captivity captive.” Nevertheless, Scripture does not explicitly describe every movement of those souls or identify every detail of what occurred. A sound interpretation may connect the passages, but a faithful preacher must distinguish the connection Scripture supports from the extra scenery religious imagination enjoys adding.

The distinction between the condition of Old Testament saints and that of Christians today is also essential. The faithful men and women who lived before Calvary trusted God according to the revelation given to them, while the blood of Jesus Christ supplied the ultimate basis upon which their sins could be dealt with. Hebrews 10:4 declares, “For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.” The animal sacrifices could not accomplish the final redemption secured by Christ. By contrast, the saved believer today is placed spiritually into Christ's body, sealed with the Holy Spirit, and possesses the promise of being with the Lord after death. Philippians 1:23 describes Paul's desire “to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better,” while Second Corinthians 5:8 speaks of being “absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.” Those promises should not be collapsed indiscriminately into the circumstances described before Christ's resurrection. Right division recognizes that the same Saviour accomplished redemption for His people while God's revelation concerning their position and privileges unfolded according to His appointed purpose.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 4:9 explains that the ascension of Jesus Christ followed His descent, directing attention to the humiliation, death, and resurrection that preceded His heavenly exaltation. The expression “the lower parts of the earth” must be examined alongside Matthew 12:40, Psalm 16:10, and Peter's explanation of Christ's resurrection in Acts 2:25–31. These passages distinguish Christ's soul from His body in describing His death and resurrection, while Luke 23:43 and Luke 16 provide additional information concerning paradise and the righteous dead. The interpretation that Christ entered the realm of the departed and led the righteous captives forth is supported by comparing these passages with Ephesians 4:8, although the details of that event must not be extended beyond what Scripture establishes.

The verse also strengthens the doctrine of Christ's completed redemption. His descent was not an additional occasion for the devil to torment Him or for sinners to receive a second opportunity for salvation after death. Jesus Christ accomplished the sacrifice for sin through His death, and His resurrection demonstrated the victory that preceded His ascension. The spiritual privileges of believers in the present dispensation of grace must also be distinguished from the circumstances of the righteous dead before Calvary. The central lesson is that the exalted Christ is the same Lord who truly entered death, was not left there, and emerged victorious before ascending into glory.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. The Son Of God Came Down From Heaven

John 1:14 — “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us”

John 6:38 — “For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.”

Philippians 2:7 — “But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant”

2 Corinthians 8:9 — “though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor”

2. Christ Entered Death For Our Sins

1 Corinthians 15:3 — “Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;”

1 Peter 3:18 — “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust”

Hebrews 2:14 — “that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;”

John 19:30 — “It is finished”

3. The Lower Parts And The Heart Of The Earth

Ephesians 4:9 — “that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?”

Matthew 12:40 — “so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”

Psalm 16:10 — “For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.”

Acts 2:31 — “that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption.”

4. Paradise And The Condition Of The Departed

Luke 23:43 — “To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.”

Luke 16:22 — “the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom”

Luke 16:26 — “between us and you there is a great gulf fixed”

2 Corinthians 12:4 — “How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words”

5. Redemption Required The Perfect Sacrifice

Hebrews 10:4 — “For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.”

Hebrews 9:12 — “having obtained eternal redemption for us.”

Hebrews 10:12 — “But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;”

2 Corinthians 5:21 — “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin”

6. Death Could Not Retain The Redeemer

Acts 2:24 — “Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.”

Acts 2:32 — “This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.”

1 Corinthians 15:4 — “And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:”

Revelation 1:18 — “I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.”

7. The Victorious Christ Ascended And Gave Gifts

Ephesians 4:8 — “When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.”

Ephesians 4:10 — “He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.”

Ephesians 4:11 — “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;”

Ephesians 4:12 — “For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:”

5. Reflection

Ephesians 4:9 presents a doctrine that ought to make every believer appreciate the extraordinary depth of what Jesus Christ accomplished through His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension. The Lord did not enter this world merely to deliver a collection of moral instructions and then depart when His earthly ministry became inconvenient. He came to accomplish redemption through a genuine sacrifice for sinners. His descent into the lower parts of the earth directs attention to the reality of His death and the victory that followed it. Matthew 12:40, Psalm 16:10, and Acts 2:31 deserve careful examination because they illuminate truths that cannot be understood by examining Christ's incarnation alone. Yet the purpose of studying these passages is not to satisfy curiosity about every unseen detail. The purpose is to recognize the greatness of the Saviour who entered death and emerged victorious over an enemy that no ordinary man could overcome.

One serious error concerning this subject is the teaching that Jesus Christ had to suffer additional punishment in hell after dying on the cross in order to complete the payment for sin. Such a doctrine mistakes Christ's descent for an unfinished atonement and undermines His declaration in John 19:30, “It is finished.” The Scriptures teach that Christ bore our sins, offered Himself as the sacrifice, and accomplished redemption through His blood. Hebrews 10:12 identifies His offering as one sacrifice for sins forever. The references to His soul not being left in hell and His descent into the heart of the earth must therefore be interpreted consistently with the finished work of Calvary. The devil was not given authority to complete redemption by torturing the Redeemer. Jesus Christ did not purchase salvation on the installment plan, making the final payment through additional punishment administered by the very enemy He came to defeat.

The condition of the righteous dead before the resurrection of Christ also deserves serious attention. Luke 16 describes Abraham's bosom, while Luke 23:43 records the Lord's promise concerning paradise. These passages provide important background when

considering the captives mentioned in Ephesians 4:8 and the descent described in verse 9. The understanding that Christ led the righteous dead into the liberty secured by His completed redemption follows a meaningful comparison of these Scriptures. However, the Bible does not provide an exhaustive account identifying every person involved or describing every event during that period. Neither does it establish a second opportunity for salvation after death. Hebrews 9:27 declares, “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.” The Christian must therefore distinguish legitimate doctrinal conclusions from religious inventions. A preacher who knows the Bible should possess enough confidence to explain what Scripture reveals and enough humility to admit when Scripture has not supplied the details.

This passage also demonstrates why rightly dividing the word of truth matters. The righteous dead before Calvary must not automatically be assigned every spiritual privilege subsequently revealed concerning the Church, and the believer today must not be placed under arrangements belonging to earlier periods of God's dealings with mankind. Paul declares that Christians have been spiritually baptized into Christ's body and sealed with the Holy Spirit. He also teaches that departing this present life means being with Christ, which is far better. These truths rest upon the completed redemptive work of Jesus Christ and His present heavenly ministry. The Scriptures reveal one Saviour and one sufficient sacrifice while distinguishing the circumstances under which God dealt with His people. Right division does not produce different Saviours or competing methods of redemption; it prevents the student from forcing every historical circumstance into the same doctrinal arrangement.

Finally, the greatest practical encouragement of Ephesians 4:9 is that the Christian serves a Lord whom death could not retain. Every human institution eventually encounters its limitations, every earthly ruler must face mortality, and every religious personality possesses weaknesses that cannot be hidden forever. Jesus Christ stands apart from them all. He entered death, rose again, and ascended into glory, where He continues His ministry for His redeemed people. Consequently, the believer's assurance must rest upon Christ rather than upon human achievement, religious ceremonies, or personal emotions. This assurance should produce faithful service, not spiritual carelessness, because the victorious Lord deserves obedience from those He has redeemed. The Christian who understands the greatness of Christ's victory ought to approach suffering with hope, temptation with sobriety, and death with confidence in the resurrection. The Lord who descended was not defeated by death, and the Lord who ascended has not abandoned His people. The grave could not keep the Redeemer, and it will not have the final word over those who belong to Him.

Ephesians 4:10 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 4:10

“He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)”

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

“He that descended is the same also that ascended up”

Paul begins this verse by establishing the identity of Jesus Christ through His descent and ascension. Notice the words “the same.” They settle something of tremendous doctrinal importance. The One who descended into the lower parts of the earth is the identical Person who ascended into heavenly glory. There was no substitution of another being, no abandonment of His identity, and no transformation of the resurrected Saviour into some impersonal spiritual influence. Ephesians 4:9 has already identified His descent, and verse 10 declares that His subsequent ascension belongs to the same Lord. Acts 1:11 confirms this when the angels announce, “this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.” The resurrected Jesus Christ is the ascended Jesus Christ, and the ascended Jesus Christ is the returning Jesus Christ. The Saviour who went into death did not disappear into religious mythology. He came out victorious, ascended into heaven, and remains the same Lord who purchased our redemption.

The connection with the preceding verse also requires serious attention. Ephesians 4:9 speaks of Christ descending “into the lower parts of the earth,” while Matthew 12:40 records His declaration that the Son of man would be three days and three nights “in the heart of the earth.” Peter's sermon in Acts 2:31 explains Christ's resurrection by declaring “that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption.” These passages distinguish His soul from His body and establish that death was real rather than symbolic. They also provide grounds for understanding the descent as involving the realm of the departed, not merely the humiliation of the incarnation. The relationship between this descent and Christ's leading captivity captive in Ephesians 4:8 deserves careful comparison with Scripture concerning paradise and the righteous dead. Yet the Bible student should distinguish what the passages explicitly reveal from further conclusions about every event during that period. The lower parts of the earth are not a convenient expression to erase merely because somebody has difficulty fitting them into his preferred theological arrangement.

The words “the same also that ascended up” further establish the bodily resurrection and continuing humanity of Jesus Christ. Luke 24:39 records the risen Lord declaring, “Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.” He was not a disembodied spirit appearing temporarily to comfort disappointed disciples. He had risen bodily from the dead. First Timothy 2:5 still identifies Him as “the man Christ Jesus,” while Philippians 3:21 promises that believers will receive bodies fashioned like His glorious body. The ascension therefore concerns the exaltation of the crucified and risen Saviour, not the disappearance of His humanity. His resurrection guarantees the future redemption of those belonging to Him. Christianity does not rest upon the memory of a dead religious teacher or the influence of a departed prophet. It rests upon a living Redeemer whose victory over death was bodily, historical, and complete.

“far above all heavens”

The next expression carries the exaltation of Christ beyond ordinary human measurements: “far above all heavens.” Paul does not merely say that Jesus Christ ascended above the mountains, the clouds, or the visible sky. He uses the plural “heavens” and places the ascended Lord far above them all. Second Corinthians 12:2 speaks of a man “caught up to the third heaven,” while Psalm 148:4 addresses “ye heavens of heavens.” The King James Bible therefore provides sufficient grounds for recognizing distinctions among the heavens rather than reducing every occurrence of the word to the same location. Yet Ephesians 4:10 is not primarily a geography lesson. Its emphasis is the incomparable exaltation of Jesus Christ. Hebrews 7:26 declares that our high priest is “made higher than the heavens.” No earthly ruler, religious headquarters, or spiritual principality can claim authority above Him. The highest earthly throne is still beneath the feet of the Lord who ascended far above all heavens.

Ephesians 1:20–23 provides a direct explanation of this exalted position. God raised Christ from the dead, set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, and placed Him “Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion.” These are not empty expressions invented to make a religious ceremony sound impressive. They declare the supremacy of Jesus Christ over every competing authority. Colossians 2:10 calls Him “the head of all principality and power.” The devil may possess influence within this present evil world, and earthly governments may exercise authority within their appointed spheres, but none occupies Christ's position. The Lord's ascension did not simply elevate Him to a somewhat more prestigious religious office. It revealed His supremacy as the victorious Redeemer. Satan has never been promoted to an equal position opposite Jesus Christ, and the universe is not governed by two rival kings struggling to determine who will finally win.

This truth must also be rightly divided from the future earthly kingdom promised in the Scriptures. Christ's present exaltation in heaven does not cancel the promises God made concerning Israel, David's throne, or the coming reign of the Messiah. Luke 1:32–33 declares that the Lord God shall give Jesus Christ “the throne of his father David” and that He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever. Acts 1:11 promises His future return, and Revelation 19 presents His victorious appearing as King of kings and Lord of lords. The ascension is therefore not an excuse to spiritualize away every prophetic promise concerning His future reign. The Church presently belongs to the exalted Christ, while Israel's national promises retain their place in God's prophetic program. The Lord can be exalted far above all heavens today without surrendering one square inch of the earthly kingdom He has promised to establish in His appointed time.

“that he might fill all things”

The final expression explains the far-reaching purpose associated with Christ's exaltation: “that he might fill all things.” This statement must be read in connection with Ephesians 1:22–23, where Christ is identified as Head over all things to the Church, “Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.” The language concerns Christ's supremacy, fullness, and divine operation, not the idea that His glorified physical body has somehow become identical with every object in creation. The Lord who ascended remains a real Person, yet His divine authority and power extend beyond the limitations of earthly location. Colossians 1:17 declares, “And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.” The same Saviour who governs His Church is the eternal Son through whom creation is sustained. Christ does not need to become the rocks, trees, rivers, or stars in order to possess authority over everything He created.

The expression must also be distinguished from pantheism and universal salvation. When Paul says Christ fills all things, he does not declare that every human being is automatically regenerated or that every fallen creature will eventually be saved. Romans 8:9 establishes that the person who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Him. John 3:36 distinguishes the one believing on the Son from the one who does not believe, while Revelation 20:15 describes the final judgment of those not found written in the book of life. Christ's supremacy over creation does not mean that all creation enjoys the saving benefits of His redemption. Neither does His fullness eliminate the distinction between the Creator and what He has made. A king may rule a territory containing loyal subjects and condemned rebels without every inhabitant becoming a member of his household. Authority over all is not the same thing as salvation for all.

The immediate context reveals another important connection between Christ's fullness and His gifts to the Church. Ephesians 4:8 declares that the ascended Lord gave gifts unto

men, and Ephesians 4:11 identifies apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers among those provisions. Verse 12 explains their purpose: “For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” The Lord who fills all things provides what His spiritual body requires for its appointed work. Yet His gifts do not make the recipients independent authorities possessing the right to replace Him. They remain servants accountable to their exalted Head. Spiritual maturity develops as believers grow in the knowledge of Christ and exercise their responsibilities according to His word. The Church does not need another head to complete the work of the ascended Lord. It needs faithful members who recognize that their gifts, ministries, and spiritual strength originate with Jesus Christ.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 4:10 establishes the identity, exaltation, and universal supremacy of Jesus Christ. The One who descended into the lower parts of the earth is the same Lord who rose from the dead and ascended far above all heavens. His descent and ascension belong to the completed redemptive work of the same divine Person, whose bodily resurrection guarantees that death did not retain Him. The plural expression “all heavens” emphasizes His exaltation above every earthly and spiritual authority, while “that he might fill all things” describes the far-reaching fullness and operation of the victorious Christ.

The verse also requires careful doctrinal distinctions. Christ's descent must not be confused with additional suffering necessary to complete the payment for sin, since His sacrifice was sufficient at Calvary. His exaltation does not cancel God's future promises concerning Israel and the Messianic kingdom. His filling of all things does not teach pantheism, universal salvation, or the disappearance of His resurrected humanity. Rather, the exalted Lord remains Head of His Church and supplies the gifts necessary for its spiritual development. The central lesson is that the same Saviour who entered death now reigns far above all heavens, possessing the authority and fullness necessary to accomplish every purpose entrusted to Him.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. The Same Christ Descended And Rose Again

Ephesians 4:9 — “that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?”
Matthew 12:40 — “so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”
Acts 2:31 — “that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption.”
Revelation 1:18 — “I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen;”

2. The Bodily Resurrection And Ascension

Luke 24:39 — “for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.”
Acts 1:11 — “this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.”
1 Timothy 2:5 — “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;”
Philippians 3:21 — “Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body”

3. Christ Exalted Above All Heavens

Ephesians 4:10 — “far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.”
Hebrews 7:26 — “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens;”
2 Corinthians 12:2 — “such an one caught up to the third heaven.”
Psalm 148:4 — “Praise him, ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters that be above the heavens.”

4. His Supreme Authority Over All Powers

Ephesians 1:21 — “Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion”
Colossians 2:10 — “which is the head of all principality and power:”
1 Peter 3:22 — “angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.”
Philippians 2:9 — “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:”

5. The Fullness Of Christ And His Body

Ephesians 1:23 — “Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.”
Colossians 1:17 — “And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.”
Colossians 2:9 — “For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.”
Ephesians 3:19 — “that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.”

6. The Ascended Christ Supplies His Church

Ephesians 4:8 — “When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.”
Ephesians 4:11 — “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;”
Ephesians 4:12 — “For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:”
Ephesians 4:16 — “maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.”

7. The Exalted King Will Return

Acts 1:11 — “shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.”
Luke 1:32 — “and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:”
Revelation 19:16 — “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.”
Romans 11:26 — “There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:”

5. Reflection

Ephesians 4:10 presents Jesus Christ in a manner that ought to put an end to the notion that Christianity merely follows the moral teachings of an ancient religious leader. Paul declares that the One who descended is the same One who ascended far above all heavens. The Lord did not merely leave behind an inspiring memory or establish an institution that must somehow preserve His influence. He actually conquered death, rose bodily, and ascended into glory. This is the foundation of the Christian's confidence, because a dead religious teacher cannot provide the continuing ministry Scripture attributes to Christ. The Christian does not serve a religious founder whose greatest accomplishments are buried in history, but a living Redeemer whose victory extends beyond the grave and whose authority reaches above the heavens.

The identity of the descending and ascending Christ also establishes the seriousness of His redemptive work. His death was genuine, His burial was genuine, and His resurrection was not a symbolic declaration that His teachings would continue influencing future generations. Matthew 12:40 and Acts 2:31 provide important testimony concerning His descent and resurrection, while Luke 24:39 confirms the reality of His risen body. These truths must not be weakened to accommodate religious theories that prefer a purely spiritual resurrection. Neither should the passages concerning His descent become an excuse for inventing additional suffering required to complete the atonement. Jesus Christ declared, “It is finished,” and Hebrews 10:12 establishes the sufficiency of His one sacrifice. The Lord did not need the devil to finish paying for sins after Calvary, and death did not possess authority to prevent His resurrection.

The declaration that Christ ascended “far above all heavens” should also correct the arrogance of earthly religious authority. No bishop, pope, pastor, denominational official, or self-appointed apostle occupies a position comparable to that of Jesus Christ. His headship over the Church comes directly from Almighty God rather than from human recognition. Ephesians 1:22 declares that God “gave him to be the head over all things to the church.” That does not eliminate biblical pastoral leadership or the responsibilities of local assemblies, but it establishes the limits of every earthly minister. Christian leaders

are servants of Christ, not replacements for Christ. The moment a religious authority begins treating his personal decisions as superior to the written word of God, he has forgotten the enormous distance between his earthly position and the throne of the ascended Lord.

The words “that he might fill all things” demand equally careful interpretation. The fullness of Jesus Christ does not mean He has become identical with His creation, nor does it mean every unsaved person automatically possesses redemption. Scripture distinguishes the Creator from the creation and the redeemed from the lost. Christ's divine authority extends over all things, while the saving benefits of His finished work belong to those who receive Him through faith. The believer should therefore reject both the religious philosophy that makes God and creation interchangeable and the sentimental teaching that everyone will ultimately be saved regardless of his relationship with Jesus Christ. The Lord can exercise absolute authority over every creature without every creature possessing the privileges of His redeemed children. Divine supremacy must never be mistaken for universal regeneration.

The connection between Christ's fullness and His gifts to the Church provides tremendous encouragement for faithful Christian service. The ascended Lord has not abandoned His people to accomplish His purposes through natural ability and religious organization alone. Ephesians 4:11–12 explains that He supplied ministries for the perfecting of the saints and the edifying of His body. Those provisions must remain subject to Scripture rather than becoming instruments for personal ambition. A preacher is not spiritually important because he possesses an impressive title, nor does a congregation become mature merely because its organization has grown. Genuine spiritual development requires biblical truth, obedience, and dependence upon the Lord. Christ gave gifts to strengthen His people, not to establish competing religious kingdoms whose leaders behave as though the Head of the Church has permanently vacated His position.

Finally, the ascension of Jesus Christ points forward to His promised return and the completion of God's redemptive purposes. The same Lord who ascended will come again, and His present heavenly position does not cancel the promises concerning Israel or His future earthly kingdom. Meanwhile, believers possess the assurance that their Saviour is alive, exalted, and sufficient for their spiritual needs. His victory should produce humility rather than religious pride, confidence rather than despair, and faithful service rather than spiritual laziness. The Christian who belongs to such a Lord has every reason to take His word seriously and obey His instructions. The One who descended has ascended far above all heavens, and the One who now reigns in glory will accomplish everything He has

promised. The Church needs no greater authority, no more sufficient Saviour, and no substitute for Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 4:11 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 4:11

"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;"

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"And he gave some, apostles"

Paul begins this remarkable list by identifying the source of the ministries provided for the body of Christ. "And he gave" directs our attention back to the ascended Lord Jesus Christ, whose victory and exaltation were established in Ephesians 4:8–10. The gifts under consideration did not originate with a religious committee, a denominational headquarters, or an ambitious collection of men determined to establish their own authority. Christ gave them. Furthermore, Paul does not merely describe spiritual abilities distributed among believers; he identifies people appointed to particular ministries for the benefit of the Church. The first group consists of apostles, whose foundational ministry occupies a distinct place in New Testament history. First Corinthians 12:28 declares, "And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers." Their position in the list reflects their importance in the establishment and instruction of the early Church. The Lord did not give apostles so that men could manufacture a permanent religious aristocracy; He gave them to establish the testimony and doctrine upon which His Church would be built.

The apostolic office must be understood according to the biblical qualifications and authority associated with it. Acts 1:21–22 identifies the qualifications considered when Matthias was chosen to replace Judas, including personal association with the risen Lord's earthly ministry and witness to His resurrection. Paul received his apostleship through a distinct appearance and commission of the risen Jesus Christ, as demonstrated in Acts 9 and explained in Galatians 1:11–12. First Corinthians 9:1 records his question, "have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?" Second Corinthians 12:12 also refers to "the signs of an apostle," connecting apostolic ministry with extraordinary divine confirmation. Ephesians

2:20 identifies apostles and prophets in relation to the Church's foundation, with Jesus Christ Himself as the chief corner stone. A foundation is laid to support the building, not repeatedly installed above every new floor. Therefore, modern claims to possess the same foundational apostolic authority must be examined against the actual qualifications and purposes recorded in Scripture. A man cannot make himself an apostle by printing the title on a business card, any more than he can make himself one of the twelve tribes of Israel by purchasing a genealogical certificate from a religious organization.

“and some, prophets”

The second group consists of prophets, and here the Bible student must distinguish the prophetic ministry exercised during the foundational period of the Church from the general responsibility of believers to proclaim the written word of God. Ephesians 3:5 explains that the mystery concerning Christ and His body “is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.” This places prophets alongside apostles in the reception and communication of revelation concerning God's purposes during the unfolding New Testament period. Acts 11:27 records prophets coming from Jerusalem to Antioch, while Acts 21:10–11 identifies Agabus and records his warning concerning Paul's coming imprisonment. These were not merely men offering interesting religious opinions or guessing about future circumstances. Their ministry belonged to the period in which divine revelation and apostolic testimony were being established. The prophet's responsibility was not to provide an impressive religious performance but to communicate what God had actually revealed.

The presence of prophets in the early Church must not be used to justify every modern claim of private revelation, unquestionable spiritual authority, or prophetic prediction. First Corinthians 14:29 declares, “Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge.” Even in the apostolic period, prophetic utterances were not treated as an excuse for confusion or the abandonment of discernment. First Corinthians 14:37 further establishes Paul's written instructions as “the commandments of the Lord.” With the inspired Scriptures available as the believer's doctrinal standard, no modern speaker possesses permission to introduce contradictory revelations or establish new articles of faith through personal experiences. Second Timothy 3:16–17 identifies Scripture as sufficient to furnish the man of God unto all good works. God may providentially guide His servants and use faithful preaching to expose sin, but that does not automatically establish the speaker as a foundational prophet possessing the authority of those named in Ephesians 4. The Holy Ghost has never needed a modern fortune-teller dressed in Christian vocabulary to correct a Bible that He already inspired.

“and some, evangelists”

The third ministry named is that of evangelists, whose work concerns the proclamation of the gospel and the bringing of lost sinners to Jesus Christ. The word “some” remains important because Paul is identifying a particular ministry rather than declaring that every member of Christ's body performs precisely the same function. Acts 21:8 identifies “Philip the evangelist,” and Acts 8 provides an excellent illustration of his work. Philip preached Christ in Samaria, and later, when directed to the Ethiopian eunuch, Acts 8:35 declares, “Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.” There stands the essential business of an evangelist. He is not appointed to entertain an audience, promote his personality, or substitute emotional excitement for biblical truth. His responsibility is to make Jesus Christ known through the Scriptures and proclaim the gospel by which sinners may be saved. An evangelist who can fill a building but cannot clearly explain how a sinner is justified by faith has mastered the crowd while neglecting his calling.

The ministry of evangelism must also be distinguished from the extraordinary signs associated with the apostolic period. Philip's ministry in Acts 8 included miracles, but that historical record does not establish miracles as the permanent qualification for every evangelist throughout the Church age. Second Timothy 4:5 records Paul's instruction to Timothy: “do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.” Timothy also possessed teaching responsibilities, demonstrating that the work of evangelism is not limited to individuals who occupy a particular public office. Every believer should be prepared to witness concerning Christ, although some are especially equipped for evangelistic ministry. The message must remain the gospel declared in First Corinthians 15:3–4: Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. An evangelist must never replace that message with baptismal regeneration, religious membership, promises of worldly prosperity, or manufactured decisions obtained through pressure. The preacher's responsibility is to present the gospel faithfully; the salvation of the sinner belongs to the Lord, not to the preacher's ability to manipulate a response.

“and some, pastors and teachers”

The final expression identifies “pastors and teachers,” ministries that are closely connected because the spiritual care of believers requires instruction in the word of God. The wording does not authorize us to assume that every teacher must hold the office of pastor, but it establishes that teaching is essential to faithful pastoral ministry. A pastor is not merely an administrator, motivational speaker, professional counselor, or religious entertainer. His responsibility includes feeding, guiding, protecting, and overseeing the flock entrusted to his care. Acts 20:28 commands overseers “to feed the church of God,

which he hath purchased with his own blood." First Peter 5:2 adds, "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof." First Timothy 3:2 identifies being "apt to teach" among the qualifications of a bishop. The connection between shepherding and teaching should therefore be unmistakable. A shepherd who never feeds the sheep has misunderstood his assignment, and a preacher who cannot teach the Bible ought not imagine that a commanding personality will compensate for an empty pulpit.

The responsibility of teachers extends beyond communicating information. Sound instruction must explain the Scriptures accurately, distinguish truth from error, and equip believers to mature in Christ. Second Timothy 2:15 commands believers to study, "rightly dividing the word of truth." Second Timothy 4:2 instructs the preacher to "Preach the word," while Titus 1:9 requires a qualified elder to hold fast the faithful word so that he may exhort and convince those who oppose sound doctrine. These instructions forbid the substitution of denominational traditions, speculative revelations, fashionable psychology, or personal opinions for biblical teaching. They also forbid turning pastoral authority into spiritual tyranny. First Peter 5:3 warns against being "lords over God's heritage," requiring leaders instead to be examples to the flock. The pastor is accountable to the chief Shepherd, and the teacher is accountable for the truth he communicates. The Lord gave pastors and teachers to develop believers who can stand upon Scripture, not to manufacture permanent dependents who cannot think without consulting their favorite religious personality.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 4:11 identifies four categories of ministry provided by the ascended Jesus Christ: apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors and teachers. These are gifts involving people appointed to serve the body of Christ, not merely personal abilities intended to distinguish one believer from another. Apostles and prophets occupied foundational responsibilities associated with the establishment of the Church and the communication of divine revelation. Evangelists proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ, while pastors and teachers provide spiritual care, biblical instruction, correction, and the protection necessary for Christian maturity. The repeated word "some" establishes diversity of responsibility without producing different degrees of salvation or competing authorities within Christ's body.

The purpose of these ministries is explained in Ephesians 4:12: the perfecting of the saints, the work of the ministry, and the edifying of the body of Christ. Their authority derives from Jesus Christ and remains subject to His word. The existence of foundational apostles and prophets does not authorize every modern claim to supernatural office, and the continuation of evangelistic and pastoral ministry does not permit religious leaders to

become substitutes for the Head of the Church. Christ provides ministers to serve His people, communicate His truth, and strengthen His body. The minister is not the foundation, the Saviour, or the final authority; Jesus Christ remains all three where Scripture assigns those responsibilities.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. The Ascended Christ Gives Ministry Gifts

Ephesians 4:8 — “When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.”

Ephesians 4:11 — “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;”

1 Corinthians 12:28 — “And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers”

Colossians 1:18 — “And he is the head of the body, the church”

2. Apostles And The Church's Foundation

Ephesians 2:20 — “And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;”

Acts 1:22 — “must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection.”

1 Corinthians 9:1 — “have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?”

2 Corinthians 12:12 — “Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.”

3. Prophets And Divine Revelation

Ephesians 3:5 — “as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;”

Acts 11:27 — “And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch.”

1 Corinthians 14:3 — “But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort.”

2 Peter 1:21 — “but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”

4. Evangelists And Gospel Proclamation

Acts 21:8 — “Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven”

Acts 8:35 — “Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.”

2 Timothy 4:5 — “do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.”

Romans 10:17 — “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

5. Pastors And The Care Of The Flock

Acts 20:28 — “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers”

1 Peter 5:2 — “Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof”

1 Timothy 3:2 — “A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;”

1 Peter 5:3 — “Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.”

6. Teachers Must Preserve Sound Doctrine

2 Timothy 2:15 — “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

2 Timothy 4:2 — “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.”

Titus 1:9 — “Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught”

2 Timothy 3:16 — “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:”

7. Ministry Exists To Build Christ's Body

Ephesians 4:12 — “For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:”

Ephesians 4:13 — “Till we all come in the unity of the faith”

1 Corinthians 4:2 — “Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.”

Ephesians 4:16 — “maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.”

5. Reflection

Ephesians 4:11 ought to correct one of the most destructive habits in modern Christianity: the tendency to build ministries around the importance of men rather than the authority of

Jesus Christ. Paul begins by declaring that Christ gave these ministries to His Church. That little statement establishes the difference between a divine calling and a religious career built upon personal ambition. Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers were never intended to become independent authorities competing with the Lord who appointed them. Their responsibilities exist for the spiritual benefit of Christ's body. A minister who uses his position to cultivate personal admiration while neglecting biblical truth has forgotten the reason his office exists. The Church does not belong to the preacher, the congregation does not belong to the pastor, and the sheep do not become the property of the shepherd merely because he has learned to speak from behind a pulpit.

The distinction between apostles and prophets and the continuing ministries of the Church also deserves careful examination. Ephesians 2:20 identifies apostles and prophets with the foundation, while Ephesians 3:5 associates them with the revelation of divine truth concerning Christ's body. Those foundational responsibilities cannot simply be reproduced whenever somebody announces that God has appointed him to an extraordinary office. The apostolic period included particular qualifications, direct testimony concerning the risen Christ, and signs confirming the work of those whom the Lord commissioned. Modern religious enthusiasm does not automatically supply those qualifications. Christians should certainly believe that God remains powerful, answers prayer, and directs His servants according to His word, but none of those truths requires accepting every claim of new revelation. The problem with the modern apostolic business is not that God has become weak; it is that men have become unusually bold about claiming authority Scripture never gave them.

The ministry of evangelists reminds us that the Church must never become so occupied with internal programs that it neglects the salvation of lost sinners. Philip preached Jesus Christ, and Paul instructed Timothy to perform the work of an evangelist. That work demands a clear gospel rather than a mixture of religious ceremonies, emotional manipulation, and promises of earthly prosperity. First Corinthians 15:3–4 establishes the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ as the gospel Paul preached. Romans 3:28 declares justification by faith without the deeds of the law. Consequently, evangelistic preaching must direct sinners toward Christ's finished sacrifice rather than toward the supposed saving power of denominational membership or baptismal water. A preacher may attract thousands of people with excitement, entertainment, and carefully manufactured invitations, but if he never clearly explains the gospel, he has merely assembled an audience without fulfilling the purpose of evangelism.

Pastors and teachers carry an equally solemn responsibility because the spiritual health of believers depends upon sound instruction. The Church cannot mature upon motivational

speeches, borrowed illustrations, personal opinions, or endless discussions of religious personalities. God has supplied His written word, and faithful ministers must explain it accurately. Second Timothy 2:15 commands rightly dividing the word of truth, which requires recognizing the distinctions between Israel and the Church, law and grace, salvation and discipleship, and the different circumstances addressed throughout Scripture. A teacher who confuses these matters may sound enthusiastic while leaving his hearers doctrinally bewildered. Yet knowledge must also produce practical obedience, humility, and love. A congregation that knows a preacher's favorite stories better than it knows the Scriptures has been entertained, but it has not necessarily been fed.

The purpose of these ministries also exposes the danger of spiritual dependency upon human personalities. Ephesians 4:12 declares that Christ gave them for the perfecting of the saints, the work of the ministry, and the edifying of His body. That means ministers are supposed to equip believers for useful service rather than convince them that spiritual growth is impossible without constant access to a particular leader. A faithful pastor should encourage Christians to read their Bibles, examine what they hear, pray, grow in discernment, and exercise their responsibilities before God. He should welcome sincere biblical questions rather than treating every inquiry as rebellion against his authority. The servant who possesses genuine confidence in Scripture has no reason to fear honest examination. A preacher who wants everybody dependent upon his personality has confused pastoral care with religious ownership, and that arrangement benefits the shepherd considerably more than the sheep.

Finally, Ephesians 4:11 should leave every believer with a greater appreciation for the wisdom of the ascended Jesus Christ. He has not abandoned His Church or left its spiritual development to human invention. He established its foundation, supplied the gospel, provided ministries for the instruction of His people, and remains the supreme Head of His body. Those entrusted with ministry must therefore approach their responsibilities with humility, diligence, and accountability, remembering that they will answer to the Lord who appointed them. Believers should respect faithful ministers without surrendering their responsibility to examine the Scriptures. Spiritual maturity requires both sound teaching and willing obedience to God's word. Christ gave ministers to build His Church, not to replace its Head. The greatest accomplishment of a faithful servant is not producing people who cannot function without him, but helping believers become so established in Jesus Christ and His word that they can stand faithfully before God.

Ephesians 4:12 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 4:12

"For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:"

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"For the perfecting of the saints"

Paul begins this verse by explaining why Jesus Christ gave the ministry gifts identified in Ephesians 4:11. The word "For" introduces their purpose, and that purpose begins with "the perfecting of the saints." Christ did not give apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers to establish a religious aristocracy in which a handful of important personalities receive perpetual admiration while the rest of the Church remains spiritually helpless. These ministries were given to prepare, establish, instruct, and mature the people of God. The word perfecting must be understood according to its biblical context, not according to the religious fantasy that Christians can reach a condition of absolute sinlessness while still living in mortal flesh. Colossians 1:28 declares Paul's purpose in preaching and teaching: "that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." The objective is spiritual maturity, biblical completeness, and fitness for Christian service. The Lord did not give the Church ministers so believers could remain permanent spiritual infants who must be spoon-fed every time somebody opens a Bible.

The distinction between positional perfection in Christ and practical spiritual maturity is essential. Hebrews 10:14 declares, "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." That statement concerns the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice and the believer's standing through His finished redemptive work. Yet Philippians 3:12 records Paul declaring, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after." There is no contradiction. The believer's acceptance before God rests upon Jesus Christ, while his daily understanding, character, and conduct still require development. Ephesians 4:13–14 confirms that Paul is discussing growth toward maturity, so believers will no longer remain children carried about with every wind of doctrine. A saved man can possess eternal life while still being poorly instructed, spiritually immature, and unnecessarily vulnerable to religious deception. Being complete in Christ does not mean the Christian has completed his education in the word of God.

The instrument of this perfecting is not religious entertainment, personality development, or an endless procession of motivational speeches. Second Timothy 3:16–17 declares that

all Scripture is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness, “That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.” There stands the equipment God has provided. Doctrine tells the believer what is right, reproof exposes what is wrong, correction sets the error straight, and instruction in righteousness teaches him how to continue faithfully. A pastor or teacher who refuses these responsibilities has abandoned the very purpose for which Christ supplied ministry. The believer must also receive correction with humility rather than imagining that every disagreement with his personal opinions constitutes persecution. A preacher who spends forty minutes entertaining a congregation and never teaches the Book may have perfected his presentation, but he has not necessarily perfected the saints.

“for the work of the ministry”

The second expression establishes what spiritually equipped believers are supposed to do: “for the work of the ministry.” Notice that Paul says work. Ministry is not an honorary title, a prestigious religious occupation, or a comfortable arrangement through which ambitious men obtain influence over other Christians. It involves labor, responsibility, sacrifice, faithfulness, and service. The previous verse identifies particular ministers whom Christ gave to His Church, while this verse explains that their ministry contributes to the preparation of the saints for useful service. First Peter 4:10 declares, “As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” The responsibility to serve is not confined to the man occupying the pulpit. Christ's body contains many members, and each member possesses responsibilities appropriate to his place. The minister who does all the work while his congregation does nothing has not necessarily built a strong church; he may simply have established a religious audience.

The work of the ministry must also be distinguished from the works of the law as a supposed means of obtaining salvation. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes that sinners are saved by grace through faith and not of works, while Ephesians 2:10 declares that believers are created in Christ Jesus unto good works. That order must remain intact. A person does not become justified because he teaches a Sunday school class, witnesses to his neighbor, helps a struggling family, or devotes his life to missionary service. Those activities belong to Christian responsibility after salvation, not to the purchase price of redemption. First Corinthians 15:10 provides the proper balance when Paul declares, “But by the grace of God I am what I am,” and then acknowledges his abundant labor through God's grace. Genuine ministry does not contradict salvation by grace; it demonstrates what grace should produce in the life of the redeemed. The cross saves the sinner without his works, but the grace that saves him does not appoint him to a lifetime of spiritual idleness.

Ministry also extends beyond the activities that attract public recognition. Acts 6:2–4 distinguishes the practical responsibilities of serving tables from the apostles' commitment to prayer and the ministry of the word. Both kinds of service mattered, although different people carried different responsibilities. Romans 12:6–8 likewise identifies diverse gifts and duties, including ministry, teaching, exhortation, giving, ruling, and showing mercy. The man who teaches Scripture faithfully should not despise the believer who quietly serves others, and the believer engaged in practical assistance should not imagine that sound doctrine is unnecessary. Every activity must be governed by biblical truth, proper accountability, and genuine concern for others. Christian service becomes dangerous when people excuse disorder, pride, or careless conduct by claiming they have a special calling. God never required every member of His body to perform the same work, but He certainly did not equip His people so they could spend their lives competing over whose work deserves the most applause.

“for the edifying of the body of Christ”

The third expression identifies the intended result of proper spiritual ministry: “for the edifying of the body of Christ.” The word edifying conveys the idea of building up, strengthening, and developing what already belongs to the Lord. Paul is not discussing the construction of an impressive religious building or the expansion of a denominational property portfolio. He is discussing the spiritual development of Christ's redeemed people. First Corinthians 12:27 declares, “Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.” Ephesians 4:16 further describes the whole body working together and making increase “unto the edifying of itself in love.” The Church is a spiritual body under the headship of Jesus Christ, and its members are meant to grow in biblical understanding, practical obedience, and mutual care. A congregation may increase its attendance, expand its facilities, and acquire impressive financial resources while remaining dangerously immature. A larger building does not automatically produce a stronger body, any more than purchasing a larger uniform makes the man wearing it physically fit.

Edification requires sound doctrine because spiritual growth cannot be established upon religious falsehood. Ephesians 4:14 warns against believers remaining children, “tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine.” The following verse establishes the proper balance: “But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.” Truth must never be surrendered merely to preserve the appearance of unity, but neither should biblical correction become an excuse for cruelty, arrogance, or unnecessary personal attacks. The purpose of teaching is to strengthen believers in Christ, not to demonstrate how effectively a preacher can humiliate those who know less than he does. Second Timothy 2:15 commands rightly dividing the word of truth, making the

distinction between Israel and the Church, law and grace, salvation and discipleship essential to sound instruction. A teacher who mixes God's different instructions into a doctrinal stew and then calls the resulting confusion unity has not edified the Church; he has merely served confusion in a respectable bowl.

The practical application of edification reaches every member of Christ's body. First Thessalonians 5:11 commands, “Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.” That responsibility includes encouraging the discouraged, correcting the wandering, helping the weak, and strengthening fellow believers through Scripture and faithful example. Yet edification must not become a respectable name for flattering people, concealing serious error, or protecting influential individuals from accountability. Sometimes a brother needs encouragement, and sometimes he needs correction. Both must be administered according to truth and love. The final objective is not dependence upon a particular ministry personality but increasing maturity under the authority of Jesus Christ. The Church should become better established in Scripture, more capable of serving faithfully, and less vulnerable to manipulation as these ministries accomplish their purpose. The proper measure of a ministry is not how many people have become impressed with the minister, but how many have been strengthened to walk faithfully with Christ.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 4:12 establishes the threefold purpose of the ministry gifts Christ provided in Ephesians 4:11: the perfecting of the saints, the work of the ministry, and the edifying of the body of Christ. These purposes are closely connected. Believers must be instructed and matured through Scripture so they can faithfully fulfill their responsibilities, and their service should contribute to the spiritual growth of Christ's body. The ministries established by the ascended Lord therefore exist to produce spiritually equipped Christians rather than permanent dependence upon religious personalities. Perfecting concerns growth and preparation, not the attainment of sinless perfection through human effort.

The verse also distinguishes salvation from service, spiritual gifts from spiritual maturity, and genuine edification from merely increasing the size of a religious organization. Christian service follows salvation by grace through faith; it does not purchase salvation. Sound teaching must rightly divide Scripture and preserve doctrinal truth while cultivating humility, love, and practical obedience. The central lesson is that Christ gives ministers to prepare His people for faithful service, so the entire body may grow stronger under the authority of its one Head, Jesus Christ.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. Christ Provides Ministers For His Church

Ephesians 4:7 — “But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.”

Ephesians 4:11 — “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;”

1 Corinthians 12:28 — “And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers”

Colossians 1:18 — “And he is the head of the body, the church”

2. The Perfecting And Maturing Of The Saints

2 Timothy 3:17 — “That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.”

Colossians 1:28 — “that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:”

Hebrews 13:21 — “Make you perfect in every good work to do his will”

Ephesians 4:13 — “unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:”

3. Sound Doctrine Equips Believers

2 Timothy 4:2 — “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season”

2 Timothy 2:15 — “rightly dividing the word of truth.”

Titus 1:9 — “Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught”

Ephesians 4:14 — “tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine”

4. Salvation And Christian Work Distinguished

Ephesians 2:8 — “For by grace are ye saved through faith”

Ephesians 2:10 — “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works”

Titus 3:5 — “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us”

1 Corinthians 15:10 — “But by the grace of God I am what I am”

5. Every Member Has A Responsibility

1 Peter 4:10 — “As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another”

Romans 12:4 — “For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office:”

1 Corinthians 12:18 — “But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.”

Romans 12:6 — “Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us”

6. The Church Must Be Edified

1 Corinthians 14:26 — “Let all things be done unto edifying.”

1 Thessalonians 5:11 — “Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.”

Ephesians 4:16 — “maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.”

Romans 14:19 — “things wherewith one may edify another.”

7. Spiritual Growth Requires Truth And Love

Ephesians 4:15 — “But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:”

Acts 20:28 — “to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.”

1 Corinthians 12:27 — “Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.”

Ephesians 4:3 — “Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

5. Reflection

Ephesians 4:12 confronts a serious problem that has weakened countless congregations: the tendency to measure successful ministry by everything except the spiritual maturity of the people being ministered to. A church may possess beautiful buildings, impressive attendance figures, professional musicians, and an extensive calendar of activities while remaining doctrinally shallow. None of those outward accomplishments necessarily demonstrates that the saints are being perfected, equipped for ministry, or strengthened in Christ. Paul identifies three objectives that should govern the work of those whom the Lord has entrusted with spiritual leadership. The Church exists under the headship of Jesus Christ, not under the authority of human business models. A congregation that can organize a hundred activities but cannot explain salvation by grace through faith has

developed organizational skill without necessarily developing biblical maturity. The Lord's standard is considerably more serious than religious popularity.

The perfecting of the saints should also correct the dangerous notion that spiritual maturity means achieving absolute sinlessness while living in the flesh. The apostle Paul himself acknowledged that he had not already attained, yet he continued pressing toward the mark. Christian maturity involves growing in biblical knowledge, recognizing error, exercising discernment, and increasingly submitting one's conduct to the word of God. It does not mean that the believer becomes incapable of sin or no longer needs correction. The saved person possesses a complete standing in Jesus Christ while continuing to struggle against the flesh and develop in practical holiness. That distinction protects both the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice and the seriousness of Christian responsibility. The mature Christian is not the man who announces that he has become perfect, but the man who has learned enough Scripture to recognize his weaknesses and submit them to the Lord.

The ministry of the word must remain central because the saints cannot be properly equipped through religious entertainment alone. Scripture provides doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness, and those responsibilities must not be abandoned merely because biblical teaching sometimes makes people uncomfortable. A preacher who refuses to address error because he fears losing popularity has placed public approval above his calling. Likewise, a teacher who constantly manufactures new interpretations without respecting biblical context may produce excitement while leaving believers spiritually confused. Second Timothy 2:15 commands rightly dividing the word of truth, requiring serious attention to the distinctions God has revealed throughout Scripture. The believer needs teaching that can withstand examination rather than theatrical performances designed to produce applause. The pulpit was never intended to become a stage upon which the preacher demonstrates his personality while the Bible waits patiently for permission to speak.

The work of the ministry also places responsibility upon every believer, not merely those occupying recognized positions of leadership. Christ's body contains different members with different gifts, yet each has opportunities to contribute according to the grace and ability God provides. Some preach, some teach, some encourage, and others render practical assistance that enables fellow believers to continue faithfully. These works do not purchase salvation, because redemption has already been accomplished through the finished sacrifice of Jesus Christ. They belong to the Christian's response to divine grace and should be performed with humility rather than a desire for recognition. No believer should despise an ordinary responsibility merely because it does not attract public

attention. The Christian who faithfully serves another person may accomplish more eternal good than the religious celebrity who has spent his entire ministry convincing people how important he is.

The edifying of Christ's body requires the proper relationship between sound doctrine and genuine Christian charity. Truth without love can become a weapon wielded by pride, while love divorced from truth eventually becomes an excuse for tolerating false teaching. Ephesians 4:15 commands believers to speak the truth in love because genuine spiritual development requires both. A faithful pastor must sometimes correct error, confront sin, and warn against dangerous doctrines, but his purpose should be restoration and maturity rather than humiliation. Likewise, believers should be willing to receive biblical correction instead of interpreting every necessary rebuke as personal hostility. The Church cannot grow stronger by avoiding truth, nor can it become healthier through bitterness and unnecessary division. A man who refuses to correct error is not protecting the sheep, and a man who enjoys injuring the sheep has forgotten that he was appointed to feed them.

Finally, Ephesians 4:12 establishes a standard by which every ministry should examine its priorities. Are believers becoming better acquainted with Scripture, more discerning concerning false doctrine, more faithful in personal conduct, and more willing to serve one another? Are pastors equipping Christians to stand upon God's word, or are they creating spiritual dependence upon their own personalities? Are ministries strengthening the body of Christ, or merely expanding human organizations that exist to preserve their own influence? These questions concern the purposes Paul actually identifies rather than the standards fashionable religion prefers. The Lord who supplied the ministry gifts remains the Head of His Church and will hold His servants accountable for their stewardship. Christ gave ministers to perfect the saints, prepare them for service, and build up His body. When those purposes are neglected, the solution is not another religious attraction but a return to the Scriptures, faithful ministry, and obedience to Jesus Christ.

When Prophets Spoke Before Scripture Was Complete

Key Passage: Ephesians 4:11 (KJV)

“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;”

There was a time in the history of the New Testament Church when God was still revealing truths that had not yet been committed to the completed body of New Testament

Scripture. The apostles were preaching, churches were being established, Gentiles were being brought into the body of Christ, and the mysteries entrusted particularly to the apostle Paul were being made known. During that foundational period, the Lord supplied prophets as well as apostles, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. These were not religious entertainers pretending to possess special information from heaven, nor were they ambitious personalities inventing impressive titles to place before their names. They occupied a genuine position in God's developing work among the early churches. Ephesians 4:11 identifies these ministers as gifts given by the ascended Jesus Christ, while Ephesians 3:5 explains that certain truths concerning the mystery of Christ were "now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit." That is a very different arrangement from some modern fellow claiming that God spoke to him privately last Tuesday and therefore everybody must accept his instructions without question. When God gave prophets to the early Church, He was providing revelation according to His divine purpose, not establishing a permanent marketplace where religious personalities could advertise conversations with heaven.

The confusion surrounding this subject comes largely from refusing to rightly divide the word of truth. Some Christians read about prophets in Acts and immediately assume that every modern religious leader who claims prophetic authority must possess the same divine commission. Others become so determined to expose counterfeit prophecy that they fail to recognize why genuine prophets were necessary during the apostolic period. Both mistakes begin with ignoring the historical setting of Scripture. The Old Testament prophets ministered primarily within God's dealings with Israel and the nations, proclaiming His judgments, promises, and prophetic purposes. The New Testament prophets mentioned in Ephesians 4 belonged to the foundational development of the Church, alongside the apostles through whom God revealed truths concerning the body of Christ. The written Old Testament Scriptures already existed, but the New Testament writings had not yet all been given, circulated, and received among the churches. Paul could therefore describe revelation being communicated through living apostles and prophets while the Lord's purposes for the Church were being established. The Bible student who refuses to recognize that historical development will spend his time either denying what God once did or demanding that God continue doing what belonged to the foundation.

The issue is not whether Almighty God still possesses the power to speak, direct, correct, or intervene in the affairs of His people. Nobody who believes the Scriptures should imagine that the Lord has become powerless because the apostolic generation has passed away. The issue is whether modern individuals possess the same authority to deliver new divine revelation that belonged to the apostles and prophets appointed during the

establishment of the Church. Second Timothy 3:16–17 declares, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.” That is an astonishing declaration concerning the sufficiency of the written word. The Scriptures furnish the believer for the work God requires, establish doctrine, expose error, and provide correction. Consequently, the Christian does not need to spend his life chasing private messages from religious personalities who claim access to information unavailable in the Bible. God has given His people a Book that can be read, studied, compared, believed, and obeyed. The Christian who neglects what God has already written while desperately searching for something God supposedly whispered to somebody else has mistaken spiritual curiosity for spiritual maturity.

1. The Prophets Christ Gave Were Not Self-Appointed

Ephesians 4:11 begins with the words “And he gave,” and those three words settle the question of where legitimate ministry authority originates. The giver is Jesus Christ, whose ascension and victory are described in Ephesians 4:8–10. Paul is not explaining how religious organizations may manufacture offices whenever they require another level of authority. He is identifying gifts supplied by the ascended Lord for the strengthening of His body. The repeated expression “some” also matters because Christ did not appoint every believer to the same ministry. Some were apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers. Their responsibilities differed, but their divine source was the same. First Corinthians 12:28 confirms, “And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers.” Notice that God did the setting. The offices were not invented by congregational excitement or obtained through personal ambition. A man does not become a prophet because he announces that he possesses prophetic authority, any more than announcing himself king establishes a throne over which God has appointed him to reign.

The prophets of the early Church must be distinguished from believers who simply possess a strong desire to preach. A faithful Christian may proclaim biblical prophecy, explain the coming of Jesus Christ, and warn others concerning the judgment revealed in Scripture without occupying the foundational office of a New Testament prophet. The difference is between communicating revelation already given and receiving revelation that God is then making known. Ephesians 3:5 specifically identifies truths “revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.” Those words concern divine revelation, not merely unusually effective public speaking. First Corinthians 14:30 likewise describes revelation being made to another individual present in a gathering, establishing that prophetic ministry in that context involved something beyond ordinary exposition of previously recorded Scripture.

The prophets were accountable for faithfully communicating what God revealed, and the churches were responsible to exercise discernment concerning their ministry. Preaching what the Bible says does not require a man to claim the office of prophet, and claiming the office of prophet does not make his preaching biblical.

This distinction becomes important whenever religious titles are used to secure unquestioning obedience. A modern teacher may possess genuine ability, experience, and usefulness in communicating Scripture without having received the authority of an apostle or foundational prophet. His teaching should be examined according to the written word rather than accepted because he has attached an impressive title to his ministry. First Corinthians 4:6 warns against thinking of men above that which is written, while Second Timothy 2:15 commands the workman to study and rightly divide the word of truth. Those instructions place the believer's confidence in divine revelation rather than human reputation. Christ supplied ministers to serve His people, not to build an untouchable class of religious officials whose personal statements outrank Scripture. The genuine prophet's authority rested upon the Lord who appointed him and the truth God revealed through him. When a religious personality becomes more concerned with defending his title than proving his doctrine, the title has already begun doing work that should belong to the Bible.

2. The Foundation Was Laid Before The Building Was Completed

Ephesians 2:20 provides one of the clearest explanations of the place occupied by apostles and prophets: “And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.” Paul describes the Church as a spiritual building, with Jesus Christ occupying the central position upon which the whole structure depends. The apostles and prophets are associated with the foundation because their ministries belonged to the establishment of that building. This is not an incidental illustration. The same apostle who identifies the prophets in Ephesians 4:11 has already explained their foundational relationship to the Church in chapter 2. A foundation is not the entire building, but it supports what is subsequently constructed upon it. Once that foundation has served its appointed purpose, the builder proceeds with the structure rather than continually pretending that the foundation has never been established. The modern obsession with producing new foundational apostles and prophets is rather like a construction crew insisting that a completed building must have its concrete foundation poured again every time somebody wishes to add another room.

The distinction also guards the unique position of Jesus Christ. The apostles and prophets did not create the saving foundation by their own accomplishments, nor did they become additional saviours standing alongside the Lord. First Corinthians 3:11 declares, “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” Ephesians 2:20

identifies Him as the chief corner stone, while the apostles and prophets supplied the foundational witness and revelation through which His truth was made known. Their authority was therefore derived and dependent, never independent or supreme. The Church rests upon Jesus Christ and the revelation God has given concerning Him. This also explains why the doctrinal teachings committed to the New Testament carry authority that cannot be overturned by the private opinions of later religious leaders. The apostles were not merely influential organizers whose ideas happened to become popular. They were appointed witnesses and servants through whom the Lord established His truth. The Church does not possess the right to replace its Cornerstone, rewrite its foundation, or announce that a modern prophet has discovered a superior arrangement to the one Jesus Christ already established.

Ephesians 3:3–6 further explains the special revelation associated with this foundational period. Paul declares that the mystery was made known to him by revelation, and that Gentiles should be "fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel." These truths concern the present spiritual body of Christ and must be distinguished from God's national promises concerning Israel. The Old Testament prophets had revealed tremendous truths about Israel, the Messiah, the nations, and the coming kingdom, but Paul explains that the mystery of the body of Christ had not been made known in previous ages as it was now revealed. The New Testament prophets therefore belonged to a period when God was establishing the Church through the revelation of truths particularly associated with the present dispensation of grace. This does not mean that the Old Testament had become useless or that Israel's promises were cancelled. It means God was revealing additional truth in its appointed time. Rightly dividing the Scriptures does not require pretending God told Abraham everything He later revealed to Paul, nor does it permit turning the Church into Israel simply because both appear in the same Bible.

3. When The Churches Needed Revelation Before The New Testament Was Complete

The historical setting of the book of Acts becomes essential when examining the work of New Testament prophets. The early churches did not possess the completed collection of Matthew through Revelation in the form Christians possess today. They had the Old Testament Scriptures, the testimony of the apostles, the preaching of Jesus Christ, and the revelation God was providing as His purposes unfolded. Various New Testament writings were given and circulated during this period, but the entire New Testament had not yet been completed. Consequently, the Lord supplied particular ministers through whom He communicated truth to His people. First Corinthians 14:26 describes a gathering in which one had a psalm, another a doctrine, another a tongue, another a revelation, and another

an interpretation. Paul concludes, “Let all things be done unto edifying.” That description belongs to the period in which extraordinary gifts were operating among the churches. It is not permission to reproduce every ancient practice without regard to its historical setting. God was providing His people with revelation during a period of unfolding revelation, not inviting every future congregation to manufacture revelations whenever the sermon schedule became uninteresting.

Acts 13:1–2 provides another important glimpse into the ministries operating at Antioch. The passage identifies prophets and teachers within the congregation, including Barnabas, Simeon, Lucius, Manaen, and Saul. While they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Ghost directed that Barnabas and Saul be separated for the work to which He had called them. That event belongs to the apostolic history through which God advanced the gospel among the Gentiles. It must be examined according to the revelation and spiritual gifts operating during that period, not automatically converted into a rule that every modern missionary must receive an audible heavenly announcement before beginning his work. The account demonstrates that the Holy Ghost directed the early Church according to God's purpose. It does not establish the personal authority of every individual who announces that God has privately revealed his future ministry. A narrative describing what God did during the apostolic period is not a blank authorization for religious personalities to claim the same experience whenever their personal ambitions require divine endorsement.

Acts 15:32 identifies Judas and Silas as prophets and records that they exhorted the brethren and confirmed them with many words. Their ministry strengthened believers during a crucial period when the relationship between Gentile converts and the demands associated with the law of Moses was being addressed. The Jerusalem council had considered the controversy, and the churches needed clear instruction rather than confusion introduced by men seeking to impose circumcision and law-keeping upon Gentile believers. The prophets participated in strengthening the brethren while apostolic teaching established the proper doctrinal direction. Notice also that genuine prophecy was not restricted to announcing future catastrophes. It could involve the communication of revealed truth for the encouragement and establishment of God's people. Yet the presence of exhortation does not mean every individual who exhorts somebody today occupies the foundational prophetic office. A Christian may preach the prophecies of Scripture without receiving new prophecy, just as a man may deliver a king's written message without becoming the king who issued it.

4. Agabus And The Difference Between Prophecy And Religious Guesswork

Agabus provides one of the clearest biblical examples of a genuine New Testament prophet. Acts 11:27 records prophets coming from Jerusalem to Antioch, and verse 28 identifies Agabus as one who “signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world.” The passage further records that the predicted famine came to pass during the days of Claudius Caesar. This was not merely a man announcing that difficult times might eventually arrive somewhere in the world. He communicated a specific warning identified by Scripture as coming through the Spirit. The account also shows that the prophecy served a practical purpose. The disciples determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judaea, and the aid was delivered through Barnabas and Saul. The revelation concerned a real need and encouraged practical Christian charity. A genuine prophetic warning in Scripture could result in hungry believers receiving assistance, which is considerably more useful than a modern prediction designed primarily to make its author appear spiritually remarkable.

Agabus appears again in Acts 21:10–11, where he came from Judaea to Caesarea and used Paul's girdle to demonstrate the coming danger awaiting the apostle in Jerusalem. His announcement began, “Thus saith the Holy Ghost,” and foretold Paul's binding and delivery into Gentile hands. The subsequent account records Paul's arrest and binding by Roman soldiers after hostile Jews seized him in Jerusalem. The precise correspondence between the prophetic wording and the actions recorded during the arrest deserves careful examination rather than careless oversimplification. Nevertheless, the essential warning concerned the danger and captivity Paul would encounter, and the account presents Agabus as a prophet operating within the apostolic period. This was not a vague emotional impression presented as an unquestionable heavenly message. It was a concrete warning given in a particular historical setting. The people hearing it urged Paul not to go to Jerusalem, but Paul remained determined to fulfill his calling despite the suffering awaiting him. The purpose of biblical prophecy was never to replace obedience with fear; even a genuine warning had to be considered within the larger responsibility of serving the Lord faithfully.

Acts 21:9 also records that Philip the evangelist had four daughters “which did prophesy.” That statement must be accepted as written rather than ignored because it creates difficulties for somebody's preferred theological arrangement. Women exercised prophetic gifts during the apostolic period, and Scripture does not conceal the fact. Yet the passage does not identify Philip's daughters as bishops, pastors, or elders exercising authority over a local congregation. First Timothy 2:12 and the qualifications for bishops in First Timothy 3 address different questions concerning teaching authority and church oversight. Rightly dividing the relevant passages requires recognizing what each one actually states. The fact that certain women prophesied during the apostolic period does not automatically

establish that every modern claim to prophecy is genuine, nor does it erase the distinctions Scripture makes concerning church leadership. A careful Bible student does not need to deny what God did through Philip's daughters, and he certainly does not need to rewrite the qualifications for a bishop to explain it.

5. When God Commanded The Prophets To Be Examined

One of the most revealing facts about New Testament prophecy is that the early churches were instructed to exercise discernment even when prophetic gifts were genuinely operating. First Corinthians 14:29 declares, “Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge.” Notice that Paul did not instruct the congregation to abandon judgment whenever someone claimed divine revelation. He did not announce that questioning a prophetic message constituted rebellion against the Holy Ghost. Instead, he established order, accountability, and examination. The very existence of this instruction exposes the absurdity of religious systems in which self-proclaimed prophets are treated as beyond correction. First Corinthians 14:33 declares, “For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.” Divine revelation was never intended to become an excuse for disorderly meetings, contradictory messages, or spiritual intimidation. When a man claims that his message came from God and then becomes furious because somebody wants to examine it, his temper has revealed something his title was trying to conceal.

The apostle Paul went even further in First Corinthians 14:37: “If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.” There stands apostolic authority confronting every claim of spiritual superiority. A genuine prophet was not authorized to contradict what God had revealed through the apostle. The written instruction established the standard, and anyone claiming spiritual insight was responsible to recognize it. First Thessalonians 5:20–21 likewise commands, “Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.” These instructions belong to the historical period when prophetic gifts operated, but the principle of testing claims remains indispensable. The believer must never replace biblical discernment with automatic acceptance merely because a speaker possesses an emotional delivery, a large congregation, or an impressive religious title. God never required Christians to disconnect their judgment from Scripture in order to demonstrate that they possessed faith.

The Bereans provide a practical example of the proper attitude toward revealed truth. Acts 17:11 declares that they received the word with all readiness of mind and searched the Scriptures daily to determine whether those things were so. They were not condemned for examining the preaching they heard; they were commended for it. If the apostle Paul's

preaching could be examined against Scripture, there is certainly no reason to place a modern religious personality beyond the same scrutiny. Deuteronomy 18:21–22 also establishes the seriousness of falsely claiming divine authority in the context of God's covenant dealings with Israel. That passage should not be carelessly converted into a modern civil procedure, but it demonstrates that claiming to speak for God was never a harmless matter. A person who assigns his own imagination to the Holy Ghost has done more than offer a mistaken opinion. A false teacher may be wrong about Scripture, but the man who falsely declares, “God told me,” has attempted to make Almighty God responsible for his own words.

6. When The Written Word Supplied The Complete Standard

The completion of the New Testament Scriptures fundamentally changed the circumstances in which the Church received and preserved divine revelation. During the apostolic period, God communicated through men appointed to establish the foundation of His Church, and that revelation was progressively committed to inspired writings. Peter recognized the authority of Paul's epistles in Second Peter 3:15–16, associating them with “the other scriptures.” Paul instructed that his letters be read among the churches, as Colossians 4:16 demonstrates, and commanded that his written instructions be recognized as the commandments of the Lord. The Church was therefore not left dependent upon an endless succession of prophets who would continually add new doctrines throughout history. The apostolic witness was committed to Scripture, and the believer now possesses that written revelation as the sufficient authority for Christian faith and practice. The Lord did not establish His Church upon inspired revelation so that later generations could spend their lives searching for somebody willing to improve upon what He had already given.

Second Timothy 3:16–17 provides the governing principle: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God,” and it furnishes the man of God unto all good works. Second Peter 1:19 likewise declares, “We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed.” Peter directs attention toward the certainty of God's prophetic word, not toward the necessity of obtaining private experiences comparable to his own eyewitness encounter with Christ's glory. Jude 1:3 commands believers to contend for “the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” Taken together with the foundational role of apostles and prophets in Ephesians 2:20, these passages provide the doctrinal basis for recognizing the completed Scriptures as the Church's sufficient standard of divine revelation. First Corinthians 13:8 also declares that prophecies would fail and tongues would cease, although the identification of “that which is perfect” in verse 10 requires interpretation and should not be treated as an explicit statement naming a particular date for the completion

of the New Testament. The broader scriptural argument is sufficient without forcing one passage to say more than it actually says. The authority of the completed Bible does not need to be defended through careless interpretations that contradict the very principle of careful Bible study.

The final warning in Revelation 22:18–19 also deserves serious attention because it concerns adding to or taking away from the words of the prophecy of that book. Its immediate wording addresses the book of Revelation, and it should not be misquoted as though John explicitly named a modern table of contents in those verses. Nevertheless, the warning demonstrates the gravity of tampering with divine revelation. Galatians 1:8 provides an equally serious warning against preaching another gospel, even when the supposed messenger claims extraordinary spiritual authority. The completed New Testament leaves Christians with the revelation necessary to know the gospel, understand their position in Christ, recognize false doctrine, and fulfill their responsibilities before God. There is no missing installment of Paul's gospel waiting to be delivered by a modern prophet who requires financial support before announcing its contents. The same God who gave the Scriptures has not instructed His people to regard those Scriptures as an unfinished manuscript awaiting corrections from religious personalities who enjoy hearing themselves speak.

7. When Modern Revelation Tries To Outrank The Bible

One of the most dangerous features of modern prophetic movements is the ease with which personal opinion becomes disguised as divine authority. A man develops an impression, experiences a vivid dream, feels strongly about a particular decision, or becomes convinced that something extraordinary is about to happen. Rather than acknowledging that he may be mistaken, he announces that God has spoken directly to him. The moment he makes that claim, an ordinary human judgment has been promoted into an alleged command from heaven. Others may then feel pressured to obey because disagreement has been presented as resistance to Almighty God. This practice becomes especially destructive when religious leaders claim prophetic authority over marriages, financial decisions, employment, medical treatment, or private family affairs. Scripture certainly teaches that God directs His people, answers prayer, and governs circumstances according to His purposes. But those truths do not turn every personal impression into new divine revelation. Proverbs 14:12 warns, “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.” A strong feeling may reveal that a person is deeply convinced, but conviction is not inspiration, and confidence is not proof that the Holy Ghost has spoken.

The modern Christian should therefore distinguish God's providential guidance from the foundational prophetic ministry described in Ephesians 4:11. A believer may pray for wisdom concerning a decision, study applicable Scripture, seek appropriate counsel, and recognize circumstances through which the Lord has directed his steps. James 1:5 encourages believers to ask God for wisdom, while Proverbs 3:5–6 commands trust in the Lord rather than dependence upon personal understanding. None of those instructions requires claiming that every conclusion has arrived through direct supernatural revelation. A Christian may sincerely believe that the Lord has opened an opportunity while remaining humble enough to acknowledge that his judgment concerning the circumstances could be mistaken. That humility is especially important when advising other people. It is one thing to say that Scripture establishes a responsibility; it is another to claim that God personally revealed what somebody else must do when no such command appears in His word. The mature believer does not need to borrow the authority of a prophet to make a responsible decision under the guidance of Scripture.

There is also a serious distinction between proclaiming biblical prophecy and claiming to receive new prophecies. A Christian may preach the pretribulational catching away of the Church, the future tribulation, the return of Jesus Christ, Israel's restoration, and the literal millennial reign of the Messiah because those subjects are addressed in Scripture. He is communicating prophetic revelation already given, not adding new revelation of his own. First Thessalonians 4:16–17, Revelation 19:11–16, and Revelation 20:1–6 provide material that should be studied and rightly divided according to the people and events involved. Yet the preacher must not invent dates, claim knowledge of unrevealed details, or declare that a personal dream has supplied information omitted from the Bible. The same principle governs ordinary doctrinal teaching. The preacher's authority rests upon his faithful handling of Scripture, not upon alleged private access to the councils of heaven. A man who faithfully explains what God has revealed is performing useful Christian service; a man who continually announces what God supposedly forgot to reveal has mistaken his imagination for a ministry.

Conclusion

The New Testament prophets occupied a genuine and important position during the foundational establishment of the Church. Their ministry cannot be dismissed merely because modern religious movements have produced counterfeit claims of prophetic authority. The book of Acts records real prophets, real revelations, and real circumstances in which the Holy Ghost communicated truth through appointed servants. Agabus warned concerning famine and Paul's coming imprisonment, Judas and Silas strengthened the brethren, and the churches received instruction concerning the proper exercise and

examination of prophetic gifts. Ephesians 3:5 places apostles and prophets together in the revelation of truths associated with the mystery of Christ, while Ephesians 2:20 identifies their foundational relationship to the Church. These passages establish that their ministry served a particular purpose during the development of New Testament revelation. The Christian should therefore neither deny the historical reality of those gifts nor assume that every modern claim represents their continuation. God's past provision must be believed according to Scripture, but historical truth becomes doctrinal confusion when men refuse to recognize the purpose and setting in which God gave it.

The completion of the New Testament Scriptures provides believers with a tremendous advantage and an equally serious responsibility. Christians today do not need to travel from one self-appointed prophet to another in search of instructions that have supposedly been withheld from the Bible. They possess the written revelation through which God establishes doctrine, explains salvation, corrects error, and furnishes His servants unto all good works. That does not mean every believer automatically understands every passage or that spiritual growth requires no teachers. Christ continues to use faithful preaching, biblical instruction, and the ministries He has provided to strengthen His people. But those ministries must remain subject to Scripture rather than becoming independent sources of additional divine authority. The believer should welcome sound teaching, receive correction humbly, and examine extraordinary claims carefully. He should also reject the notion that spiritual maturity requires a private revelation unknown to ordinary Christians. The Church does not become spiritually impoverished because it possesses the completed Scriptures instead of an endless supply of new prophets. It becomes impoverished when it neglects the Scriptures while chasing the excitement of alleged revelation.

Finally, Ephesians 4:11 directs our attention to the wisdom of the ascended Jesus Christ, who supplied His Church with what it required during its establishment and continues to govern His redeemed body through His revealed truth. The prophets did not exist to establish competing spiritual kingdoms, cultivate personal celebrity, or demand obedience to their own imaginations. Their ministry belonged to the unfolding revelation of God's purpose in Christ. Now the Christian's responsibility is to study the Scriptures, rightly divide the word of truth, preserve the gospel of grace, and faithfully obey what the Lord has commanded. There is no need to despise sincere prayer, deny God's providential guidance, or pretend that the Holy Ghost has ceased working in believers. But there is every reason to reject claims that place private messages above the Bible or assign divine authority to words God has not spoken. Second Timothy 2:15 still commands the workman to study, and Second Timothy 3:17 still declares that Scripture furnishes the man of God unto all good works. When prophets spoke before the New Testament was complete, God was

establishing the foundation of His Church. Now that His written revelation has been supplied, the faithful Christian does not need another foundation, another gospel, or another voice claiming authority above the Book. The greatest need of the Church is not for more men announcing, “God told me,” but for more believers who will open the Scriptures and obey what God has already said.

Ephesians 4:13 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 4:13

“Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:”

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

“Till we all come in the unity of the faith”

Paul begins this verse with a word that establishes the continuing purpose of the ministry gifts described in Ephesians 4:11–12. “Till” indicates a goal toward which the ministry of the Church is directed. Christ gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers for the perfecting of the saints, the work of the ministry, and the edifying of His body. Now Paul explains the intended result of that work. The Church is not supposed to remain an assembly of spiritual infants perpetually dependent upon somebody else to explain the simplest doctrines. It is supposed to grow toward maturity in the faith. Notice also the expression “we all.” Paul does not reserve spiritual growth for preachers, teachers, or believers who have enjoyed unusual educational opportunities. Every member of Christ's body is included in the objective. God did not provide His Church with biblical instruction so that a handful of professional Christians could become knowledgeable while everybody else remained comfortably ignorant.

The phrase “unity of the faith” must be distinguished from “the unity of the Spirit” in Ephesians 4:3. The unity of the Spirit is something believers are commanded to keep, whereas the unity of the faith in verse 13 is something toward which they are growing. The Holy Spirit establishes spiritual union when He baptizes believers into the one body of Christ, as First Corinthians 12:13 explains. But Christians do not automatically possess identical doctrinal understanding the moment they receive salvation. One believer may understand the distinction between law and grace, while another is still trying to earn God's

acceptance through religious performance. One may recognize the difference between Israel and the Church, while another confuses the promises of the two. Both may be genuinely saved, yet their understanding requires correction and development. Spiritual unity is established by God's operation; doctrinal maturity develops as believers learn to submit their thinking to God's revelation.

This does not mean that the Church can manufacture unity by eliminating every doctrine that produces disagreement. Jude 1:3 commands believers to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” The faith possesses a revealed foundation that must be preserved rather than negotiated away. Christian unity is not achieved by allowing one congregation to preach salvation by grace while another adds religious works, and then declaring that both messages are equally acceptable. Genuine unity requires agreement with the truth God has revealed. The responsibility of pastors and teachers is therefore to correct error through Scripture, not conceal error beneath religious diplomacy. Second Timothy 2:15 commands believers to study, “rightly dividing the word of truth.” The Church grows toward unity of the faith as its members become more firmly established in sound doctrine. You cannot build doctrinal unity by throwing doctrine out the window; that merely produces a gathering of people who have agreed not to discuss what they believe.

“and of the knowledge of the Son of God”

The second expression identifies the central Person toward whom genuine Christian knowledge must be directed: “the Son of God.” Paul does not describe spiritual maturity as the accumulation of religious information for its own sake. He identifies knowledge of Jesus Christ as essential to the Church's development. Ephesians 1:17 records Paul's prayer that God would grant believers wisdom and revelation “in the knowledge of him.” Philippians 3:10 expresses the apostle's desire, “That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings.” These passages establish that spiritual growth involves a deeper understanding of Christ's Person, His finished work, His present ministry, and the believer's relationship to Him. A man may know the dates of church councils, memorize religious controversies, and possess an impressive collection of theological terminology while remaining remarkably ignorant of the Saviour described in Scripture. A head filled with religious information is not necessarily a heart governed by the Lord Jesus Christ.

The title “Son of God” also demands doctrinal precision. Jesus Christ is not merely an extraordinary human teacher whom God adopted because of superior moral accomplishments. John 1:1 declares, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” John 1:14 identifies that Word as the One who was made flesh and dwelt among us. Colossians 2:9 declares concerning Christ, “For in him

dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." Consequently, knowing the Son of God requires believing what Scripture reveals concerning His deity, incarnation, sinless life, substitutionary death, bodily resurrection, and exaltation. The Church cannot mature while treating the identity of Jesus Christ as an optional doctrine. Neither should believers confuse the Father and the Son by denying the personal distinctions Scripture establishes within the Godhead. A religion that uses the name Jesus while denying the Person Scripture reveals has not achieved deeper knowledge of Christ; it has substituted another object of belief beneath a familiar name.

"unto a perfect man"

The third expression establishes the intended result of this growth: "unto a perfect man." This is one of those passages that religious perfectionists can mishandle if they ignore the immediate context. Paul is not promising that every Christian will achieve absolute sinlessness while still living in mortal flesh. He is describing the maturity toward which Christ's body is being developed. The contrast becomes unmistakable in the following verse, where Paul warns against remaining children carried about with every wind of doctrine. The perfect man is therefore contrasted with spiritual childhood, instability, and susceptibility to deception. First Corinthians 13:11 supplies a useful comparison: "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things." Spiritual maturity involves leaving behind childish thinking and developing sound judgment. A mature Christian is not somebody who has become incapable of making a mistake; he is somebody who has learned to recognize error and is willing to be corrected by Scripture.

The singular expression "a perfect man" is particularly significant because the context concerns the development of the one body of Christ. Paul has already established one body in Ephesians 4:4, and he is now describing the corporate maturity toward which that body is directed. Individual believers must grow, but the objective extends beyond isolated personal accomplishments. Christ's body is meant to develop together through the working of its various members, as Ephesians 4:16 subsequently explains. This corporate emphasis does not erase individual responsibility or create some mysterious collective personality independent of Jesus Christ. Rather, it reveals that spiritual growth is not intended to become a competition in which Christians measure themselves against one another. Philippians 3:12 records Paul admitting, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after." The apostle's confession exposes the absurdity of claiming absolute practical perfection. The man who announces that he has arrived at sinless perfection should explain why an inspired apostle was still pressing forward rather than congratulating himself for having reached the finish line.

“unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ”

The final expression reveals the extraordinary standard by which Christian maturity is measured: “the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” Paul does not direct believers to measure their growth against the most admired preacher, the largest congregation, or the most influential religious institution. The standard is Jesus Christ Himself. The word “stature” presents the picture of developed maturity, while “fulness” emphasizes the completeness toward which the body is directed. Ephesians 1:23 identifies the Church as Christ's body, “the fulness of him that filleth all in all.” Colossians 2:10 declares that believers are complete in Him. Yet this completeness of spiritual standing does not eliminate the necessity of growth in practical understanding and conduct. The Lord's people are to become increasingly conformed to His character and established in His truth. God has not appointed religious popularity as the measuring stick for Christian maturity; He has appointed the fullness of Jesus Christ.

This standard must not be confused with the suggestion that Christians can become divine beings or possess the incommunicable attributes of Almighty God. The Lord Jesus Christ remains unique in His deity, while believers receive spiritual life and grow in godliness through their relationship with Him. Romans 8:29 declares God's purpose that His people should be “conformed to the image of his Son.” Second Corinthians 3:18 describes believers being changed into the same image from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord. Galatians 4:19 expresses Paul's concern “until Christ be formed in you.” These passages concern spiritual conformity to Christ rather than the transformation of redeemed sinners into additional members of the Godhead. The believer does not become omnipotent, omniscient, or worthy of worship because he grows in holiness. The purpose of Christian maturity is to make believers increasingly like their Saviour in character and conduct, not to manufacture a collection of smaller gods competing with the One who redeemed them.

The fullness of Christ also points beyond the present struggles of the Christian life toward the completion of God's redemptive purpose. Philippians 3:21 promises that the Lord “shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body.” Romans 8:23 speaks of the future redemption of the body, and First Corinthians 15:51–52 explains the transformation awaiting believers at the resurrection and catching away. Present spiritual growth is real, but it remains incomplete while Christians continue to contend with the flesh. The Church is therefore called to pursue maturity now while awaiting the future perfection that God will accomplish through Jesus Christ. This is not an excuse for spiritual laziness, because the Lord commands believers to grow in grace and knowledge during their earthly lives. Neither is it permission to boast that the Church has already attained absolute perfection. The Christian's present responsibility is to grow toward

Christlikeness, while his future confidence rests upon the Lord who will finish the redemption He has promised.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 4:13 establishes the ultimate purpose of the ministry gifts described in the preceding verses: the spiritual maturity of Christ's body through unity in the faith, increasing knowledge of the Son of God, and growth toward the fullness of Christ. The unity of the faith must be distinguished from the unity of the Spirit already established through salvation. Believers possess a common spiritual relationship in Christ, but their understanding of biblical doctrine requires continual development. The expression “a perfect man” emphasizes spiritual maturity rather than absolute sinlessness, while the measure of Christ's stature establishes the Lord Himself as the standard of Christian growth.

The passage also distinguishes the believer's completed standing in Christ from his developing spiritual condition. Salvation is received through faith apart from works, while maturity develops through Scripture, obedience, correction, and the faithful exercise of ministry. The Church must neither surrender doctrine in pursuit of artificial unity nor mistake religious knowledge for genuine Christlikeness. The central lesson is that Christ provided ministry gifts to bring His people toward sound doctrine, spiritual stability, and increasing conformity to Himself, while the final completion of their redemption remains assured through His finished work.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. Ministry Gifts Prepare Believers For Maturity

Ephesians 4:11 — “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;”

Ephesians 4:12 — “For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:”

Colossians 1:28 — “that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:”

2 Timothy 3:17 — “That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.”

2. Spiritual Unity And Doctrinal Unity

Ephesians 4:3 — “Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

1 Corinthians 12:13 — “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body”

Ephesians 4:13 — “Till we all come in the unity of the faith”

1 Corinthians 1:10 — “that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you”

3. The Faith Must Remain Grounded In Truth

Jude 1:3 — “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.”

Romans 3:28 — “a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.”

Galatians 1:8 — “preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.”

2 Timothy 2:15 — “rightly dividing the word of truth.”

4. Growing In The Knowledge Of Jesus Christ

Ephesians 1:17 — “the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him:”

John 17:3 — “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.”

Philippians 3:10 — “That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings”

2 Peter 3:18 — “But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

5. Spiritual Maturity Rather Than Childhood

Philippians 3:12 — “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after”

Hebrews 5:14 — “But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age”

1 Corinthians 13:11 — “but when I became a man, I put away childish things.”

Ephesians 4:14 — “That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine”

6. The Fullness And Image Of Christ

Ephesians 1:23 — “Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.”

Colossians 2:9 — “For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.”

Romans 8:29 — “to be conformed to the image of his Son”

Galatians 4:19 — “My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you,”

7. Present Growth And Future Perfection

2 Corinthians 3:18 — “are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

Romans 8:23 — “waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.”

Philippians 3:21 — “Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body”

1 John 3:2 — “when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”

5. Reflection

Ephesians 4:13 confronts a serious weakness in modern Christianity: the tendency to confuse religious activity with spiritual maturity. A congregation may possess an impressive schedule, beautiful facilities, enthusiastic music, and a preacher capable of entertaining an audience without producing believers who understand the Scriptures. Yet Paul identifies unity in the faith, knowledge of the Son of God, and maturity in Christ as the objectives of genuine ministry. These are not optional accomplishments reserved for unusually dedicated Christians. They are the purposes for which the ascended Lord provided His Church with ministers. A man who has attended church for thirty years but cannot distinguish salvation by grace from salvation by works has spent a considerable amount of time around religious activity without necessarily receiving the instruction he needed. The Church was not established to manufacture professional spectators; it was established to develop spiritually mature believers under the authority of Jesus Christ.

The distinction between the unity of the Spirit and the unity of the faith must also remain clear. The Holy Spirit places saved believers into Christ's body, establishing a spiritual relationship that human organizations cannot manufacture. Nevertheless, believers must grow in their understanding of the doctrines God has revealed. This growth requires sound teaching, careful study, and willingness to abandon inherited errors when Scripture exposes them. A Christian cannot strengthen unity by pretending that contradictory gospels are equally acceptable or that doctrinal accuracy is unimportant. Neither should legitimate differences in maturity become excuses for pride or unnecessary hostility. Romans 14 demonstrates that believers may differ in understanding and judgment without ceasing to belong to Christ. Genuine unity does not require the abandonment of truth; it requires God's people to become increasingly governed by the same truth.

The knowledge of the Son of God provides the central direction for this development. Christianity is not merely an intellectual pursuit in which believers compete to determine who possesses the largest collection of religious facts. Scripture reveals Jesus Christ so that sinners may trust Him and believers may grow in understanding His Person, work, and will. The Christian ought to know why Christ's blood is sufficient for redemption, why His resurrection establishes our hope, and why His present headship governs the Church. He should also understand the distinctions between Israel's national promises and the spiritual position of Christ's body. Those truths are not unrelated theological decorations. They establish the framework necessary for understanding God's word. A believer who knows Christ through Scripture possesses something infinitely more valuable than a religious vocabulary designed to impress people who never open their Bibles.

The expression “unto a perfect man” also corrects the doctrine of sinless perfection in the present Christian life. Paul himself acknowledged in Philippians 3:12 that he had not already attained perfection in the practical sense. Yet he continued pressing forward because spiritual growth remains a genuine responsibility. The believer is complete in Christ regarding his saving position, but he still must learn, obey, receive correction, and resist the flesh. A mature Christian recognizes those responsibilities rather than announcing that he has progressed beyond temptation. Spiritual maturity should produce greater humility because the believer increasingly understands both God's holiness and his dependence upon divine grace. The fellow who has finally convinced himself that he can no longer sin has not necessarily reached spiritual adulthood; he may simply have developed an unusually sophisticated method of deceiving himself.

The measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ also exposes the foolishness of comparing our spiritual accomplishments with those of other believers. One preacher may possess exceptional knowledge, another unusual courage, and another remarkable patience under difficult circumstances. Yet none of them constitutes the ultimate standard of Christian maturity. Jesus Christ remains the measure, and every believer falls short of His perfect character while growing toward conformity to Him. That understanding should correct both jealousy and spiritual arrogance. The Christian who compares himself only with weaker believers may become proud, while the Christian constantly measuring himself against others may become discouraged. Scripture directs attention toward Christ rather than religious competition. The Lord did not command believers to become impressive copies of their favorite preacher; He commanded them to grow toward the likeness of His Son.

Finally, Ephesians 4:13 should encourage every Christian to take spiritual growth seriously without confusing that growth with the basis of eternal salvation. The believer's redemption

rests upon Christ's finished sacrifice, while his earthly responsibility is to mature through the Scriptures and walk according to the Spirit. That growth will not reach its complete fulfillment through personal effort during this present life, because the redemption of the body still awaits the Lord's appointed time. Philippians 3:21 promises that Christ will change our vile body and fashion it like His glorious body. Until then, believers should study faithfully, reject false doctrine, receive correction, and seek to become increasingly useful members of Christ's body. The Christian life is not a race to prove we can become perfect without Christ, but a continuing work in which the Lord develops His redeemed people toward the maturity He has appointed. Our present calling is to grow in Him, and our future confidence is that He will complete what He has promised.

Ephesians 4:14 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 4:14

"That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;"

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"That we henceforth be no more children"

Paul begins this verse by declaring one of the principal reasons Jesus Christ provided ministry gifts to His Church: "That we henceforth be no more children." The expression reaches directly back to Ephesians 4:11–13, where apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers are identified as gifts for the perfecting of the saints and the edifying of Christ's body. The objective is spiritual maturity, not perpetual religious infancy. Paul is not condemning children or the simple faith by which sinners receive Jesus Christ. He is condemning the spiritual condition of believers who remain undeveloped in biblical understanding when they should be growing toward maturity. First Corinthians 3:1 records Paul addressing the Corinthians "as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ." They were genuinely saved, yet their conduct revealed serious spiritual immaturity. A believer can possess eternal security, belong to the body of Christ, and still demonstrate the doctrinal understanding of somebody who has barely opened a Bible. The new birth makes a man a child of God, but it was never intended to make him a permanent infant in his understanding of God's word.

The word “henceforth” establishes that continued childishness is no longer acceptable as the normal condition of a growing believer. Hebrews 5:12 exposes Christians who should have progressed far enough to teach others but still required instruction in the elementary principles of God's word. Hebrews 5:14 declares, “But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age,” and connects that maturity with the exercise of discernment. A newly saved Christian needs instruction, patience, encouragement, and the sincere milk of the word described in First Peter 2:2. But a believer who refuses to progress beyond elementary knowledge is neglecting a responsibility that Scripture plainly establishes. Spiritual growth does not happen merely because someone has occupied a church pew for thirty years. Time provides opportunities for maturity; it does not guarantee that those opportunities have been used. A man can spend half his life in a grocery store and still starve if he never eats, and a Christian can spend decades around preaching without becoming established in Scripture if he never learns to study for himself.

“tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine”

The second expression supplies a vivid picture of the consequences of remaining spiritually immature. Paul describes believers being “tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine.” The language suggests something unstable upon moving water, driven from one direction to another because it possesses no secure means of resisting the surrounding forces. One week a believer becomes excited about a new interpretation of prophecy, the following week he discovers somebody teaching that Christians must keep the law of Moses, and shortly afterward he encounters a religious personality promising secret knowledge unavailable to ordinary Bible readers. Each new teacher carries him in another direction because he has never become firmly established in the truth. James 1:6 describes the doubting man as resembling “a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.” The problem in Ephesians 4:14 is particularly doctrinal. The Christian who refuses to become anchored in Scripture will eventually discover that every religious breeze looks like the leading of the Holy Ghost.

Notice that Paul does not say every wind of persecution, every wind of personal difficulty, or every wind of changing circumstances. He identifies “every wind of doctrine.” False teaching is dangerous because doctrine determines what people believe concerning God, salvation, Christian conduct, and eternity. A believer who abandons justification by faith may become enslaved to religious works, while another who confuses Israel and the Church may misapply promises and commands belonging to different dispensational settings. Still another may become obsessed with prophetic speculation, treating every political event as though somebody has finally discovered the date of Christ's return. Colossians 2:7 describes the proper alternative: “Rooted and built up in him, and

stablished in the faith." The Christian is not commanded to avoid examining unfamiliar teachings merely because they are unfamiliar. Acts 17:11 commends those who searched the Scriptures daily to determine whether the things they heard were true. A stable believer does not reject everything new because he fears learning, and he does not accept everything new because he enjoys excitement. He tests everything by the written word of God.

"by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness"

Paul now identifies the human instruments through which doctrinal instability is exploited: "by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness." The word "sleight" describes deception accomplished through skillful manipulation, while "cunning craftiness" emphasizes the deliberate cleverness employed to mislead others. The picture is not of an honest teacher making an occasional mistake while attempting to understand a difficult passage. It is of men employing methods that conceal error beneath an appearance of credibility. Second Corinthians 4:2 contrasts apostolic integrity with "walking in craftiness" and "handling the word of God deceitfully." False teachers may quote genuine Scriptures, use familiar Christian terminology, and present their conclusions with great confidence while quietly removing the words from their proper contexts. A verse intended for Israel becomes a command governing the Church; a passage about Christian rewards becomes a threat against eternal security; a historical sign becomes a universal condition of salvation. The most dangerous religious deception often contains enough Bible to sound convincing and enough distortion to destroy the doctrine that Bible actually teaches.

The cunning teacher understands that outright rejection of Scripture will not persuade every Bible-believing Christian. Consequently, he may begin with a legitimate truth, attach an unsupported interpretation, and gradually make the interpretation appear inseparable from the passage. Second Peter 3:16 warns concerning those who "wrest" the Scriptures unto their own destruction. Romans 16:18 describes deceivers who use "good words and fair speeches" to deceive the hearts of the simple. The deception may be dressed in scholarly terminology, emotional appeals, supposed spiritual experiences, or flattering promises that make the listener feel unusually enlightened. Some teachers use fear to keep their audience obedient, while others use admiration and personal attention to discourage examination of their claims. Whatever the method, the essential problem remains the same: human ingenuity has replaced faithful exposition. A man does not need to tear pages out of the Bible to corrupt its teaching. Sometimes all he needs to do is move the meaning out of its context and persuade everybody that he has discovered something wonderful.

"whereby they lie in wait to deceive"

The final expression exposes the deliberate character of the danger: “whereby they lie in wait to deceive.” Paul is not describing a harmless difference of opinion over a minor question. His language pictures someone waiting for an opportunity to mislead another person. Acts 20:29–30 contains a remarkably similar warning, where Paul predicts grievous wolves entering among the flock and men arising from within the congregation “speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.” That warning exposes an important feature of religious deception. The danger does not always enter from outside the visible Christian community. Sometimes it develops among people already recognized as teachers or leaders. A congregation may be especially vulnerable when it assumes that a familiar face, an impressive title, or years of association automatically guarantee doctrinal faithfulness. The Lord's people must therefore judge teaching by Scripture rather than reputation. A wolf does not become a shepherd because he learns the vocabulary of the sheep, and a false teacher does not become faithful because he discovers how to sound religious.

This warning does not mean that every Christian who misunderstands a passage should be accused of deliberate deception. Scripture distinguishes between those who require patient instruction and those who knowingly exploit others through false teaching. Second Timothy 2:24–25 commands the servant of the Lord to be gentle and patient, instructing those who oppose themselves in meekness. But Second Peter 2:1–3 warns of false teachers who introduce destructive heresies and exploit others through covetousness. The appropriate response therefore requires discernment. Honest confusion should be corrected with Scripture and patience, while persistent efforts to distort the gospel, manipulate believers, or establish authority contrary to God's word require serious opposition. The purpose of sound doctrine is not to turn Christians into suspicious people who imagine a conspiracy behind every disagreement. It is to protect them from genuine error while equipping them to recognize the difference between ignorance and calculated deceit. Biblical discernment is not the ability to accuse everybody of being a wolf; it is the ability to recognize the wolf without mistaking every struggling sheep for one.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 4:14 establishes the protective purpose of spiritual maturity. Christ gave ministers to equip His people so they would no longer remain childish in their understanding, unstable in doctrine, and vulnerable to religious deception. The verse identifies a progression from immaturity to instability and then to exploitation by deceptive teachers. Its warnings concerning the sleight of men, cunning craftiness, and deliberate deceit demonstrate that false doctrine is not always the result of innocent misunderstanding. Some teachers deliberately distort Scripture, manipulate believers, and

use religious appearances to conceal their true purposes. The central lesson is that spiritual maturity requires believers to become firmly established in biblical truth so they can recognize and resist teachings that would lead them away from Jesus Christ.

The verse also distinguishes spiritual discernment from needless suspicion and religious hostility. Believers must examine doctrine according to Scripture, rightly divide God's word, and refuse to compromise the gospel for the sake of superficial unity. At the same time, honest misunderstandings should be corrected with patience rather than treated automatically as deliberate deception. The following verse commands speaking the truth in love, establishing the proper relationship between doctrinal firmness and Christian conduct. A mature believer is neither gullible enough to believe every religious claim nor arrogant enough to imagine that everybody who disagrees with him is deliberately dishonest.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. Spiritual Childhood Must Give Way To Maturity

Ephesians 4:13 — “unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:”

1 Corinthians 3:1 — “even as unto babes in Christ.”

Hebrews 5:13 — “For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe.”

1 Peter 2:2 — “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:”

2. False Doctrine Produces Instability

Ephesians 4:14 — “tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine”

Colossians 2:7 — “Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith”

James 1:6 — “For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.”

Colossians 2:8 — “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit”

3. Scripture Establishes Doctrinal Discernment

2 Timothy 2:15 — “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

Acts 17:11 — “and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.”

2 Timothy 3:16 — “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:”

1 Thessalonians 5:21 — “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.”

4. Religious Deception Uses Cunning Methods

2 Corinthians 4:2 — “not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully”

2 Peter 3:16 — “which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.”

Romans 16:18 — “by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.”

2 Corinthians 11:13 — “For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.”

5. False Teachers Threaten The Flock

Acts 20:29 — “For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.”

Acts 20:30 — “Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.”

2 Peter 2:1 — “But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you”

2 Peter 2:3 — “And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you:”

6. The Gospel Must Remain Uncorrupted

Galatians 1:8 — “preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.”

Ephesians 2:8 — “For by grace are ye saved through faith”

1 Corinthians 15:3 — “how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;”

Romans 3:28 — “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.”

7. Truth Must Be Defended With Wisdom And Love

Ephesians 4:15 — “But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:”

2 Timothy 2:24 — “And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient,”

Romans 16:17 — “mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.”

Jude 1:3 — “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.”

5. Reflection

Ephesians 4:14 ought to disturb every Christian who has become satisfied with knowing just enough Scripture to repeat familiar religious expressions. Paul warns that spiritual childhood leaves believers vulnerable to doctrines that can carry them in practically any direction. A man may genuinely possess salvation through faith in Jesus Christ while remaining dangerously uninformed concerning the Scriptures that explain his position and responsibilities. That condition is not something to celebrate as simplicity or humility. The believer is commanded to grow, study, and become established in truth. Christ gave ministers to prepare His people for maturity, not to maintain their ignorance. A Christian who refuses to learn the Bible is leaving the door unlocked for anybody who knows how to twist a verse and sound convincing while doing it.

The danger becomes especially serious when false teaching concerns salvation itself. One religious system declares that sinners are justified by faith without the deeds of the law, while another demands ceremonies, law-keeping, or personal merit as necessary contributions to redemption. Both messages cannot represent the same gospel merely because their advocates pronounce the name of Jesus Christ. Galatians 1:8 warns against another gospel, and Romans 3:28 establishes justification by faith apart from the deeds of the law. The believer must therefore learn the difference between salvation and discipleship, spiritual standing and practical conduct, and God's promises to Israel and His instructions concerning the Church. These distinctions are not unnecessary theological complications. A man who cannot distinguish the gospel from religious works is standing in dangerous doctrinal weather without knowing which direction the wind is blowing.

Paul's reference to the sleight of men also exposes the dangerous assumption that religious deception must always appear obviously wicked. False teachers may possess pleasant personalities, impressive education, persuasive speech, and the ability to quote large portions of Scripture. Their effectiveness often depends upon presenting error in a form that resembles truth. They may flatter their audiences, appeal to spiritual curiosity, or claim access to knowledge unavailable to ordinary believers. Others employ fear, insisting that questioning their teaching constitutes rebellion against God. Yet Scripture never commands Christians to surrender discernment because a religious personality possesses

a commanding voice or impressive credentials. Acts 17:11 commends those who examined what they heard by the Scriptures. The devil does not need to convince every Christian to throw away his Bible if he can persuade him to accept somebody else's interpretation without examining the passage.

The expression “lie in wait to deceive” also requires believers to recognize that deliberate doctrinal manipulation is a genuine danger. Acts 20 warns that grievous wolves would threaten the flock and that men would arise seeking to draw disciples after themselves. Nevertheless, this warning must not become an excuse for treating every disagreement as intentional wickedness. Christians sometimes misunderstand difficult passages, repeat errors they inherited, or require further instruction before recognizing the truth. Second Timothy 2:24–25 commands patience and meekness when correcting those who oppose themselves. Proper discernment therefore distinguishes between the person who needs instruction and the teacher who persistently exploits others through false doctrine. A faithful shepherd must know when to patiently guide a confused sheep and when to confront a wolf determined to destroy the flock.

The practical answer to doctrinal instability is neither blind loyalty to a favorite preacher nor endless suspicion toward everyone else. It is faithful study of the written word of God. Second Timothy 3:16 establishes Scripture as profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness. That means believers need more than an occasional sermon, a collection of religious slogans, or a few verses selected to support what they already believe. They must read passages in context, compare Scripture with Scripture, and recognize the people and circumstances being addressed. Pastors and teachers should encourage this maturity rather than cultivating dependence upon their own personalities. The strongest congregation is not the one whose members can repeat everything their pastor believes, but the one whose members can open their Bibles and demonstrate why those beliefs are scriptural.

Finally, Ephesians 4:14 should produce both doctrinal courage and genuine Christian humility. The believer must resist false teaching without becoming arrogant, defend the gospel without delighting in unnecessary arguments, and correct error without abandoning charity. The following verse commands speaking the truth in love because truth and love belong together in genuine spiritual growth. Love does not require surrendering doctrine, and doctrinal conviction does not require personal cruelty. The Christian should become increasingly difficult to deceive precisely because he is increasingly governed by Scripture rather than emotion, personality, or religious fashion. The goal is not merely to win arguments but to remain faithful to Jesus Christ and strengthen His body. A mature Christian is not carried away by every wind of doctrine because his confidence is anchored

in the unchanging word of God. The winds may change, the teachers may come and go, but the truth remains where Almighty God placed it.

Ephesians 4:15 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 4:15

"But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:"

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"But speaking the truth in love"

Paul begins this verse with a contrast that exposes two dangerous extremes in Christian conduct. Ephesians 4:14 has just warned against spiritual children who are "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine." Now Paul introduces the alternative: "But speaking the truth in love." The word "But" is important because it distinguishes spiritual maturity from the instability produced by deception. The Christian who has grown in sound doctrine must not become another manipulator who uses religious language to control others. He must communicate the truth, and he must do so in love. These two responsibilities belong together. Truth without genuine charity can become an instrument of personal pride, while supposed love that refuses to speak the truth eventually becomes a respectable disguise for cowardice. First Corinthians 13:6 declares that charity "Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth." Biblical love does not compete with biblical truth. The Christian who sacrifices truth to preserve affection has misunderstood love, and the man who uses truth merely to wound others has misunderstood the purpose of speaking it.

Notice that Paul commands believers to speak "the truth," not merely whatever happens to sound agreeable, encouraging, or popular. John 17:17 records the Lord's prayer: "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." The standard is therefore the revelation God has given rather than the opinions men have developed. Second Timothy 4:2 commands the preacher to "Preach the word," including reproof, rebuke, exhortation, longsuffering, and doctrine. That instruction leaves no room for a ministry that carefully avoids every uncomfortable passage because somebody might become offended. The gospel itself declares that sinners cannot save themselves and must trust Jesus Christ, whose death,

burial, and resurrection provide the only sufficient basis of salvation. Romans 3:28 establishes justification by faith without the deeds of the law. A preacher cannot demonstrate Christian love by concealing those truths from people who need to hear them. A physician who refuses to identify a deadly disease because the diagnosis might upset the patient is not demonstrating compassion; he is allowing the disease to continue while congratulating himself for having excellent bedside manners.

Yet speaking the truth in love also governs the manner, motive, and purpose of Christian correction. Paul does not say that possessing accurate doctrine grants permission to become arrogant, insulting, or needlessly argumentative. Second Timothy 2:24–25 instructs the servant of the Lord to be gentle, patient, and meek when correcting those who oppose themselves. Galatians 6:1 commands spiritual believers to restore one overtaken in a fault "in the spirit of meekness." Such instructions do not weaken biblical conviction; they direct its proper exercise. There are occasions when error must be confronted firmly, especially when false teaching threatens the gospel or damages the flock. Nevertheless, the goal should be correction, restoration, protection, and spiritual growth rather than the satisfaction of winning an argument. A man can be absolutely correct in the doctrine he defends and completely wrong in the fleshly spirit with which he defends it. God never appointed personal bitterness as a spiritual gift.

"may grow up into him in all things"

The second expression identifies the purpose of speaking the truth in love: "may grow up into him in all things." Paul is continuing the subject of spiritual maturity introduced in Ephesians 4:11–14. Christ gave ministers for the perfecting of the saints, the work of the ministry, and the edifying of His body. The goal is not merely to expose false teachers, win doctrinal controversies, or accumulate religious information. It is growth into greater conformity to Jesus Christ. The expression "grow up" directly contrasts with the spiritual childhood condemned in the preceding verse. First Peter 2:2 commands newborn believers to desire "the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." Second Peter 3:18 instructs Christians to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Spiritual growth is therefore an expected responsibility, not an optional pursuit reserved for unusually dedicated believers. The new birth gives the sinner spiritual life, but a living Christian who refuses to grow is neglecting the very purpose for which God has supplied instruction.

The words "in all things" deserve particular attention because Christlikeness cannot be confined to a believer's favorite subjects. A Christian may possess considerable knowledge of prophecy while remaining dishonest in business, harsh toward his family, or careless about personal holiness. Another may speak eloquently about grace while demonstrating

little patience toward weaker believers. Still another may defend the King James Bible with tremendous enthusiasm while habitually ignoring its commands concerning humility, charity, and self-control. Paul does not permit believers to select one convenient department of Christianity and declare themselves mature because they have developed proficiency in it. Colossians 1:10 describes walking worthy of the Lord, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God. Romans 12:9 commands, “Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.” Doctrine must govern both conviction and conduct. A man who can explain twenty biblical distinctions but cannot control his tongue has learned something about the Book without allowing enough of the Book to govern his life.

This growth must also be distinguished from the doctrine that believers can become absolutely sinless through personal effort before receiving their glorified bodies. Philippians 3:12 records Paul's confession: “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after.” The believer is complete in Christ concerning his spiritual standing, as Colossians 2:10 declares, yet he continues to require correction and development in practical living. Galatians 5:17 describes the continuing conflict between flesh and Spirit, while Romans 8:13 commands believers through the Spirit to mortify the deeds of the body. Growth in Christ therefore involves increasing obedience, sound judgment, spiritual fruit, and dependence upon the Lord. It does not mean achieving independent perfection through human determination. Neither does it mean that salvation is gradually earned as spiritual maturity increases. The Christian grows because he has been saved by grace, not because he is attempting to grow enough to persuade God to save him.

“which is the head, even Christ”

The final expression identifies the supreme authority and governing Person of the entire spiritual body: “which is the head, even Christ.” Paul does not identify a religious institution, earthly bishop, denominational president, or universally recognized preacher as the Head of the Church. He identifies Jesus Christ. Ephesians 1:22–23 declares that God “gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body.” Colossians 1:18 confirms, “And he is the head of the body, the church.” These statements establish that Christ possesses the authority to direct, nourish, and govern His redeemed people. The ministers mentioned in Ephesians 4:11 are therefore servants entrusted with responsibilities beneath His headship. Their gifts do not authorize them to replace His authority or manufacture doctrines contrary to His word. The Church already possesses a Head, and no earthly religious official has received divine permission to occupy the position.

The relationship between the Head and the body also explains why genuine spiritual growth must remain centered upon Jesus Christ. Colossians 2:19 warns against failing to hold the Head, from whom the body receives nourishment and increases with the increase of God. A congregation may become intensely loyal to a particular preacher, tradition, or religious organization while gradually losing sight of the Lord whose people it claims to serve. When personal loyalty becomes more important than biblical truth, spiritual development is endangered. First Corinthians 3:5 exposes the proper position of ministers by asking, “Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed?” The great apostle did not present himself as a substitute head over the redeemed. He understood that ministers are servants through whom God works. The preacher who wants believers permanently dependent upon his personality has confused building Christ's body with constructing a personal religious kingdom.

Christ's headship also provides the necessary balance between authority, unity, and maturity. The members of His body possess different gifts and responsibilities, but they remain accountable to the same Lord. Ephesians 4:16 explains that the whole body is fitly joined together, with every part contributing according to its appointed measure. That arrangement requires truthful communication, loving cooperation, and submission to biblical authority rather than competition for personal prominence. It also requires distinguishing the spiritual body of Christ from Israel's national promises and the future earthly kingdom of the Messiah. The Church presently belongs to its exalted Head, while God's promises concerning Israel retain their appointed place in prophecy. The believer's spiritual union with Christ does not abolish those distinctions. The body cannot become healthy by replacing its Head, and the members cannot grow properly while refusing the instructions of the One who gave them life.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 4:15 establishes the proper relationship between biblical truth, Christian love, spiritual maturity, and the headship of Jesus Christ. The verse contrasts the instability of spiritual childhood described in Ephesians 4:14 with the mature conduct expected from believers who are being established in sound doctrine. Speaking the truth in love requires both doctrinal faithfulness and proper Christian character. Truth must not be compromised for the sake of superficial unity, but neither should it be used as an excuse for pride, bitterness, or unnecessary cruelty. The purpose of faithful communication is spiritual growth rather than personal victory in religious arguments.

The verse also identifies Jesus Christ as both the objective of Christian maturity and the supreme Head of His body. Believers are to grow into greater conformity to Him in every area of life while recognizing that their salvation rests upon His completed work rather than

their own spiritual accomplishments. Pastors and teachers must therefore direct Christians toward Scripture, sound doctrine, and practical obedience rather than permanent dependence upon human personalities. The central lesson is that genuine spiritual maturity requires truth spoken in love, growth toward Christlikeness, and continuing submission to Jesus Christ as the one Head of His Church.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. God's Word Establishes The Truth

John 17:17 — “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.”

John 14:6 — “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”

2 Timothy 2:15 — “rightly dividing the word of truth.”

Proverbs 12:17 — “He that speaketh truth sheweth forth righteousness: but a false witness deceit.”

2. Truth Must Be Spoken In Love

1 Corinthians 13:6 — “Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;”

Ephesians 4:25 — “Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour”

Colossians 4:6 — “Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt”

Romans 12:9 — “Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.”

3. Biblical Correction Requires Wisdom And Meekness

2 Timothy 2:24 — “And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient,”

2 Timothy 2:25 — “In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves”

Galatians 6:1 — “restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.”

Proverbs 27:6 — “Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.”

4. Sound Doctrine Must Never Be Compromised

Jude 1:3 — “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.”

Galatians 1:8 — “preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.”

2 Timothy 4:2 — “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.”

Titus 1:9 — “Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught”

5. Believers Must Grow Toward Spiritual Maturity

1 Peter 2:2 — “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:”

2 Peter 3:18 — “But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

Colossians 1:28 — “that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:”

Ephesians 4:13 — “unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:”

6. Christ Alone Is Head Of The Church

Colossians 1:18 — “And he is the head of the body, the church”

Ephesians 1:22 — “and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,”

Colossians 2:19 — “And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered”

Ephesians 5:23 — “even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.”

7. The Body Must Grow Together In Love

Ephesians 4:16 — “maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.”

1 Corinthians 12:27 — “Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.”

1 Thessalonians 5:11 — “Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.”

Ephesians 4:29 — “but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.”

5. Reflection

Ephesians 4:15 confronts two dangerous tendencies that have repeatedly weakened Christian fellowship: the willingness to sacrifice truth for acceptance and the temptation to use truth as an excuse for fleshly hostility. Paul does not instruct believers to select whichever approach seems most comfortable. He commands them to speak the truth in love. That means sound doctrine must remain intact while the believer's manner and purpose reflect the character of Jesus Christ. A preacher who refuses to identify false teaching because somebody might become offended has abandoned an important responsibility. Yet a preacher who takes personal pleasure in humiliating people has also failed to understand the purpose of biblical correction. The Church does not need a compromise between truth and love; it needs believers who understand that genuine love requires truth and genuine truth must be communicated with godly purpose.

The responsibility to speak truth becomes particularly important when the gospel is involved. Salvation rests upon the finished work of Jesus Christ, whose death, burial, and resurrection provide the sufficient basis of redemption. Romans 3:28 establishes justification by faith without the deeds of the law, while Ephesians 2:8–9 excludes human works as the purchase price of salvation. A Christian cannot demonstrate love by treating contradictory plans of salvation as equally acceptable. People who are trusting religious ceremonies, personal righteousness, or institutional membership need the truth concerning Jesus Christ. That truth should be explained with clarity and seriousness rather than arrogance or unnecessary ridicule. The objective is to direct sinners toward the Saviour, not merely to demonstrate that the preacher knows more theology than they do. A loving warning against a false gospel is worth considerably more than a thousand pleasant assurances that leave a sinner trusting something Christ never promised would save him.

This verse also corrects the mistaken idea that spiritual maturity consists entirely of possessing accurate doctrinal information. Sound doctrine is indispensable, but Scripture requires that knowledge to govern conduct. The Christian who understands dispensational distinctions, recognizes false teaching, and can explain difficult passages must still learn patience, humility, forgiveness, and self-control. First Corinthians 8:1 warns that knowledge can puff up while charity edifies. The believer who continually argues with others may possess real knowledge without demonstrating corresponding maturity. Growth in Christ requires the application of truth to the heart and daily life. A man may be able to identify every error in another Christian's teaching while remaining strangely unwilling to examine his own behavior. The Bible was not given merely to sharpen the Christian's arguments against everybody else; it was given to correct the Christian himself.

The expression “may grow up into him in all things” demands more than occasional religious enthusiasm. Spiritual growth should affect the believer's relationships, speech,

responsibilities, decisions, and personal testimony. It should produce greater stability when false teachings appear and greater humility when correction becomes necessary. The standard is not another Christian's personality or the traditions of a favored denomination. Jesus Christ remains the measure toward which His people are growing. This does not mean believers become sinlessly perfect during their earthly lives or that spiritual progress determines whether they remain saved. Their standing rests upon Christ, while their practical growth continues through Scripture and obedience. The Christian who has been saved for many years should not merely possess more religious memories than a new convert; he should demonstrate increasing evidence that God's word has shaped his character.

The declaration that Christ is the Head also establishes the proper limits of every ministry. Pastors and teachers possess genuine responsibilities, but they remain servants under the authority of Jesus Christ. Their purpose is to equip believers through Scripture rather than cultivate personal dependence upon their own opinions. A congregation should respect faithful leadership without treating a preacher's preferences as equal to the commandments of God. Likewise, a pastor should welcome sincere biblical examination rather than assuming that every question challenges his position. The body receives its life and direction from Christ, not from the reputation of an earthly minister. Sound leadership should therefore produce believers who understand Scripture and can exercise discernment responsibly. The strongest ministry is not the one that has convinced everybody to depend upon the preacher, but the one that has taught believers to depend upon Jesus Christ and His word.

Finally, Ephesians 4:15 establishes a standard that every Christian should remember whenever doctrinal disagreement or personal correction becomes necessary. Speak what Scripture teaches, distinguish revealed truth from personal opinion, and refuse to make bitterness a substitute for conviction. Correct error without delighting in another person's embarrassment, and receive correction without treating every disagreement as an attack. The purpose of truth is not merely to defeat falsehood in conversation but to bring God's people toward greater maturity in Jesus Christ. Christian love must never silence necessary warnings, and doctrinal conviction must never become a respectable disguise for the flesh. Every believer should therefore examine both the content and the spirit of his communication. Truth without love may become a weapon of pride, while love without truth becomes an accomplice to error. But truth spoken in love builds the body, strengthens the saints, and directs every member toward Jesus Christ, who alone is the Head.

Ephesians 4:16 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 4:16

"From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"From whom the whole body"

Paul begins this verse by identifying the source of the Church's spiritual life, unity, and growth: "From whom." The words point directly back to Ephesians 4:15, where Jesus Christ is identified as "the head, even Christ." Everything described in verse 16 proceeds from Him. The Church is not an independent religious organization that occasionally requests assistance from heaven. It is a spiritual body whose life and direction originate with its living Head. Colossians 1:18 declares, "And he is the head of the body, the church." Notice that Paul does not identify a pope, bishop, denominational president, or popular preacher as the source of the body's spiritual life. Jesus Christ occupies that position exclusively. Men may administer earthly organizations, but they cannot create the supernatural union that makes a sinner a member of Christ's body. The Church has one Head, and every religious leader who attempts to occupy His place has mistaken a servant's assignment for the Master's throne.

The expression "the whole body" is equally important because Paul is describing all those spiritually united to Jesus Christ, not merely the members of one denomination or local congregation. First Corinthians 12:13 declares, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body." That operation includes saved Jews and Gentiles without erasing the distinct national promises God made to Israel. Ephesians 2:16 explains that believing Jews and Gentiles are reconciled unto God in one body through the cross. The body of Christ is therefore a spiritual organism established through salvation, not a religious institution whose membership roll determines who belongs to heaven. Local churches have legitimate responsibilities concerning fellowship, teaching, discipline, and ministry, but they do not manufacture membership in Christ's body. A man may have his name written in a church directory without ever having received Jesus Christ as his Saviour. A church secretary can add a name to a membership list, but only the Holy Ghost can place a redeemed sinner into the body of Jesus Christ.

"fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth"

The second expression reveals the extraordinary relationship between the members of Christ's body. Paul describes the body as “fitly joined together and compacted,” language that emphasizes arrangement, connection, and mutual dependence. God has not assembled a disorderly collection of unrelated individuals and merely instructed them to occupy the same religious building. He has united believers in Christ and assigned them different responsibilities within the body. First Corinthians 12:18 declares, “But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.” The arrangement originates with divine wisdom rather than personal ambition. A hand cannot decide that the entire body ought to consist of hands, and an eye cannot declare the foot unnecessary merely because walking is less glamorous than seeing. The body functions because different members perform different responsibilities, not because every member competes to become the most impressive organ in the room.

The words “by that which every joint supplieth” explain how the members contribute to the body's well-being. The emphasis is not merely upon possessing a position but upon supplying something beneficial through that position. Romans 12:5 declares, “So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.” One Christian may teach Scripture, another may encourage discouraged believers, another may provide practical assistance, and another may labor faithfully in responsibilities that attract little public recognition. These contributions differ, but their purpose is united. The verse does not teach that every believer must possess identical gifts or perform every kind of ministry. Neither does it excuse the member who refuses to contribute because somebody else appears more talented. A joint that contributes nothing to the body should not spend its time complaining that another member receives more attention. The Lord did not arrange His people for competition, but for cooperation under His authority.

“according to the effectual working in the measure of every part”

Paul now explains that the body's development occurs “according to the effectual working in the measure of every part.” The expression “effectual working” points toward genuine spiritual operation rather than religious appearance. Ephesians 3:7 describes Paul's ministry as given “by the effectual working of his power.” The believer's usefulness therefore cannot be reduced to natural personality, organizational talent, or human determination. Christ supplies grace, and His people are responsible to exercise what He has entrusted to them. Philippians 2:13 establishes the relationship between divine power and human responsibility: “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” Spiritual growth requires real obedience, but genuine spiritual fruit ultimately depends upon divine enablement. A congregation may possess considerable activity without experiencing corresponding maturity. The Lord measures effective ministry

by what His power accomplishes through faithful obedience, not by how much religious machinery men can keep running.

The words “in the measure of every part” connect directly with Ephesians 4:7, where grace is given “according to the measure of the gift of Christ.” Different members receive different provisions and responsibilities. Romans 12:6 declares, “Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us.” These differences do not establish superior and inferior classes of salvation, nor do they mean that some believers possess a better Saviour than others. Every genuinely saved person is complete in Christ regarding spiritual standing, yet individual usefulness, maturity, and assignments differ. The Christian who teaches should teach faithfully, while the one entrusted with practical service should perform that responsibility diligently. Nobody is authorized to demand the same gift from every believer or to turn extraordinary apostolic signs into universal requirements for salvation. Christ determines the measure of the gift, and the servant is responsible for faithfulness within that measure. Envying another man's assignment will not improve the work God placed in your own hands.

“maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love”

The final expression identifies the result of the body's proper functioning: “maketh increase of the body.” In the immediate context, this increase concerns the spiritual growth and maturity described throughout Ephesians 4:11–15. The Church must become more firmly established in doctrine, more discerning concerning false teaching, and more conformed to Jesus Christ. Numerical growth through the salvation of sinners is certainly desirable, but that is not the only measure of increase. First Corinthians 3:6 declares, “I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.” The Lord may bless faithful gospel preaching with additional converts, while sound biblical teaching strengthens believers already belonging to His body. A congregation can grow larger without necessarily growing wiser, holier, or more obedient. Adding another hundred names to the attendance register does not prove that the Church has gained another hundred mature Christians. The body must grow in spiritual health, not merely organizational size.

Paul concludes with the remarkable expression “unto the edifying of itself in love.” The members of Christ's body are to contribute to one another's spiritual development through faithful service governed by biblical charity. First Thessalonians 5:11 commands, “Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.” Ephesians 4:15 has already required speaking the truth in love, and verse 16 now shows that love must govern the body's cooperative growth. This does not authorize sacrificing doctrine to preserve artificial harmony, because genuine edification requires truth. Neither does it permit harshness, jealousy, or domination under the excuse of defending sound

teaching. Christ remains the source of the body's life, while believers participate in its development through their appointed responsibilities. The healthy Church is not the one where everybody agrees to ignore error, nor the one where everybody fights to prove personal superiority. It is the body in which truth governs the members, love directs their service, and Jesus Christ receives the glory.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 4:16 presents the Church as one spiritual body whose life, unity, and growth originate with Jesus Christ, its living Head. The members are joined together through God's saving work, yet each possesses different responsibilities and receives grace according to Christ's provision. The expression “every joint supplieth” emphasizes mutual dependence, while “the measure of every part” recognizes the diversity of gifts and service. Genuine spiritual increase results as believers faithfully exercise their responsibilities under the authority and power of Christ. This growth concerns doctrinal stability, spiritual maturity, practical obedience, and the strengthening of the entire body.

The verse also distinguishes spiritual unity from organizational uniformity, divine enablement from merely human activity, and genuine edification from religious popularity. The body of Christ is not identical to a denomination or earthly institution, although believers are commanded to serve faithfully within biblical local congregations. Every member has responsibilities, but no member replaces the authority of Jesus Christ. Love must govern their cooperation without requiring compromise concerning sound doctrine. The central lesson is that Christ supplies the life and power of His body, while every member is responsible to contribute faithfully to its spiritual growth and edification in love.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. Christ Is The Head And Source Of The Body

Ephesians 4:15 — “may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:”

Colossians 1:18 — “And he is the head of the body, the church”

Ephesians 1:22 — “and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,”

Colossians 2:19 — “And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered”

2. One Spiritual Body In Jesus Christ

1 Corinthians 12:13 — “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body”

Romans 12:5 — “So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.”

Ephesians 2:16 — “And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross”

1 Corinthians 12:27 — “Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.”

3. Every Member Contributes To The Whole

1 Corinthians 12:18 — “But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.”

1 Corinthians 12:21 — “And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee”

1 Corinthians 12:25 — “but that the members should have the same care one for another.”

1 Peter 4:10 — “As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another”

4. Different Measures Of Grace And Service

Ephesians 4:7 — “But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.”

Romans 12:6 — “Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us”

1 Corinthians 12:11 — “dividing to every man severally as he will.”

Philippians 2:13 — “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”

5. Spiritual Increase And Christian Maturity

1 Corinthians 3:6 — “I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.”

Ephesians 4:13 — “Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God”

Colossians 1:10 — “being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;”

2 Peter 3:18 — “But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

6. Edification Must Operate In Love

Ephesians 4:16 — “maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.”

1 Thessalonians 5:11 — “Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.”

Romans 14:19 — “things wherewith one may edify another.”

1 Corinthians 13:6 — “Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;”

7. Biblical Ministry Protects And Strengthens The Body

Ephesians 4:12 — “For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:”

Ephesians 4:14 — “That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine”

2 Timothy 2:15 — “rightly dividing the word of truth.”

Ephesians 4:29 — “but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.”

5. Reflection

Ephesians 4:16 exposes the foolishness of attempting to build Christ's Church around the importance of one earthly religious personality. Paul describes a whole body receiving its life and direction from Jesus Christ, with every member contributing according to the measure of grace supplied by the Lord. That arrangement leaves no room for a preacher to behave as though the spiritual survival of his congregation depends entirely upon his personal greatness. Pastors and teachers possess genuine responsibilities, but their calling is to equip believers rather than establish permanent dependence upon themselves. The Church belongs to Christ, and its members must learn to serve under His authority. A preacher who makes himself indispensable has not necessarily strengthened Christ's body; he may simply have convinced the congregation that its Head cannot function without his assistance.

The expression “fitly joined together” also confronts the tendency to confuse spiritual unity with organizational uniformity. Believers are united through the Holy Spirit's operation, not through denominational agreements or religious membership requirements. That spiritual relationship should produce practical cooperation, mutual concern, and faithful fellowship without demanding the abandonment of biblical distinctions. The Church must never sacrifice the gospel merely to appear united with organizations teaching another plan of salvation. Yet genuine Christians should not manufacture unnecessary divisions over matters that Scripture does not establish as tests of fellowship. Unity requires truth, and practical fellowship requires humility. The answer to religious division is not to discard

doctrine, but to allow God's word to govern both our convictions and our treatment of fellow believers.

The words “every joint supplieth” place a serious responsibility upon the ordinary Christian. The Lord did not establish His body so that a few gifted individuals could perform while everybody else remained a permanent audience. Every believer has opportunities to contribute through the grace and responsibilities God provides. Some may preach or teach, while others encourage, assist, pray, or perform practical service that receives little public attention. Those differences do not establish different degrees of salvation or make one member spiritually worthless. The important question is whether the believer is faithfully exercising his responsibilities. A Christian who continually complains about lacking another man's abilities may be overlooking the very work God has already placed before him.

The measure of every part also corrects the pride and jealousy that frequently damage Christian service. The believer who possesses unusual abilities should remember that those abilities were received rather than independently manufactured. Likewise, the person entrusted with less visible responsibilities should not assume that God considers his contribution insignificant. First Corinthians 12 teaches that the body requires different members performing different functions according to divine arrangement. The Lord will examine faithfulness rather than merely the outward prominence of a ministry. That should encourage diligence without competition and humility without discouragement. God never commanded the hand to become an eye, and He never instructed every Christian to become a copy of the most admired preacher in the congregation.

The increase described in this verse also demands a more biblical understanding of successful ministry. A congregation may grow numerically while remaining shallow in doctrine, careless in conduct, and vulnerable to false teaching. Genuine edification requires believers to become more firmly established in Scripture, more discerning concerning error, and more faithful in their daily responsibilities. The ministry gifts described earlier in Ephesians 4 exist to promote that development. The Church must therefore examine more than attendance records, financial reports, and public recognition when considering its spiritual condition. Sound teaching and obedient living remain indispensable. A church may acquire a larger building without developing a stronger body, and a crowded auditorium cannot substitute for Christians who actually understand and obey the Bible.

Finally, Paul concludes by declaring that the body edifies itself “in love,” establishing the spirit that must govern every legitimate contribution. Biblical love does not require overlooking false doctrine, excusing deliberate sin, or surrendering the authority of

Scripture. It requires believers to communicate truth, receive correction, bear appropriate responsibilities, and seek the spiritual welfare of others. The body cannot develop properly through bitterness, pride, or continuous competition among its members. Every Christian should therefore examine whether his conduct strengthens fellow believers or merely advances personal importance. The Lord has supplied His word, distributed gifts, and established Christ as Head over the entire body. A healthy Church is not built by religious celebrities competing for attention, but by redeemed people faithfully serving one another under Jesus Christ. When every member supplies what God has given, truth governs the work, and love directs the service, the body grows toward the maturity its Head intended.

Ephesians 4:17 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 4:17

"This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind,"

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord"

Paul begins this verse with a solemn declaration that marks an important transition in the fourth chapter of Ephesians. "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord" is considerably stronger than a casual suggestion concerning proper Christian behavior. The word "therefore" connects his warning with everything already established concerning the believer's spiritual calling, the unity of Christ's body, the ministry gifts supplied by the ascended Lord, and the necessity of growing toward spiritual maturity. Ephesians 4:1 commanded believers to walk worthy of their calling, and verses 11–16 explained how the body of Christ is to develop through sound doctrine, faithful service, and truth spoken in love. Now Paul applies those doctrines directly to the conduct of redeemed people. He is not content to establish their position in Christ while ignoring how they live afterward. A Christian who understands his heavenly calling but continues deliberately walking according to his former sinful habits has learned something about his position without taking seriously the responsibilities that accompany it.

The expression "testify in the Lord" also establishes the authority behind Paul's warning. He is not merely offering personal advice about respectable behavior or recommending the

social customs of one civilization over another. As the apostle of the Gentiles, he speaks with authority derived from Jesus Christ. First Thessalonians 4:1 similarly exhorts believers “by the Lord Jesus” concerning how they ought to walk and please God. First Corinthians 14:37 establishes that Paul's apostolic instructions are “the commandments of the Lord.” This matters because Christianity is not a collection of optional moral preferences arranged according to the opinions of individual congregations. The Lord who saved believers through grace also commands them concerning their conduct. Yet these commands must not be confused with conditions for purchasing salvation. Ephesians 2:8–9 has already established that salvation is God's gift, received through faith and not of works. The Christian does not obey in order to persuade Christ to become his Saviour; he is commanded to obey because Christ has already saved him. Grace establishes the relationship before duty governs the walk.

There is also a necessary distinction between apostolic authority and the authority claimed by modern religious personalities. Paul could testify in the Lord because he had received his commission from the risen Jesus Christ and was entrusted with the revelation of God's purposes for the Church. A modern preacher possesses no comparable authority to invent additional commandments or require unquestioning acceptance of his personal preferences. His responsibility is to communicate the written word faithfully. Second Timothy 2:15 commands the workman to study, rightly dividing the word of truth, while Second Timothy 4:2 commands, “Preach the word.” The Church is not obligated to follow a minister into doctrinal error merely because he claims to speak with unusual conviction. Nevertheless, when Scripture clearly establishes a responsibility, the believer must not dismiss it as somebody else's opinion. The preacher has no authority to manufacture commandments, but the Christian has no authority to ignore the commandments God has already written.

“that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk”

The second expression identifies the practical change expected from those who have received Jesus Christ: “that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk.” Notice the word “henceforth.” Paul establishes a distinction between the believer's former manner of life and the conduct appropriate after salvation. The Christian is not supposed to continue indefinitely under the same governing principles that characterized his life before receiving Christ. Ephesians 2:2 describes the former walk of the unsaved as being “according to the course of this world.” But Ephesians 2:10 declares that believers are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works. The order is unmistakable. Salvation comes first, and the new walk follows. Paul is not demanding that sinners become sufficiently righteous to qualify for the new birth. He is commanding those already redeemed to stop living as

though nothing has changed. The grace that rescues a sinner from condemnation was never intended to leave him contentedly practicing the very sins from which Christ redeemed him.

The expression “other Gentiles” requires careful attention to the people being addressed. Paul is writing to believers at Ephesus, including Gentiles who had formerly been strangers from the covenants of promise and without God in the world, as Ephesians 2:11–12 explains. Yet through the blood of Jesus Christ, those who were once far off had been made nigh. The apostle is therefore not declaring that Gentile nationality itself makes somebody wicked or that Jewish nationality automatically produces righteousness. He is contrasting redeemed Gentiles with the surrounding unbelieving world. The same gospel saves Jews and Gentiles through faith in Jesus Christ, and First Corinthians 12:13 explains that both are baptized by one Spirit into one body. Their spiritual union does not erase Israel's distinct national promises, but it establishes their common position in Christ. The Gentile believer is not commanded to become a Jew under the law of Moses. He is commanded to live as a Christian under the grace and authority of Jesus Christ.

The word “walk” describes the believer's habitual conduct, decisions, attitudes, relationships, and practical course through life. It reaches far beyond attendance at religious services or the ability to repeat familiar biblical expressions. Galatians 5:16 commands, “Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.” Romans 6:4 likewise speaks of walking “in newness of life.” Those passages describe the practical responsibilities of saved people who still possess fleshly desires and must continually submit themselves to God. The believer may work among unbelievers, live within an ungodly society, and encounter circumstances requiring contact with the world, but he is not required to adopt the world's moral standards. Separation from sinful conduct is not permission for arrogance, cruelty, or withdrawal from the responsibility to preach the gospel. It is a command to maintain a testimony consistent with Christ. The Christian has been sent into the world as a witness, not returned to the world's former bondage as a willing participant.

“in the vanity of their mind”

The final expression identifies the inward condition underlying the outward conduct Paul condemns: “in the vanity of their mind.” The word “vanity” describes emptiness, futility, and thinking directed toward things that cannot produce the spiritual life and righteousness mankind needs. Paul is not suggesting that unbelieving Gentiles are incapable of intelligence, education, invention, or impressive accomplishments. The problem concerns their spiritual understanding and the principles governing their lives apart from God. Romans 1:21 declares that men “became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart

was darkened." The next verse adds, "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools." Those statements reveal how human reasoning can become corrupted when it rejects divine truth. A person may possess extraordinary intellectual ability while remaining ignorant of salvation through Jesus Christ. A brilliant mind can calculate the distance between distant stars and still fail to understand why a guilty sinner needs the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The following verse explains the spiritual consequences of this vanity. Ephesians 4:18 describes unbelievers as "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." Notice the progression. The problem begins within the person's understanding and heart, then expresses itself through alienation from God's life and conduct contrary to His will. This is not merely a shortage of religious information that can be corrected through an impressive academic program. First Corinthians 2:14 declares, "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him." The natural mind requires spiritual illumination through God's truth, and the sinner needs regeneration through faith in Christ. Education may improve human knowledge and conduct, but it cannot accomplish the new birth. A university may teach a man how the world operates, but it cannot award him eternal life with his diploma. That gift comes through Jesus Christ.

This warning also applies directly to believers who allow the thinking of their former lives to govern their present conduct. Although the Christian has received spiritual life, he still possesses the capacity to entertain vain thoughts, adopt worldly assumptions, and yield to fleshly desires. Romans 12:2 commands, "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." Ephesians 4:23 likewise commands believers to "be renewed in the spirit of your mind." These instructions demonstrate that spiritual growth requires more than outward religious conformity. The believer's values, priorities, judgments, and desires must increasingly be brought under the authority of Scripture. He must learn to distinguish what is acceptable before God from what happens to be fashionable among men. A Christian can possess correct doctrine while still allowing pride, covetousness, bitterness, or worldly ambition to direct his thinking. The Lord did not save the believer merely to change the label on his religious identity while leaving the old man's thinking in charge of every decision.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 4:17 marks the transition from the doctrinal establishment of Christ's body to the practical responsibilities of believers who have received salvation through Jesus Christ. Paul's solemn testimony in the Lord establishes that Christian conduct is governed by divine authority rather than personal preference. The command to walk no longer as other

Gentiles walk distinguishes the redeemed person's new responsibilities from the sinful practices associated with his former life. This change does not purchase salvation, erase Gentile identity, or place Christians under Israel's Mosaic covenant. It expresses the practical holiness appropriate to people who have been saved by grace and spiritually united to Christ.

The verse also reveals that outward conduct grows from inward thinking. The vanity of the unrenewed mind produces spiritual emptiness because human reasoning separated from God's truth cannot supply salvation or genuine holiness. Believers must therefore resist conformity to worldly thinking and continually submit their minds to the Scriptures. The central lesson is that the Christian who possesses a new position in Jesus Christ must no longer allow the principles of his former unsaved life to govern his daily walk.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. The Lord Commands A Worthy Walk

Ephesians 4:1 — “beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,”

1 Thessalonians 4:1 — “how ye ought to walk and to please God”

Colossians 1:10 — “That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing”

1 Corinthians 14:37 — “the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.”

2. The Former Walk Of The Unsaved

Ephesians 2:2 — “Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world”

Titus 3:3 — “For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures”

1 Peter 4:3 — “For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles”

Romans 6:4 — “even so we also should walk in newness of life.”

3. Gentiles Brought Near Through Christ

Ephesians 2:12 — “That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel”

Ephesians 2:13 — “But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.”

1 Corinthians 12:13 — “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body”

Galatians 3:28 — “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free”

4. Salvation By Grace Produces A Changed Walk

Ephesians 2:8 — “For by grace are ye saved through faith”

Ephesians 2:10 — “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works”

Titus 2:12 — “Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;”

Galatians 5:13 — “only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.”

5. The Vanity Of The Unrenewed Mind

Romans 1:21 — “but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.”

Romans 1:22 — “Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,”

Ephesians 4:18 — “Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God”

1 Corinthians 3:19 — “For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God.”

6. The Believer's Mind Must Be Renewed

Romans 12:2 — “but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind”

Ephesians 4:23 — “And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;”

Colossians 3:2 — “Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.”

2 Corinthians 10:5 — “and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;”

7. Putting Away The Former Life

Ephesians 4:20 — “But ye have not so learned Christ;”

Ephesians 4:22 — “That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;”

Ephesians 4:24 — “And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”

Galatians 5:16 — “Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.”

5. Reflection

Ephesians 4:17 confronts one of the most dangerous assumptions in modern Christianity: the idea that a person can receive Jesus Christ as Saviour and then treat practical holiness as an unnecessary religious inconvenience. Paul does not establish salvation by works, nor does he threaten the believer with the loss of eternal life whenever the flesh gains an advantage. He commands redeemed people to stop walking according to the principles that governed their former lives. That distinction matters because the finished work of Christ provides salvation, while the believer's conduct should reflect the spiritual life received through Him. A Christian who continues deliberately embracing the world's sinful standards has misunderstood the purpose of grace. The Lord did not redeem His people from the bondage of sin so they could spend the rest of their lives decorating their chains and calling the arrangement Christian liberty.

The expression “other Gentiles” also requires believers to understand their position in God's present dealings with mankind. The Ephesians included Gentiles who had once been strangers from Israel's covenants and without God in the world, yet Christ had brought them near through His blood. Their salvation did not transform them into ethnic Jews or require them to obtain righteousness through the Mosaic law. It placed them spiritually into the one body of Jesus Christ through the operation of the Holy Spirit. Consequently, Paul's command concerns a changed manner of life rather than a change of nationality. The saved Gentile should no longer follow the sinful practices characterizing his former existence. The Church is not Israel wearing a different religious uniform, and the Christian's holiness is not established by borrowing the ceremonial obligations of a covenant God gave to another people.

The vanity of the unrenewed mind presents an equally serious warning because sinful conduct often begins with corrupted thinking. A person may become convinced that personal pleasure determines morality, financial success establishes worth, or public popularity proves that his choices are right. These assumptions may receive enthusiastic approval from society while remaining contrary to Scripture. Romans 1 demonstrates how human reasoning becomes vain when people refuse to glorify God according to the truth revealed to them. Yet intellectual ability does not automatically establish spiritual understanding, and considerable education cannot substitute for regeneration. The Christian must therefore examine the principles governing his own thinking rather than merely criticizing the world's outward behavior. A man may possess enough education to impress an entire university and still be spiritually foolish if he refuses the truth Almighty God has revealed.

This verse should also correct the tendency to measure Christian separation entirely by outward appearances. A believer may abandon certain habits, avoid particular entertainments, and learn to speak the language of respectable religion while continuing to cherish worldly pride, bitterness, covetousness, or selfish ambition. Paul identifies the vanity of the mind because outward conduct proceeds from inward thinking. Romans 12:2 commands believers to be transformed through the renewing of their minds, and Ephesians 4:23 repeats that responsibility. The Christian must allow Scripture to correct his desires and judgments as well as his visible behavior. That work requires honest self-examination rather than constant comparison with people whose sins appear more obvious. It is entirely possible to look separated from the world on Sunday while allowing the world's ambitions to govern every decision made on Monday.

The responsibility to walk differently must never become an excuse for arrogance toward unbelievers. Paul reminds Christians elsewhere that they themselves formerly lived in disobedience and deception before receiving God's mercy. The gospel is intended to reach lost sinners, not provide saved people with a platform from which to boast about their superiority. Believers should reject sinful practices while treating those who remain lost as people who need the same Saviour they once needed. Clear biblical preaching may expose error and confront rebellion, but the purpose should be to communicate truth rather than display personal contempt. Christians must remain faithful witnesses without adopting the conduct they condemn. The believer is called to be distinct from the world in holiness, not distinguished from everybody else by an unusually impressive collection of insults.

Finally, Ephesians 4:17 brings the entire preceding discussion of spiritual maturity into practical focus. Christ gave ministers to establish His people in truth so they would no longer remain children carried about by false doctrine. But sound doctrine must eventually govern the believer's walk, or biblical knowledge becomes little more than religious information. The Christian should therefore examine his habits, speech, relationships, entertainments, ambitions, and private thoughts according to the Scriptures. He should acknowledge where the flesh has regained influence and seek the Lord's strength to walk in the Spirit. His confidence must remain in Christ's finished sacrifice, while his conduct should increasingly reflect the new life he possesses. The world may continue walking in the vanity of its mind, but the redeemed have been given a better way. The Christian who belongs to Jesus Christ should no longer live as though he has never met Him.

Ephesians 4:18 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 4:18

"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:"

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"Having the understanding darkened"

Paul begins this verse by describing the spiritual condition of the unbelieving Gentiles mentioned in Ephesians 4:17. Their manner of life is characterized by "the vanity of their mind," and now the apostle explains what accompanies that vanity: "Having the understanding darkened." Notice that he does not accuse every unsaved person of possessing an inferior intellect. A lost man may understand mathematics, medicine, philosophy, engineering, government, and history while remaining spiritually blind concerning the things of Almighty God. The problem is not necessarily an absence of natural intelligence but the condition of the understanding when separated from divine truth. Romans 1:21 declares that men "became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened." Their darkness is connected with their failure to glorify God according to the truth available to them. A man may possess enough intelligence to explain how the stars move across the heavens and still lack the spiritual understanding to recognize the Creator before whom he must answer.

This darkness must also be understood in relation to the work of Satan and the unbelieving response of mankind. Second Corinthians 4:4 declares, "In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." There is the enemy's interest in keeping sinners ignorant of the gospel. The devil does not need every unbeliever to become openly hostile toward religion. He is quite satisfied when a person becomes so occupied with religious activity, intellectual speculation, or worldly success that he never recognizes his need for Jesus Christ. First Corinthians 2:14 further declares that the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God because they are spiritually discerned. This does not mean the gospel is beyond ordinary communication, for God commands it to be preached and believed. It means spiritual truth cannot be properly received through natural reasoning that rejects God's revelation. The darkness of the unsaved mind cannot be cured merely by increasing the amount of worldly information stored inside it. The sinner needs the light of God's truth concerning Jesus Christ.

“being alienated from the life of God”

The second expression identifies the dreadful spiritual condition accompanying darkened understanding: “being alienated from the life of God.” The word alienated describes separation and estrangement. Paul is not saying that unbelievers have ceased to exist, lost their natural consciousness, or become incapable of participating in ordinary human activities. They possess physical life, but they lack the spiritual life received through salvation in Jesus Christ. Ephesians 2:1 has already described the former condition of believers as “dead in trespasses and sins.” That death concerns spiritual separation from God, not the absence of biological activity. Ephesians 2:12 likewise reminds the Gentile believers that they had once been “having no hope, and without God in the world.” They lived, worked, reasoned, and participated in society while lacking the saving relationship now possessed through Christ. A man can be very much alive according to the records of a hospital and still be spiritually dead according to the testimony of Almighty God.

This alienation also establishes why salvation cannot be reduced to moral improvement or religious education. Colossians 1:21 describes believers' former condition as “alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works,” while the following verse identifies their reconciliation through Christ's death. The sinner's problem is not merely that he has failed to discover an agreeable religious philosophy. He is separated from the life of God and needs reconciliation through the finished sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. Romans 5:10 explains that believers were reconciled to God by the death of His Son while they were enemies. That reconciliation is received through faith, not through the sinner's ability to manufacture spiritual life by personal effort. John 14:6 identifies Jesus Christ as “the way, the truth, and the life.” Eternal life is found in Him, not in a collection of religious accomplishments. No amount of polishing the old man can produce the new birth, because spiritual death is not a problem that can be solved through better manners and a respectable church attendance record.

“through the ignorance that is in them”

Paul next identifies the ignorance associated with this alienation: “through the ignorance that is in them.” This expression must not be mistaken for the innocent lack of information experienced by someone who has simply never studied a particular subject. The context concerns spiritual ignorance associated with a darkened understanding and a blinded heart. Scripture distinguishes between someone who has not yet heard the truth and someone who resists the truth when confronted with it. Romans 1:19–21 demonstrates that mankind is accountable for its response to God's revelation, while Acts 17:30 declares, “And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent.” Paul preached those words at Athens, where religious activity and

intellectual discussion were abundant. The Athenians possessed altars, traditions, and philosophical opinions, yet needed the truth concerning the God who made all things and the risen Christ through whom judgment would come. A city may be crowded with temples, surrounded by philosophers, and filled with religious conversation while remaining desperately ignorant of the God it claims to be searching for.

The ignorance described here also exposes the danger of confusing sincerity with truth. Romans 10:2–3 describes Israelites who possessed zeal for God but lacked knowledge, seeking to establish their own righteousness rather than submitting to God's righteousness. That passage concerns Israel, not the Gentiles specifically addressed in Ephesians 4:18, but it establishes a principle extending beyond nationality: religious enthusiasm does not guarantee spiritual understanding. The unsaved Gentile may trust philosophy, idolatry, or personal goodness, while another person may trust ceremonies, traditions, or religious inheritance. Their particular errors differ, but none of those substitutes can accomplish salvation. John 17:3 identifies eternal life in relation to knowing the only true God and Jesus Christ whom He sent. Consequently, the gospel must address ignorance with revealed truth rather than simply reassuring people that whatever they sincerely believe must be acceptable. A man may sincerely believe he is traveling toward heaven while following a religious road that never leads him to Jesus Christ. Sincerity cannot correct a false destination.

“because of the blindness of their heart”

The final expression reveals the inward condition underlying the entire description: “because of the blindness of their heart.” Paul does not locate the problem exclusively in the intellect. He identifies the heart, the inward seat of the person's affections, desires, purposes, and moral response to truth. Spiritual darkness is therefore more serious than the inability to solve a difficult theological question. The heart may resist truth because that truth exposes sin and demands submission to God. John 3:19 declares, “And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.” Notice that love for darkness enters the explanation. Men do not always reject divine truth because they have examined every argument and concluded that the evidence is insufficient. Sometimes they reject it because they love the conduct that truth condemns. A darkened heart may spend a lifetime manufacturing intellectual excuses for a rebellion that began long before the argument was invented.

The blindness of the heart also explains the dangerous progression described in Ephesians 4:17–19. First comes walking in the vanity of the mind, then the darkened understanding and alienation from God's life, followed by the ignorance and blindness described in verse 18. Verse 19 continues, “Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto

lasciviousness." The passage depicts the terrible moral consequences of resisting divine truth and surrendering to sinful desires. Hebrews 3:13 warns concerning being "hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." Sin does not merely produce guilt; when cherished and repeatedly defended, it can dull the conscience and strengthen resistance to correction. Yet the believer should not conclude that all unbelievers have reached the same degree of hardening or that any particular sinner lies beyond the saving power of Christ. First Timothy 1:15 declares that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. The answer to the blinded heart is not a cleverer excuse for continuing in darkness, but the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, who alone can give life to the spiritually dead.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 4:18 exposes the spiritual condition of mankind apart from the saving life found in Jesus Christ. Paul identifies four closely connected realities: darkened understanding, alienation from God's life, spiritual ignorance, and blindness of heart. These descriptions do not mean unbelievers are incapable of natural intelligence or moral accomplishments. They concern the spiritual darkness arising from mankind's separation from God and resistance to His truth. The surrounding passage particularly describes the unsaved Gentiles whose former manner of life the Ephesian believers were commanded to abandon. Yet the broader doctrinal principles apply to sinners of every nationality, since both Jews and Gentiles require salvation through Jesus Christ.

The verse also demonstrates why religious education, human philosophy, and moral reform cannot substitute for regeneration. The sinner needs the light of the gospel and reconciliation through the blood of Jesus Christ, while the saved believer must continue renewing his mind through Scripture. Spiritual ignorance must not be confused with the ordinary absence of education, and blindness of heart must not be mistaken for a condition beyond the saving power of God. The central lesson is that mankind's deepest darkness is spiritual rather than intellectual, and only the truth of Jesus Christ can bring the sinner from alienation into the life of God.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. The Understanding Darkened By Sin

Romans 1:21 — "but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened."

1 Corinthians 2:14 — "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him:"

2 Corinthians 4:4 — “In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not”

John 3:19 — “men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.”

2. Alienation From The Life Of God

Ephesians 2:1 — “who were dead in trespasses and sins;”

Ephesians 2:12 — “having no hope, and without God in the world:”

Colossians 1:21 — “And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works”

Romans 5:10 — “For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son”

3. Spiritual Ignorance Cannot Produce Salvation

Acts 17:30 — “And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:”

Romans 10:3 — “For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness”

1 Corinthians 1:21 — “the world by wisdom knew not God”

1 Timothy 1:13 — “but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.”

4. The Blindness And Hardening Of The Heart

Mark 3:5 — “being grieved for the hardness of their hearts”

Hebrews 3:13 — “lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.”

Ephesians 4:19 — “Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness”

John 3:19 — “And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world”

5. Jesus Christ Brings Light Into Darkness

John 8:12 — “I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.”

Colossians 1:13 — “Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:”

2 Corinthians 4:6 — “For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts”

1 Peter 2:9 — “who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:”

6. Reconciliation And New Life Through Christ

Ephesians 2:8 — “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:”

Colossians 1:14 — “In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:”

John 3:3 — “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

Romans 5:1 — “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:”

7. The Believer's Mind Must Be Renewed

Romans 12:2 — “but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind”

Ephesians 4:20 — “But ye have not so learned Christ;”

Ephesians 4:23 — “And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;”

Colossians 3:10 — “And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:”

5. Reflection

Ephesians 4:18 ought to correct the popular assumption that mankind's greatest problem is simply a shortage of education, opportunity, or intellectual development. Those things certainly matter within ordinary human life, but Scripture identifies a far deeper condition. The unsaved person possesses a darkened spiritual understanding and remains alienated from the life of God. A man may graduate from the finest university, acquire extraordinary knowledge, and earn the admiration of his generation without possessing eternal life through Jesus Christ. Human intelligence cannot reconcile a guilty sinner to Almighty God. Neither can an impressive collection of religious opinions accomplish regeneration. The world may know how to educate the mind, but only the Lord Jesus Christ can give spiritual life to the sinner who is dead in trespasses and sins.

The blindness of the heart also exposes why some people resist the gospel despite hearing its message repeatedly. John 3:19 explains that men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. That statement identifies a moral problem extending beyond

intellectual disagreement. Divine truth exposes human guilt, confronts cherished sins, and declares that righteousness cannot be earned through personal accomplishments. Such a message is unwelcome to the flesh because fallen man prefers a religion that congratulates his goodness rather than exposes his need for redemption. Nevertheless, Christians must not assume that every unbeliever consciously understands every implication of the truth he rejects. Ignorance, deception, pride, and hardened desires may all contribute to spiritual resistance. The gospel is not rejected merely because it is difficult to understand; sometimes it is rejected because the truth is clear enough to make the sinner uncomfortable.

This passage also demonstrates the inadequacy of religious sincerity. Romans 10 describes Israelites possessing zeal for God without submitting to His righteousness. Their sincerity did not correct their misunderstanding concerning justification. Similarly, the Gentiles described in Ephesians 4 lived according to principles that could not produce the life of God. Their religious traditions, philosophical ideas, and personal convictions could not supply the redemption accomplished through Christ's blood. The Christian must therefore proclaim salvation by grace through faith rather than suggesting that every sincere religious system provides an acceptable road to heaven. Such preaching should remain clear without becoming unnecessarily insulting toward those who have inherited false teaching. A wrong road does not become the right road because the traveler believes in it sincerely, and a false gospel does not become saving truth because its advocates are enthusiastic.

The progression from darkened understanding to hardness of heart should also warn believers against becoming careless concerning their own thinking. Although the Christian has received new life through Jesus Christ, he still possesses the capacity to entertain worldly assumptions and yield to sinful desires. Romans 12:2 commands believers to be transformed through the renewing of their minds. That responsibility involves more than memorizing religious expressions or defending favorite doctrines. It requires allowing Scripture to correct personal judgments, expose sinful motives, and govern daily decisions. A Christian may recognize the errors of unbelieving society while remaining remarkably blind to pride, bitterness, or covetousness within his own conduct. It is possible to possess enough Bible knowledge to identify the world's darkness while refusing to let that same Bible expose the darkness we have permitted in our own habits.

The distinction between natural knowledge and spiritual understanding should never become an excuse for intellectual laziness. Scripture commands believers to study, rightly divide the word of truth, and grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. God has not required His people to abandon careful thinking in order to demonstrate faith. He requires them to

submit their thinking to His revelation. Education and reasoning can be useful instruments, but they must never become authorities superior to the Scriptures. Likewise, biblical knowledge should produce humility rather than the conceit of imagining that every person with less understanding must be deliberately dishonest. The purpose of truth is to direct sinners toward salvation and establish believers in sound doctrine. The Christian's responsibility is not to become less thoughtful than the world, but to become more faithful in allowing God's word to govern what he thinks.

Finally, Ephesians 4:18 should deepen every believer's gratitude for the saving grace of Jesus Christ. Before salvation, the redeemed were themselves separated from God's life and dependent upon His mercy. They did not escape spiritual darkness through superior intelligence, greater moral worth, or membership in a more respectable religious institution. They were saved through faith in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. That remembrance should produce compassion toward lost sinners and seriousness concerning the gospel entrusted to the Church. The believer must proclaim Christ without compromising the truth, while remembering that he also once needed the light he now possesses. The greatest tragedy is not that men walk through this world without understanding everything around them, but that they can live an entire lifetime without knowing the Saviour who came to redeem them. The answer to spiritual darkness remains the same: Jesus Christ, the light of the world, and the life found through faith in His name.

Ephesians 4:19 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 4:19

"Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness."

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"Who being past feeling"

Paul continues his description of the unbelieving Gentiles introduced in Ephesians 4:17–18, revealing the terrible progression that occurs when spiritual darkness develops into moral insensibility. The expression "Who being past feeling" describes people whose hearts have become so accustomed to sin that the ordinary restraints of conscience no longer exercise their former influence. They have not necessarily lost every human emotion

or become incapable of affection, regret, or ordinary moral judgment. Paul is describing a spiritual and moral condition in which repeated surrender to ungodliness has hardened the heart against correction. Ephesians 4:18 has already identified darkened understanding, alienation from the life of God, ignorance, and blindness of heart. Now the consequences become increasingly apparent. Hebrews 3:13 warns believers against being "hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." Sin deceives because it rarely announces the full consequences of its demands. It begins by asking for permission, continues by demanding accommodation, and eventually teaches the sinner to defend what once troubled his conscience. The most dangerous stage of spiritual rebellion is not necessarily when a man commits a sin and feels guilty, but when he commits the same sin and congratulates himself for no longer feeling anything wrong.

First Timothy 4:2 describes another manifestation of hardened conscience through those who speak lies in hypocrisy, "having their conscience seared with a hot iron." That passage concerns false teachers, while Ephesians 4:19 describes the ungodly manner of life from which believers have been delivered. Nevertheless, the comparison establishes the seriousness of moral insensibility. A conscience repeatedly ignored can become increasingly unreliable as a warning against wrongdoing. Romans 2:15 describes conscience bearing witness, with thoughts accusing or excusing, yet Scripture never identifies human conscience as an infallible substitute for divine revelation. Conscience must be instructed and governed by the word of God. A person may feel comfortable with something Scripture condemns, while another may experience unnecessary guilt concerning a matter God has not forbidden. The standard remains God's revealed truth rather than the sinner's changing feelings. Christians must also recognize that persistent disobedience can dull spiritual sensitivity without cancelling the salvation of those genuinely born again. A man who has silenced his conscience has not silenced Almighty God. He has merely disabled one of the warnings that should have driven him toward the truth.

"have given themselves over unto lasciviousness"

The second expression reveals the deliberate surrender accompanying this hardened condition: "have given themselves over unto lasciviousness." Notice carefully that Paul says they "have given themselves over." The wording emphasizes personal responsibility. These people are not merely unfortunate victims of circumstances beyond their control, nor does the apostle excuse their behavior by claiming that moral rebellion is inevitable because society has become corrupt. They have surrendered themselves to sinful indulgence. The word lasciviousness describes unrestrained sensuality, shameless conduct, and fleshly desires exercised without proper moral restraint. Galatians 5:19

includes lasciviousness among the works of the flesh, alongside adultery, fornication, and uncleanness. The term reaches beyond a single outward act to the shameless disposition that excuses and pursues fleshly indulgence. Romans 1:24 describes God giving men up to uncleanness through the lusts of their hearts. The descriptions complement one another: mankind willingly pursues rebellion, and divine judgment may permit sinners to experience the consequences of the course they have chosen. Sin does not have to drag every man into its service by force when the flesh is already eager to volunteer for the assignment.

This surrender must not be confused with the ordinary presence of temptation in the Christian life. A believer may experience sinful desires without being required to obey them, and temptation itself is not identical to the deliberate practice of sin. Galatians 5:16 commands Christians to walk in the Spirit so they will not fulfill the lust of the flesh. Romans 6:12 likewise commands, “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.” Those instructions establish both the reality of the flesh and the believer's responsibility to resist its demands. The unsaved Gentiles described in Ephesians 4:19 had yielded themselves to lasciviousness, but Christians are commanded to live according to a different governing principle. This distinction does not make the redeemed incapable of serious disobedience, nor does it permit them to claim that eternal security makes their conduct irrelevant. Romans 6:1–2 rejects continuing in sin under the excuse that grace abounds. The flesh may continue making demands after salvation, but the Christian has no biblical authority to surrender the government of his life to an enemy Christ has commanded him to reckon dead.

“to work all uncleanness”

The third expression demonstrates that the surrender described by Paul does not remain merely an inward attitude: “to work all uncleanness.” The word “work” is significant because it identifies the active practice of unrighteousness. Sinful desires have become governing principles that express themselves through conduct. The word “all” emphasizes the breadth of the uncleanness being described, while uncleanness includes the moral and sensual corruption that stands contrary to God's holiness. Mark 7:21–23 establishes that defilement proceeds from the heart, identifying evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, and other wickedness among the things that defile a person. The problem therefore begins within before becoming visible through outward action. A corrupt mind produces corrupt desires, and desires deliberately entertained eventually seek opportunities for expression. Society may rename uncleanness as personal freedom, self-expression, or harmless pleasure, but changing the vocabulary does not change God's judgment concerning the conduct. A man can place an attractive label upon a barrel of sewage, but the contents do not become pure because somebody has improved the advertising.

This passage also establishes why Christian holiness must involve more than outward respectability. The next chapter declares in Ephesians 5:3, “But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints.” Paul is addressing redeemed people, commanding conduct consistent with their new position in Christ. He does not say that avoiding uncleanness purchases justification or that every believer becomes sinlessly perfect the moment he receives salvation. The Christian is saved through faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ, yet he remains responsible to refuse the flesh and pursue holiness. First Thessalonians 4:7 declares, “For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.” That holiness must govern private decisions as well as public appearances. A believer cannot claim spiritual maturity merely because his reputation remains respectable while he deliberately nourishes corrupt desires beyond public observation. The Lord does not require the Christian to become an expert at hiding sin. He requires him to recognize sin for what it is and refuse to make provision for the flesh.

“with greediness”

The final expression adds another disturbing characteristic to the picture: “with greediness.” The ungodliness described here is not merely practiced; it is pursued with an appetite that resists satisfaction. Greediness involves the desire for more, and within this context it particularly describes the grasping disposition with which people pursue uncleanness. The sinner who gives himself over to fleshly indulgence seldom discovers a permanent point at which his desires announce that they have received enough. What once appeared shocking gradually becomes familiar, and what once provided excitement may soon demand further indulgence. Proverbs 27:20 declares, “Hell and destruction are never full; so the eyes of man are never satisfied.” The comparison illustrates the restless appetite of fallen desire. Greediness may involve money and possessions, but here it should not be reduced to financial covetousness alone. Paul is describing an insatiable pursuit of corruption. The flesh is a terrible master because it continually promises satisfaction while demanding another payment for a satisfaction it never finally delivers.

The connection between uncleanness and covetousness becomes especially clear in Colossians 3:5, where Paul commands believers to mortify sinful desires and identifies “covetousness, which is idolatry.” Ephesians 5:5 likewise connects uncleanness with covetousness and idolatry. The underlying problem is the displacement of God's authority by desires that demand unrestricted obedience. Money may become an idol, but so may sensual pleasure, personal recognition, power, or any other appetite that a person determines to satisfy regardless of God's commands. Romans 6:16 warns that yielding oneself to obey establishes a relationship of service to the master being obeyed. The

Christian must therefore understand that unchecked desire is not an innocent companion merely because it remains hidden from other people. It is a dangerous influence that must be brought under the authority of Scripture. When desire becomes the master and conscience becomes the servant, a man has constructed an idol without needing a statue, an altar, or a pagan temple.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 4:19 reveals the moral consequences of the spiritual darkness described in the preceding verses. Paul identifies a progression from hardened moral sensitivity to deliberate surrender, the active practice of uncleanness, and an insatiable desire for further indulgence. These descriptions concern the ungodly walk from which the Ephesian believers had been called to separate themselves. They do not establish that every unbeliever displays the same degree of corruption or that hardened sinners are beyond the reach of Christ's saving grace. The passage reveals what happens when sin is permitted to govern the heart and conscience without submission to God's truth.

The verse also establishes essential distinctions concerning salvation and Christian conduct. Spiritual regeneration comes through faith in Jesus Christ, not through moral improvement or successful resistance to temptation. Nevertheless, believers are commanded to put off the former conversation, renew their minds, and walk in the Spirit. Eternal security does not provide permission for deliberate uncleanness, and the presence of temptation does not require surrender to sinful desires. The central lesson is that repeated submission to sin hardens the conscience, corrupts the conduct, and strengthens fleshly appetites, while the redeemed are commanded to live according to the new life they possess in Jesus Christ.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. The Conscience Hardened By Sin

Ephesians 4:18 — “Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God”

Hebrews 3:13 — “lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.”

1 Timothy 4:2 — “Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;”

Proverbs 28:14 — “Happy is the man that feareth alway: but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief.”

2. Sinners Surrendering To Their Lusts

Romans 1:24 — “Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts”

Romans 1:28 — “God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;”

John 8:34 — “Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.”

2 Peter 2:19 — “for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.”

3. Lasciviousness And The Works Of The Flesh

Galatians 5:19 — “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,”

Mark 7:21 — “For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders,”

2 Corinthians 12:21 — “and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed.”

Jude 1:4 — “turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.”

4. Uncleanness And Covetous Desire

Ephesians 5:3 — “But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints;”

Colossians 3:5 — “and covetousness, which is idolatry:”

Proverbs 27:20 — “Hell and destruction are never full; so the eyes of man are never satisfied.”

1 Thessalonians 4:7 — “For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.”

5. Putting Off The Former Life

Ephesians 4:20 — “But ye have not so learned Christ;”

Ephesians 4:22 — “That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;”

Ephesians 4:23 — “And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;”

Ephesians 4:24 — “And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”

6. Salvation Delivers Sinners From Darkness

1 Corinthians 6:11 — “And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified”

Titus 3:5 — “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us”

Colossians 1:13 — “Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:”

Ephesians 2:8 — “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:”

7. The Believer Must Refuse The Flesh

Romans 6:12 — “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.”

Galatians 5:16 — “Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.”

Romans 12:2 — “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind”

1 Thessalonians 4:3 — “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication:”

5. Reflection

Ephesians 4:19 presents one of the most sobering descriptions of moral decline in the New Testament because it reveals what happens when a person repeatedly resists the truth until sin no longer produces its former sense of shame. Paul is not describing an isolated failure followed by conviction and repentance. He describes a condition in which people have given themselves over to sinful indulgence and have become increasingly insensitive to its consequences. This should alarm anyone who imagines that sin becomes less serious merely because it becomes more familiar. Society may celebrate practices that previous generations condemned, but public acceptance cannot alter divine righteousness. The conscience that has stopped protesting is not necessarily a conscience that has finally discovered freedom. It may be a conscience that has been repeatedly silenced until its warnings are scarcely heard. The Christian must therefore measure conduct by Scripture rather than by the changing standards of society.

The expression “have given themselves over unto lasciviousness” also exposes the danger of treating fleshly desires as authorities that must always be obeyed. The world

increasingly teaches that an appetite becomes legitimate simply because it is deeply felt, while Scripture commands believers to exercise self-control and refuse the works of the flesh. Romans 6:12 warns Christians not to allow sin to reign in their mortal bodies. That command would be unnecessary if every desire experienced by a saved person were automatically righteous. Temptation may arise without invitation, but deliberate surrender involves responsibility. The believer must not excuse sinful conduct by claiming that resistance is impossible. The flesh may demand satisfaction with all the enthusiasm of a spoiled king, but the Christian is under no obligation to recognize its authority. Jesus Christ, not personal appetite, possesses the right to govern the redeemed.

The words “to work all uncleanness” demonstrate that inward corruption eventually seeks outward expression. Repeatedly entertaining sinful desires can weaken resistance and lead to conduct that once would have troubled the conscience. Yet the Christian must recognize the difference between being tempted and deliberately practicing unrighteousness. The Scriptures do not promise that salvation removes every struggle against the flesh. They command believers to mortify sinful desires and walk according to the Spirit. This requires practical decisions concerning what we entertain, encourage, pursue, and permit to influence our thinking. It also requires personal accountability rather than constant attempts to blame surrounding society. A man cannot continually invite sinful influences into his life and then act astonished when those influences begin shaping his conduct. Holiness must govern private choices as well as public appearances.

The addition “with greediness” reveals the restless appetite associated with unchecked sin. Fallen desire continually promises satisfaction but often becomes more demanding through repeated indulgence. What once seemed sufficient may eventually appear ordinary, producing a search for something more extreme or stimulating. This principle extends beyond sensual wrongdoing into covetousness, pride, and the pursuit of personal power. Colossians 3:5 identifies covetousness as idolatry because a desire can become an object of devotion that displaces obedience to God. The believer must therefore examine what governs his ambitions and priorities. The flesh is a master that continually increases its demands while diminishing the satisfaction it promises. The answer is not merely discovering a more respectable appetite, but bringing one's desires under the authority of Jesus Christ and His word.

This passage should also produce compassion toward sinners rather than spiritual arrogance. Paul reminds believers in First Corinthians 6:11, “And such were some of you,” before describing the cleansing, sanctification, and justification received through Jesus Christ. The redeemed did not escape sin because they were naturally superior to those who remain lost. They received the mercy of God through the gospel. Consequently,

Christians should condemn ungodliness without forgetting that the same Saviour who delivered them remains able to save others. Hardened sinners should not be treated as hopeless cases beyond the reach of divine grace. Nor should biblical warnings become permission to mock people who need salvation. The purpose of exposing darkness is not to congratulate ourselves for possessing light, but to direct those in darkness toward Jesus Christ. Truth should be proclaimed with conviction and with a sincere concern for the souls hearing it.

Finally, Ephesians 4:19 must be understood in connection with the glorious contrast introduced in the following verse: “But ye have not so learned Christ.” The Christian has received something the unsaved world cannot manufacture through education, entertainment, moral improvement, or religious ceremony. He has received salvation through faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ. That salvation does not make him incapable of sin, but it establishes a new spiritual position and responsibilities that must govern his walk. Ephesians 4:22–24 commands believers to put off the old man, be renewed in the spirit of their minds, and put on the new man. Those instructions demonstrate that genuine Christian growth requires deliberate submission to God's word. The believer must never confuse eternal security with permission to return to the bondage from which Christ delivered him. The world may surrender itself to lasciviousness, uncleanness, and greediness, but the redeemed have been called to something far better. We have not so learned Christ.

Ephesians 4:20 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 4:20

“But ye have not so learned Christ;”

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

“But ye have not so”

Paul opens this brief but powerful verse with a contrast that separates the Christian's calling from the spiritual condition described in Ephesians 4:17–19. The word “But” turns the entire argument away from the darkness of the unconverted Gentiles and toward those who have received Jesus Christ. The previous verses describe men walking in the vanity of their minds, possessing darkened understanding, alienated from the life of God, and

surrendering themselves to lasciviousness and uncleanness. Then Paul declares, “But ye have not so learned Christ.” He is not suggesting that Christians have suddenly become incapable of temptation or that salvation has permanently removed every sinful desire from their flesh. He is declaring that their new relationship with Jesus Christ is fundamentally inconsistent with the old manner of life. Ephesians 2:2 had already reminded these believers that they once walked according to the course of this world. Ephesians 2:10 subsequently identified them as God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works. The Christian is not commanded to manufacture a new spiritual identity through good behavior; he is commanded to live according to the new identity God has already given him.

The expression “ye have not so” should also correct the religious tendency to treat the gospel as permission for continued rebellion. Some people hear that salvation is by grace through faith and immediately conclude that obedience must be an optional inconvenience. But the same apostle who wrote Ephesians 2:8–9 also wrote Ephesians 4:20. He did not forget what he had taught about salvation when he began instructing believers concerning holiness. Romans 6:1–2 confronts the same error: “Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid.” The sinner is not justified because he has successfully abandoned every fleshly habit. He is justified through faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, the saved man has no biblical authority to embrace the very conduct God commands him to put away. Titus 2:11–12 declares that the grace of God teaches believers to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. Grace does not purchase the Christian a lifetime membership in the old man's rebellion. It delivers him from condemnation and teaches him to stop taking orders from the flesh.

There is also a necessary distinction between the believer's spiritual standing and his daily condition. The Corinthians were genuinely saved, yet Paul described some of them as carnal and as babes in Christ in First Corinthians 3:1–3. Their behavior contradicted their spiritual position, but Paul did not conclude that the gospel had become insufficient to save them. Likewise, a Christian may struggle with anger, pride, dishonesty, covetousness, or other sins without every failure proving that he has lost eternal life. That does not make those sins harmless. Ephesians 4:30 warns believers against grieving the Holy Spirit of God, whereby they are sealed unto the day of redemption. The indwelling Spirit is not an excuse for sinful conduct; His presence makes such conduct a serious contradiction. The Christian possesses a new spiritual relationship while continuing to confront the flesh. A believer may stumble into the old ways, but he has no business constructing a permanent residence there and hanging a sign over the door that reads, “Saved by Grace.”

“learned Christ”

The final two words reveal the extraordinary nature of Christian instruction: “learned Christ.” Paul does not merely say that the Ephesians learned a religious system, acquired a respectable moral philosophy, or memorized a collection of spiritual regulations. He identifies Jesus Christ Himself as the Person they have learned. This does not diminish the importance of doctrine, because the believer cannot rightly know Christ while rejecting the truths Scripture reveals concerning Him. John 1:1 establishes His deity, First Corinthians 15:3–4 establishes the gospel of His death, burial, and resurrection, and Colossians 1:18 identifies Him as Head of the Church. Yet learning Christ must extend beyond the accumulation of facts. Ephesians 4:21 continues, “If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus.” The believer is instructed through the truth concerning Christ, and that instruction should increasingly shape his thinking and conduct. A man can learn enough about a famous person to write his biography without ever knowing him personally, and he can learn enough religious vocabulary to impress a congregation without ever submitting his life to Jesus Christ.

The distinction becomes especially clear when comparing the Lord's invitation in Matthew 11:29: “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart.” Christ did not invite men merely to admire His teaching from a safe distance while refusing its authority. He called them to learn from Him. Paul later expressed his own desire in Philippians 3:10: “That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings.” The apostle already possessed salvation and substantial knowledge of divine revelation, yet he continued seeking deeper practical knowledge of the Lord. That desire did not require abandoning serious Bible study for mystical experiences. It required understanding the Scriptures, believing their testimony concerning Christ, and living under His authority. Second Timothy 3:16–17 establishes the Scriptures as sufficient for doctrine, correction, and instruction in righteousness. The Christian who continually demands another private revelation while ignoring the commandments already written in his Bible has not discovered a superior method of learning Christ. He has discovered a convenient way of avoiding the lessons already assigned.

Finally, “learned Christ” establishes why genuine Christian instruction must produce a changed direction in life. The verses immediately following explain that believers are to put off the old man, be renewed in the spirit of their minds, and put on the new man. Ephesians 4:24 declares that the new man “after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” That is considerably more substantial than an outward religious performance. The Christian must not merely exchange one set of social customs for another while allowing his inward desires to remain governed by the world. Romans 12:2 commands

transformation through the renewing of the mind, while Galatians 5:16 commands believers to walk in the Spirit. The new walk proceeds from the spiritual life already received through salvation, not from an attempt to purchase that life through moral effort. The old man remains corrupt according to deceitful lusts, but the believer is no longer required to submit to his demands. Learning Christ is not an academic exercise in which the student receives a certificate for knowing the answers while continuing to disregard every instruction the Teacher has given.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 4:20 establishes a decisive contrast between the unconverted Gentile walk described in verses 17–19 and the spiritual instruction received by those who belong to Jesus Christ. Paul declares that the Christian has not learned Christ according to the principles of spiritual darkness, lasciviousness, and uncleanness. Salvation establishes a new position through grace, while Christian instruction develops the believer's understanding of how that new position should govern his conduct. Learning Christ involves both receiving Him through faith and growing in the truth concerning His Person, His finished work, His authority, and His commandments. The verse does not teach salvation through moral achievement or absolute sinless perfection after conversion.

The statement also prepares the reader for Ephesians 4:21–24, where Paul describes hearing Christ, being taught in Him, putting off the old man, renewing the mind, and putting on the new man. Genuine Christian education must therefore accomplish more than producing religious information or impressive theological vocabulary. The believer should become increasingly obedient to Scripture, discerning concerning false teaching, and separated from the sinful practices that characterized his former life. The central lesson is that the person who has learned Jesus Christ must no longer allow the old man's thinking and conduct to govern the life Christ has redeemed.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. The Christian Must Leave The Former Walk

Ephesians 4:17 — “that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind,”

Ephesians 4:18 — “Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God”

Ephesians 4:19 — “Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness”

Ephesians 4:20 — “But ye have not so learned Christ;”

2. Salvation Establishes A New Life

Ephesians 2:8 — “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:”

Ephesians 2:10 — “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works”

2 Corinthians 5:17 — “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”

Romans 6:4 — “even so we also should walk in newness of life.”

3. Jesus Christ Is The Subject Of True Instruction

Matthew 11:29 — “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart:”

John 5:39 — “Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.”

Philippians 3:10 — “That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings”

Colossians 2:6 — “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:”

4. Christ Teaches His People Through Truth

Ephesians 4:21 — “If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus:”

John 17:17 — “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.”

2 Timothy 3:16 — “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:”

2 Timothy 2:15 — “rightly dividing the word of truth.”

5. Putting Off The Old Man

Ephesians 4:22 — “That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;”

Romans 6:12 — “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.”

Colossians 3:9 — “Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;”

Galatians 5:24 — “And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.”

6. The Mind Renewed And The New Man

Ephesians 4:23 — “And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;”

Ephesians 4:24 — “And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”

Romans 12:2 — “but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind”

Colossians 3:10 — “And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:”

7. Genuine Grace Produces Godly Conduct

Titus 2:12 — “Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;”

Galatians 5:16 — “Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.”

1 John 2:3 — “And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.”

Ephesians 4:30 — “And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.”

5. Reflection

Ephesians 4:20 contains one of the shortest and most searching statements concerning Christian conduct in Paul's epistles. After describing the spiritual darkness, hardened conscience, and uncleanness of the unbelieving world, the apostle declares, “But ye have not so learned Christ.” That statement should confront every Christian who has become comfortable allowing the old man's habits to govern his daily life. The Lord Jesus Christ did not save sinners so they could remain permanently satisfied with the very conduct His word condemns. Salvation is received through faith apart from works, but the grace that saves also teaches believers to deny ungodliness. A Christian who continually uses eternal security as an excuse for deliberate disobedience has confused the certainty of redemption with permission for rebellion. The blood of Christ secures the believer's salvation; it does not provide the flesh with a certificate authorizing continued wickedness.

The expression “learned Christ” also exposes the weakness of religious education that never reaches beyond the accumulation of information. A man may understand dispensational distinctions, memorize hundreds of verses, and explain difficult doctrinal controversies while remaining bitter, dishonest, or unwilling to accept correction. Such

knowledge may be genuine, but it has not produced the practical maturity Scripture requires. Paul did not merely command believers to learn about Christianity as an academic subject. He directed them toward Jesus Christ Himself, whose truth must govern both their understanding and their conduct. Second Timothy 3:16 establishes Scripture as profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness. The man who uses the Bible to correct everybody except himself has discovered a remarkably convenient method of studying Scripture without submitting to its authority.

The contrast between the believer's former walk and his present calling also requires careful doctrinal distinctions. Ephesians 2 declares that salvation is by grace through faith and not of works, while Ephesians 4 commands those already saved to abandon their former conduct. The order must never be reversed. A sinner cannot purchase regeneration through moral improvement, and a Christian cannot improve upon Christ's finished sacrifice through faithful obedience. Nevertheless, the believer is responsible to walk in newness of life because he has received a new spiritual relationship through Jesus Christ. Romans 6:1–2 rejects the suggestion that grace encourages continued sin. Good works are not the entrance fee into salvation, but they belong to the life God intends His redeemed people to live.

This verse should also correct the mistaken belief that Christian holiness consists merely of adopting outward religious customs. A person may learn respectable behavior, avoid certain public sins, and develop the vocabulary associated with conservative Christianity while permitting worldly desires to govern his heart. Paul addresses the old man's corruption and the necessity of renewing the mind because genuine spiritual growth must reach beyond appearances. The believer must examine his private thoughts, relationships, ambitions, entertainment, and personal decisions according to the Scriptures. He should acknowledge sinful habits rather than inventing explanations that make them appear acceptable. Galatians 5:16 commands believers to walk in the Spirit rather than fulfill the lust of the flesh. Changing the clothing worn by the old man does not make him the new man. Genuine Christian growth requires a renewed mind and conduct increasingly governed by God's truth.

There is also a necessary warning here for pastors and teachers. Christ gave ministers for the perfecting of the saints, not merely for producing congregations capable of repeating familiar religious expressions. A faithful ministry should teach believers who Jesus Christ is, what He accomplished through His death and resurrection, and how His word governs the Christian life. Sound doctrine must remain central, but it must be applied without confusing salvation and discipleship or replacing biblical correction with personal humiliation. The preacher's responsibility is to explain Scripture faithfully and encourage

obedience rather than construct an audience permanently dependent upon his personality. Believers should become increasingly established in the word of God and more capable of recognizing error. A congregation that knows its preacher's opinions better than it knows Christ's commandments has been trained to admire a servant without necessarily learning to obey the Master.

Finally, Ephesians 4:20 should produce gratitude, humility, and a renewed commitment to faithful Christian living. Before salvation, believers themselves walked according to the course of this world and possessed no righteousness capable of earning acceptance before God. The difference between the redeemed and the lost is not the superiority of human nature but the mercy of God revealed through Jesus Christ. That remembrance should prevent spiritual pride while encouraging holiness. Christians must reject the world's sinful practices without treating lost people as enemies beyond the reach of the gospel. They must proclaim Christ faithfully, receive correction humbly, and allow Scripture to govern their daily conduct. The world may continue walking in the vanity of its mind, but the Christian has received a better Teacher, a better calling, and a better life. The redeemed have not so learned Christ, and their walk ought to demonstrate that they belong to Him.

Ephesians 4:21 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 4:21

"If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus:"

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"If so be that ye have heard him"

Paul begins this verse with an expression that deserves careful attention: "If so be that ye have heard him." The apostle is continuing the contrast introduced in Ephesians 4:20, where he declared, "But ye have not so learned Christ." The previous verses described the unregenerate Gentiles walking in the vanity of their minds, with darkened understanding, spiritual alienation, and a conscience increasingly surrendered to uncleanness. Now Paul addresses those who profess to belong to Jesus Christ and reminds them of the instruction they have received. The expression "If so be" introduces a condition that confronts the reality of their Christian profession without requiring us to assume that Paul believes the entire Ephesian congregation is secretly lost. He is calling attention to the necessary

consistency between hearing Christ and living according to His truth. A man who claims to have received the Lord's instruction but deliberately embraces the conduct Christ condemns has introduced a serious contradiction into his testimony. The gospel does not merely provide a new religious identification while granting the old man permission to continue governing the life. If Christ has been heard, His word must be taken seriously.

The wording “ye have heard him” is especially significant because the Ephesian believers were not all standing beside the Sea of Galilee when Jesus Christ preached during His earthly ministry. Many were Gentiles who received the gospel through apostolic preaching and the ministry of those entrusted with the word of God. Ephesians 1:13 explains that they trusted Christ “after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation.” Romans 10:17 declares, “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” Consequently, hearing Christ must not be restricted to receiving an audible voice directly from heaven. The risen Lord made His truth known through the gospel preached by His appointed servants, and those hearing the apostolic message were confronted with Christ's own authority. Second Corinthians 5:20 describes the apostles as ambassadors for Christ, with God beseeching through them. That is considerably different from the modern practice of treating every inward impression as a personal announcement from the Lord. When the gospel of Jesus Christ is faithfully proclaimed from Scripture, the sinner is confronted with the authority of the Saviour, whether the preacher possesses an impressive personality or barely knows how to pronounce the theological words appearing in his sermon.

This expression also requires a distinction between hearing religious information and receiving God's truth through faith. A person may listen to thousands of sermons, memorize the essential statements of the gospel, and become familiar with Christian terminology without ever personally trusting Jesus Christ. John 5:39–40 records the Lord confronting religious men who possessed the Scriptures but refused to come unto Him for life. Their problem was not that the testimony concerning Christ had never reached their ears. They resisted the One whom that testimony identified. The same danger remains when an individual treats biblical instruction as something to collect, debate, or admire without believing its central message. First Corinthians 15:3–4 declares Christ's death for our sins, His burial, and His resurrection according to the Scriptures. That gospel must be received through faith rather than merely acknowledged as religious history. Yet the saved believer must continue hearing God's word for instruction and spiritual growth. Hearing the message is not the same thing as receiving the Saviour, and receiving the Saviour is not permission to stop listening to His word afterward.

“and have been taught by him”

The second expression advances the argument from hearing Christ to being instructed by Him: “and have been taught by him.” Notice that Paul does not merely say the Ephesians had attended religious meetings, acquired theological vocabulary, or received instruction from gifted men. He identifies Jesus Christ as the ultimate Teacher. Ephesians 4:11 has already explained that the ascended Lord gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers to His body. Those servants possess legitimate responsibilities, but their authority is derived from Christ and governed by His revelation. The Lord's people must therefore distinguish between the human instrument communicating doctrine and the divine authority upon which genuine doctrine rests. A pastor may faithfully teach the Scriptures, but he has no right to manufacture additional commandments and then insist that obedience to his personal preferences demonstrates submission to Jesus Christ. Second Timothy 4:2 commands, “Preach the word,” while Second Timothy 2:15 requires rightly dividing the word of truth. The true teacher does not establish his own throne above the congregation. He directs the congregation toward the Lord whose word he has been entrusted to explain.

Being taught by Christ also involves more than learning what happened during His earthly ministry. The Son of God revealed His deity, fulfilled the Scriptures concerning His first coming, offered Himself for sins, rose bodily from the dead, and ascended into glory. His truth was subsequently proclaimed and explained through the apostles, including the revelation entrusted to Paul concerning the Church as Christ's body. Ephesians 3:3–6 identifies the mystery made known by revelation, including believing Gentiles becoming fellowheirs and members of the same body through the gospel. That truth does not erase God's promises to Israel or turn every instruction given during Christ's earthly ministry into an identical command for the present Church. Rather, it requires the believer to recognize God's unfolding revelation and apply Scripture according to its context. John 1:17 declares that grace and truth came by Jesus Christ, while Colossians 2:6 commands, “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.” The Christian who genuinely desires to be taught by Christ must learn what Christ has revealed, not merely what religious tradition has decided to attribute to Him.

There is also a direct connection between the instruction received from Christ and the transformation required in the believer's conduct. The following verses command Christians to put off the old man, be renewed in the spirit of their minds, and put on the new man. Such commands reveal the practical purpose of being taught by the Lord. A person may master complicated prophetic distinctions while remaining dishonest, bitter, or governed by fleshly desires. Another may passionately defend salvation by grace while treating grace as an excuse to neglect the instructions governing Christian conduct. Neither condition demonstrates the maturity Paul intends. Titus 2:11–12 declares that the

grace of God teaches believers to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and to live soberly, righteously, and godly. The same grace that saves the sinner without his works instructs the redeemed concerning good works afterward. A student who can repeat every answer on the examination but refuses to perform the duties he has been taught has demonstrated a remarkable talent for collecting information while neglecting the purpose of education. The Lord did not teach His people merely to improve their religious vocabulary.

“as the truth is in Jesus”

The final expression establishes the standard by which everything supposedly learned about Christ must be examined: “as the truth is in Jesus.” Paul does not write that truth is whatever a religious institution declares, whatever a preacher sincerely believes, or whatever happens to produce the strongest emotional response. Truth is inseparably connected with the Person and revelation of Jesus Christ. John 14:6 records His declaration, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” John 1:14 identifies Him as the Word made flesh, while John 17:17 declares concerning God's revelation, “thy word is truth.” These passages establish that genuine Christian truth cannot be separated from the Lord who reveals it. The historical Jesus is not merely the founder of a religious philosophy that later generations are free to revise according to changing preferences. He is the eternal Son of God, the incarnate Word, and the risen Saviour. A religion may borrow the name of Jesus Christ while preaching doctrines that contradict His word, but borrowing the name does not make the contradiction true.

The expression also strikes at the popular assumption that sincerity can transform false doctrine into spiritual truth. A person may sincerely believe that water baptism regenerates the sinner, that personal righteousness contributes to justification, or that eternal life must be repeatedly earned through religious performance. But Romans 3:28 declares that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law, and Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes salvation by grace through faith, excluding works as its basis. Those declarations cannot be overturned by religious enthusiasm. Likewise, the Lord's truth does not authorize believers to abandon the distinction between Israel's national promises and the Church's present spiritual position. Scripture must be rightly divided rather than forced to support a theological system inherited without examination. The truth that is in Jesus includes His identity, His finished sacrifice, His present headship, and the responsibilities He has revealed for His redeemed people. A counterfeit gospel does not become authentic because it has been preached in a beautiful building by a sincere man wearing an impressive religious title.

Finally, the expression “as the truth is in Jesus” connects doctrinal truth with the righteousness and holiness described in Ephesians 4:22–24. Paul is not moving from

serious theology into an unrelated discussion of respectable behavior. He is explaining what the truth concerning Jesus Christ requires of those who have received Him. The believer is commanded to put off the old man, whose corruption proceeds according to deceitful lusts, and to put on the new man, created after God in righteousness and true holiness. Notice the contrast between the “deceitful lusts” of the old man and “the truth” found in Jesus. Sin deceives by promising freedom while producing bondage, but Christ reveals the truth that governs the believer's new life. Romans 12:2 commands transformation through the renewing of the mind, while Galatians 5:16 commands walking in the Spirit. These responsibilities do not purchase salvation; they flow from the life received through faith in Christ. The old man must be put off because his desires are deceitful, and the new man must be put on because the truth found in Jesus demands more than a change in religious terminology.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 4:21 establishes three essential realities concerning genuine Christian instruction: hearing Christ, being taught by Christ, and receiving the truth that is in Jesus. The verse continues Paul's contrast between the ungodly Gentile walk described in verses 17–19 and the different manner of life expected from those who have learned Christ. Hearing Him involves receiving the truth communicated through God's word rather than requiring a private audible revelation. Being taught by Him involves submitting to the doctrine He has revealed through the Scriptures and the apostles entrusted with His message. The expression “as the truth is in Jesus” identifies the Saviour Himself as the foundation of genuine Christian understanding and excludes religious teachings that contradict His revelation.

The passage also distinguishes saving faith from subsequent Christian instruction and spiritual standing from practical conduct. The sinner receives salvation through faith in Christ's finished work, while the redeemed must continue learning and obeying His word. Genuine instruction does not replace grace with law-keeping, nor does it excuse sin by appealing to eternal security. Instead, it prepares the believer for the practical responsibilities explained in Ephesians 4:22–24. The central lesson is that those who have truly heard and learned Jesus Christ must allow His truth to correct their thinking, govern their conduct, and separate their present walk from the deceitful ways of the old man.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. Christ Is Heard Through The Gospel

Ephesians 1:13 — “after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation”

Romans 10:17 — “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

2 Corinthians 5:20 — “Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us:”

1 Thessalonians 2:13 — “ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God”

2. The Lord Jesus Christ Is Our Teacher

Ephesians 4:20 — “But ye have not so learned Christ;”

Matthew 11:29 — “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart:”

Ephesians 4:21 — “If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus:”

Colossians 3:16 — “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom”

3. The Truth Is Found In Jesus Christ

John 14:6 — “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”

John 1:14 — “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us”

John 1:17 — “but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.”

John 17:17 — “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.”

4. Christ's Teaching Contradicts The Former Walk

Ephesians 4:17 — “that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind,”

Ephesians 4:18 — “Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God”

Ephesians 4:19 — “Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness”

Ephesians 4:22 — “That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;”

5. Salvation By Grace Produces Christian Responsibility

Ephesians 2:8 — “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:”

Ephesians 2:10 — “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works”

Titus 2:12 — “Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;”

Romans 6:4 — “even so we also should walk in newness of life.”

6. The Old Man Must Be Put Off And The Mind Renewed

Ephesians 4:23 — “And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;”

Ephesians 4:24 — “And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”

Romans 12:2 — “but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind”

Colossians 3:10 — “And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:”

7. Scripture Remains The Standard For Christian Instruction

2 Timothy 3:16 — “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:”

2 Timothy 2:15 — “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

1 John 4:1 — “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God:”

Galatians 1:8 — “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.”

5. Reflection

Ephesians 4:21 confronts a dangerous condition that can develop among people who spend considerable time around Christian teaching without allowing that teaching to govern their lives. Paul does not merely ask whether the Ephesians have attended religious meetings or become acquainted with the vocabulary of Christianity. He asks whether they have heard Christ and been taught by Him according to the truth found in Jesus. That question should trouble anyone who has become satisfied with possessing correct doctrine while deliberately resisting its practical demands. A man may defend eternal security, explain dispensational distinctions, and identify false teaching while remaining dishonest, bitter, or unwilling to receive correction. Such contradictions do not prove that biblical knowledge is unimportant, but they demonstrate why knowledge must produce obedient living. The Christian who knows how to defend every doctrine except the

doctrines that condemn his own behavior has not exhausted the teaching of Jesus Christ. He has merely learned which portions of the examination he prefers to answer.

The expression “If so be that ye have heard him” also distinguishes genuine faith from empty religious familiarity. A person may know the facts of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection without personally trusting Him as Saviour. The gospel is not merely an account of historical events to be admired; it is God's declaration concerning the sacrifice through which sinners may receive forgiveness and eternal life. Romans 3:28 establishes justification by faith without the deeds of the law, while Ephesians 2:8–9 excludes works as the basis of salvation. That distinction must remain clear because genuine obedience follows salvation rather than purchasing it. Neither should Christians conclude that every struggle against sin means they have never truly believed. The believer's standing rests upon Christ's finished work, while his conduct still requires growth and correction. The Lord does not save sinners because they have mastered every lesson, but those who belong to Him should never become satisfied with refusing the lessons He has already given.

Being taught by Christ also requires believers to recognize the authority of Scripture over human religious opinion. The Lord has supplied pastors and teachers for the edification of His Church, but those ministers remain servants rather than independent sources of divine revelation. A preacher may explain Scripture faithfully, yet he has no authority to establish personal preferences as commandments or demand unquestioning obedience to interpretations he cannot demonstrate from the Book. Likewise, a Christian who constantly seeks private revelations while neglecting written instruction has misunderstood how the Lord directs His people through His word. Second Timothy 3:16 identifies Scripture as profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness. These responsibilities include confronting error, correcting sinful conduct, and establishing sound understanding. A man who repeatedly announces that God has given him new instructions while disregarding the instructions already written is not demonstrating extraordinary spiritual insight. He is attempting to improve upon a Teacher whose authority requires no assistance.

The declaration “as the truth is in Jesus” also exposes religious systems that retain Christian terminology while contradicting the doctrine Scripture reveals. Jesus Christ is not merely one teacher among many, and His gospel is not one acceptable arrangement within a collection of contradictory plans of salvation. He is the eternal Son of God who became flesh, died for our sins, and rose again according to the Scriptures. Any teaching that makes human righteousness necessary to complete His saving work must be measured against the plain declarations of justification by faith. The same principle governs Christian

conduct, because the Lord does not authorize believers to defend sinful practices by appealing to modern fashions or religious popularity. Truth remains truth whether society celebrates it or rejects it. The name of Jesus Christ cannot sanctify a false gospel, and the appearance of Christianity cannot transform disobedience into holiness.

The immediate context also establishes why a renewed mind is indispensable to Christian maturity. Paul has described the vanity, darkness, and moral corruption characterizing the former Gentile walk, and he now reminds believers that such conduct is inconsistent with what they have learned from Christ. The following verses instruct them to put off the old man, be renewed in the spirit of their minds, and put on the new man. This means Christian growth cannot be reduced to adopting outward religious customs while maintaining the same inward appetites and ambitions. The believer must allow Scripture to examine his speech, motives, relationships, and personal decisions. That work requires honesty because the flesh is remarkably skilled at finding respectable explanations for conduct God has already condemned. The old man does not become the new man because he learns religious language. Genuine spiritual growth requires the Christian to stop defending what God's word commands him to put away.

Finally, Ephesians 4:21 should produce gratitude for the privilege of knowing Jesus Christ and seriousness concerning the responsibilities that accompany that relationship. The Christian has not been left to wander through life without divine instruction, nor has he been required to invent his own standard of righteousness. God has revealed the Saviour through whom salvation is received and has supplied the Scriptures through which believers may grow in knowledge and obedience. Every saved person should therefore approach biblical instruction with humility, willing to receive correction rather than merely collecting information. The purpose of Christian teaching is not to produce a congregation impressed with its own knowledge, but believers increasingly governed by the truth of Jesus Christ. This growth does not improve upon His finished sacrifice; it demonstrates the proper response of those who have received His grace. The world may continue learning how to excuse its darkness, but the redeemed have been taught by a different Teacher. If we have heard Christ, learned Christ, and received the truth that is in Jesus, our walk ought to reveal that we are no longer taking our instructions from the old man.

Ephesians 4:22 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 4:22

“That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;”

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

“That ye put off concerning the former conversation”

Paul begins this verse with a command that strikes directly at the practical conduct of every redeemed believer: “That ye put off concerning the former conversation.” The expression follows Ephesians 4:20–21, where the apostle reminds Christians that they have learned Christ and have been taught by Him according to the truth found in Jesus. Now he explains what that instruction requires. The words “put off” suggest the removal of something that no longer belongs upon the person wearing it. Just as a man removes filthy clothing rather than pretending it has become clean because he has purchased a respectable suit, the Christian must reject the sinful practices associated with his former life. The Lord does not command His people to improve the appearance of the old man until he becomes acceptable. He commands them to put him off. God never instructed the Christian to dress the old man in religious clothing and parade him through the church as an example of sanctification.

The word “conversation” deserves particular attention because its biblical meaning extends beyond ordinary speech. It concerns one's manner of life, behavior, and conduct. First Peter 1:18 refers to the “vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers,” demonstrating that the expression encompasses an entire way of living. Ephesians 2:2 has already described the former conduct of these believers: “Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world.” They had lived according to the principles governing the unregenerate world, but salvation had established a new spiritual relationship through Jesus Christ. The expression “former conversation” therefore looks backward toward the life that characterized them before conversion. Paul is not merely telling Christians to improve their vocabulary or avoid a few offensive expressions. He is demanding a fundamental change in the manner of life governed by the old nature. The Christian life is not merely a new way of speaking about the same old conduct; it is a new walk made possible through the life received in Jesus Christ.

This command must also be distinguished from the means by which a sinner receives salvation. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes that salvation is by grace through faith and not of works. The believer does not put off the old man successfully enough to persuade God to regenerate him. He receives salvation through faith in the finished sacrifice of Jesus Christ and is then instructed to live according to the spiritual position he possesses. Romans 6:4 describes this responsibility as walking “in newness of life.” The distinction between

standing and state is essential because confusing the two transforms Christian obedience into another system of religious bondage. Nevertheless, salvation by grace does not mean the believer may continue deliberately practicing the sins Christ commands him to abandon. Good works do not purchase salvation, but the absence of a purchase price does not make disobedience an acceptable use of God's gift.

“the old man”

The second expression identifies what the believer is commanded to put off: “the old man.” This is not merely a reference to somebody's unpleasant personality, bad habits, or lack of formal religious training. Paul is describing the old sinful identity associated with fallen humanity in Adam. Romans 6:6 declares, “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.” Notice the connection with the death of Jesus Christ. The old man's crucifixion is not accomplished by the Christian's determination to become respectable. It is associated with the believer's identification with Christ in His death. Romans 6:11 subsequently commands believers to reckon themselves dead indeed unto sin but alive unto God through Jesus Christ. The old man is not a slightly damaged version of the new man waiting for sufficient religious improvement. He belongs to the fallen condition from which the believer has been delivered through Christ.

Colossians 3:9 presents an important companion passage: “Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds.” Ephesians 4:22 commands believers to put off the old man concerning their former conversation, while Colossians describes the old man as already put off in connection with their new position. These statements must not be treated as contradictions. They reveal the difference between the believer's spiritual identification with Christ and the practical conduct required because of that identification. The saved person has been brought into a new relationship with Christ, yet he still possesses mortal flesh capable of sinful desires. Romans 7:18 records Paul's declaration, “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing.” Salvation does not eradicate the flesh or instantly remove every temptation. The old man has been crucified with Christ, but the Christian must still refuse the flesh when it attempts to govern his daily conduct.

This distinction also exposes the weakness of attempting to conquer sin entirely through human determination. A person may reform certain habits, develop self-discipline, and improve outward behavior without possessing the spiritual life received through regeneration. Such changes may be beneficial, but they cannot accomplish justification or create the new man. Second Corinthians 5:17 declares, “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.” The new creature exists because of God's saving work, not because

the sinner successfully educated his old nature into righteousness. After salvation, the believer must yield himself to God and walk in the Spirit rather than rely upon the flesh to produce holiness. Galatians 5:16 commands, “Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.” Trying to produce spiritual holiness through the unaided strength of the old man is rather like asking a thief to guard the treasury and then expressing astonishment when the money disappears.

“which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts”

The final expression reveals why the old man must be rejected: “which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts.” Notice that Paul describes the old man as corrupt, not merely uninformed, inexperienced, or temporarily confused. The problem reaches into the nature of fallen mankind. The old man's desires are not dependable guides to righteousness because they have been corrupted through sin. Jeremiah 17:9 declares, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” That statement belongs to God's revelation through Jeremiah, but its warning concerning the deceitfulness of the heart is consistent with Paul's description of the old man. The Christian must therefore reject the notion that a desire becomes righteous simply because it feels powerful, natural, or personally meaningful. The old man does not need better advertising. He needs to be refused, because his strongest recommendations frequently lead directly toward the sins God has condemned.

The phrase “deceitful lusts” also explains how sinful desire gains influence. James 1:14–15 declares that a man is tempted when he is drawn away by his own lust and enticed, and that lust, when it conceives, brings forth sin. Deception is essential to the process because the flesh rarely announces its intentions honestly. It promises pleasure while concealing consequences, advertises freedom while producing bondage, and encourages satisfaction while continually demanding more. The previous verses in Ephesians 4 describe unbelievers becoming past feeling and giving themselves over to uncleanness with greediness. That progression demonstrates what happens when sinful desires are repeatedly obeyed rather than resisted. Sin is a dishonest salesman who promises satisfaction, delivers bondage, and then convinces the customer that another purchase will finally make everything right. The Christian must recognize the deception before allowing desire to become the authority governing his conduct.

These deceitful lusts are not limited to sensual sins, although Ephesians 4:19 plainly includes uncleanness and lasciviousness. The flesh may also pursue pride, recognition, covetousness, revenge, bitterness, dishonesty, and the desire to control other people. A Christian may condemn obvious immorality while allowing his own heart to become consumed with jealousy or personal ambition. That is why the following verses address

lying, anger, stealing, corrupt communication, bitterness, wrath, and malice. Paul is not describing an abstract doctrine disconnected from everyday life. He is identifying the old man's corruption and then demanding practical obedience in the areas where that corruption appears. Romans 13:14 commands believers to “make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.” The Christian must not continually arrange opportunities for sin and then claim surprise when temptation becomes difficult to resist. A man cannot spend his days feeding the old man and his evenings complaining that the flesh has become unusually strong.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 4:22 establishes the believer's responsibility to reject the former manner of life associated with the old man. The command follows Paul's declaration that Christians have learned Jesus Christ and received instruction according to the truth found in Him. The expression “former conversation” concerns the conduct characterizing the believer's life before salvation, while “the old man” identifies the fallen nature and identity associated with Adam. The old man is described as corrupt because his desires are deceitful and contrary to God's righteousness. The Christian is therefore commanded to reject the practical influence of the old life rather than attempt to make sinful habits respectable through outward religious conformity.

The verse also requires the distinction between the believer's completed spiritual standing in Christ and his continuing responsibility to walk according to that position. Romans 6:6 identifies the old man as crucified with Christ, while Ephesians 4:22 commands practical rejection of the former conduct. Salvation is not earned through moral reform, and spiritual maturity does not require the impossible claim that the flesh has been eradicated. The following verses explain the corresponding responsibilities of renewing the mind and putting on the new man. The central lesson is that those who have received new life in Christ must no longer permit the corrupt desires of the old man to govern their daily conduct.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. The Former Conversation Must Be Abandoned

Ephesians 2:2 — “Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world”

Ephesians 4:17 — “that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind,”

1 Peter 1:18 — “from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers;”

Titus 3:3 — “For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures”

2. The Old Man Crucified With Christ

Romans 6:6 — “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him”

Galatians 2:20 — “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me:”

Colossians 3:9 — “seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;”

Romans 6:11 — “Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

3. Salvation Establishes The New Position

Ephesians 2:8 — “For by grace are ye saved through faith”

2 Corinthians 5:17 — “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature:”

Colossians 2:10 — “And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:”

Ephesians 1:13 — “ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,”

4. The Corruption Of Deceitful Lusts

Ephesians 4:22 — “the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;”

James 1:14 — “But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.”

Romans 7:18 — “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing:”

Galatians 5:17 — “For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh:”

5. The Believer Must Refuse The Flesh

Romans 6:12 — “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.”

Romans 6:13 — “Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin:”

Galatians 5:16 — “Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.”

1 Peter 2:11 — “abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;”

6. Renewing The Mind And Putting On The New Man

Ephesians 4:23 — “And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;”

Ephesians 4:24 — “And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”

Romans 12:2 — “but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind”

Colossians 3:10 — “And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:”

7. Practical Sins The Christian Must Put Away

Ephesians 4:25 — “Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour”

Ephesians 4:28 — “Let him that stole steal no more:”

Ephesians 4:29 — “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth”

Ephesians 4:31 — “Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:”

5. Reflection

Ephesians 4:22 exposes a dangerous misunderstanding concerning Christian living: the notion that salvation by grace somehow removes the believer's responsibility to reject sinful conduct. Paul does not command sinners to put off the old man in order to purchase redemption. He is addressing people who have already received Jesus Christ and are being instructed concerning the responsibilities of their new spiritual position. The order is essential because salvation is the gift of God, not the reward of successful moral reform. Nevertheless, the same grace that saves the sinner instructs the redeemed concerning holiness. The Christian has no business using the finished work of Christ as an excuse to continue enjoying the corruption from which that work delivered him. Grace establishes liberty from condemnation, not permission to surrender willingly to the old man's demands.

The distinction between the old man and the new man must also remain clear. Romans 6:6 identifies the old man as crucified with Christ, while Ephesians 4:22 commands believers to reject the former conduct associated with him. This does not mean that salvation instantly removes the flesh or eliminates every struggle against temptation. Paul himself acknowledged the corruption remaining in his flesh, and Galatians 5 describes the conflict between flesh and Spirit. A Christian may therefore experience sinful desires without being

required to obey them. The proper response is not to deny the existence of the flesh or pretend that every temptation proves salvation has disappeared. The believer's old man has been crucified with Christ, but the flesh has not received permission to conduct the Christian's daily affairs. Spiritual security and practical responsibility must never be confused.

The description “corrupt according to the deceitful lusts” also explains why the believer must distrust the promises of his former nature. Sin rarely approaches a person with an honest announcement concerning its ultimate consequences. It offers pleasure without responsibility, satisfaction without obedience, and freedom without submission to God. The first compromise may appear insignificant, but repeated surrender can establish habits that become increasingly difficult to resist. James 1 explains how lust entices and produces sin, demonstrating that sinful conduct begins before the outward act becomes visible. The Christian should therefore examine the desires he deliberately entertains rather than merely the conduct other people can observe. The flesh is an expert at presenting rebellion as a reasonable exception, and the man who continually accepts those exceptions will eventually discover that his exceptions have become his ordinary manner of life.

This passage also demands more than outward religious respectability. A believer may abandon visible sins while privately nourishing pride, bitterness, jealousy, dishonesty, or the desire for personal recognition. Such conduct may be less obvious than the uncleanness described in Ephesians 4:19, but it still belongs to the corruption of the old man. The following verses command believers to put away lying, sinful anger, stealing, corrupt communication, and malice. Those instructions demonstrate that Christian holiness must govern ordinary speech, relationships, and decisions. A man who publicly defends sound doctrine while privately refusing God's correction has not become spiritually mature merely because he knows the correct theological answers. The old man does not become holy because he learns to use religious language, and the Christian who merely conceals his sinful habits has not accomplished what Paul commands.

The practical answer is found in the relationship between putting off the old man, renewing the mind, and putting on the new man. These responsibilities belong together because merely abandoning one outward habit does not guarantee that the believer's thinking has become governed by Scripture. Romans 12:2 commands transformation through the renewing of the mind, while Galatians 5:16 commands walking in the Spirit. The Christian should acknowledge sin when God's word exposes it, refuse to make provision for the flesh, and pursue the conduct appropriate to his new life in Christ. That may require correcting dishonest statements, abandoning sinful influences, seeking reconciliation, or

establishing more faithful habits. None of those actions purchases eternal life, but they belong to obedience after salvation. God has not called His people to become experts at managing the appearance of the old man. He has commanded them to reject his influence and live according to the truth found in Jesus Christ.

Finally, Ephesians 4:22 should produce gratitude for salvation and seriousness concerning sanctification. Before receiving Christ, believers themselves walked according to the course of this world and possessed no righteousness capable of earning eternal life. Their deliverance came through the finished sacrifice of Jesus Christ, not through personal superiority over those who remain lost. That remembrance should prevent arrogance while encouraging faithful obedience. The Christian must never become so occupied with condemning the world's sins that he neglects the correction of his own conduct. He should examine his life according to Scripture, recognize the deceitfulness of sinful desires, and continually seek the Lord's strength to walk in the Spirit. The old man belongs to the former conversation, not to the direction in which the redeemed are commanded to walk. Christ did not save us so we could spend our lives improving the old man's reputation. He saved us by grace and commands us to live according to the new life we have received in Him.

Ephesians 4:23 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 4:23

“And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;”

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

“And be renewed”

Paul begins this verse with a command that reaches directly into the inward life of every redeemed believer: “And be renewed.” The word “And” connects the instruction with Ephesians 4:22, where Christians are commanded to put off the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts. The following verse will command them to put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. Between those two instructions stands the necessity of renewal. The old manner of life must be rejected, but rejecting former habits without correcting the thinking that supported them leaves a man vulnerable to returning to the same corruption. Romans 12:2 declares, “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.” Notice that

Paul does not describe spiritual growth as merely learning to appear religious before an audience. He addresses the inward thinking from which conduct develops. The old man does not become holy because somebody has cleaned up his appearance. The Christian needs more than a respectable exterior while the same corrupt thinking continues operating behind the walls.

The expression “be renewed” must also be distinguished from the new birth itself. Salvation is accomplished through faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ, not through an extended process of moral education. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes that sinners are saved by grace through faith and not of works, while Second Corinthians 5:17 declares that the individual in Christ is a new creature. Yet the Christian who has already received salvation remains responsible to grow spiritually. Second Corinthians 4:16 describes the inward man as being “renewed day by day.” The believer does not need to be born again every morning, spiritually baptized into Christ's body every afternoon, or sealed with the Holy Spirit again whenever he discovers another weakness. Ephesians 4:30 declares that believers are sealed unto the day of redemption. Their spiritual standing rests upon God's completed saving work, while their practical condition requires continuing growth and correction. Salvation is not an installment plan, and sanctification is not an attempt to finish the redemption Christ supposedly left incomplete. The saved man is commanded to renew his thinking because he already belongs to the Saviour.

This renewal is neither automatic in its practical effects nor something the flesh can accomplish independently of God. The Christian must receive the truth, submit to the Holy Spirit, and allow Scripture to expose the thinking that contradicts the Lord's revealed will. Colossians 3:10 describes the new man as “renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.” Knowledge matters because conduct must be governed by truth rather than by unexamined desires or inherited worldly assumptions. Second Timothy 3:16–17 establishes Scripture as profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness, furnishing the man of God unto all good works. That is God's appointed equipment for spiritual maturity. A man who continually feeds his mind upon corrupt influences while neglecting biblical instruction should not be astonished when his judgments begin resembling those of the world. You cannot spend six days teaching your mind to think like the old man and expect one hour of religious attendance to make every corrupt assumption disappear. The Book must be believed, studied, and obeyed if the believer expects its truth to govern his walk.

“in the spirit of your mind”

The second expression identifies the inward sphere in which this renewal must occur: “in the spirit of your mind.” Notice that Paul does not merely say the Christian should acquire

additional information. He reaches into the disposition, direction, and governing attitude of the mind itself. The expression should not be confused carelessly with every other occurrence of the word spirit in Scripture. First Corinthians 2:11 speaks of “the spirit of man which is in him,” while Romans 8:16 distinguishes the Holy Spirit from the believer's spirit by declaring, “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.” The phrase in Ephesians 4:23 concerns the inward orientation of the believer's thinking; it does not identify the human mind as the Holy Ghost or reduce spiritual renewal to natural intellectual improvement. The Holy Spirit works in the redeemed, but the Christian must submit his inner life to the truth He has revealed. A renewed mind is not merely a mind that has learned more religious words. It is a mind increasingly governed by a different authority, directed toward different priorities, and corrected by a different standard.

The immediate context demonstrates why such renewal is necessary. Ephesians 4:17 describes the unconverted Gentiles walking “in the vanity of their mind,” while verse 18 explains that their understanding is darkened and that they are alienated from the life of God. Their inward blindness contributes to the conduct described in verse 19, where they give themselves over to lasciviousness and uncleanness. Now Paul instructs believers to reject that former manner of life and renew the inward thinking that directs their decisions. Romans 8:6 declares, “For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.” The contrast involves more than the accumulation of religious knowledge. The carnal mind is governed by fleshly priorities, while spiritual-mindedness reflects submission to the things of God. A Christian may understand complicated prophetic distinctions yet still permit greed, jealousy, resentment, or personal ambition to govern his thinking. A man who can explain the difference between Israel and the Church but cannot distinguish righteous judgment from personal bitterness still has some renewing to do. Doctrinal accuracy should correct the person possessing it, not merely equip him to correct everybody else.

The command also reaches into what the believer deliberately entertains, values, and allows to direct his conduct. Philippians 4:8 instructs Christians to think upon things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report. Second Corinthians 10:5 describes “bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.” Colossians 3:2 commands, “Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.” These are not invitations to abandon reasonable thinking, ignore earthly responsibilities, or manufacture a continuous emotional experience. They are commands to bring the believer's reasoning and priorities into submission to divine truth. The Christian must learn to recognize when his judgments are being shaped by sinful desires rather than Scripture. He must also recognize that understanding the Bible does not grant permission to become proud,

careless, or unkind. First Corinthians 2:16 declares, “But we have the mind of Christ.” That privilege should govern how believers think, judge, speak, and serve. The renewed mind does not merely ask whether an action is profitable, popular, or personally satisfying. It asks whether the action agrees with the word of God and honors the Lord Jesus Christ.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 4:23 establishes the necessity of inward renewal in the believer's daily Christian life. Positioned between the command to put off the old man and the command to put on the new man, the verse explains that genuine spiritual growth requires a transformation in thinking rather than merely an improvement in outward behavior. This renewal must be distinguished from regeneration, which occurs through God's saving work when a sinner receives Jesus Christ through faith. The believer's standing in Christ is complete, but his mind must continually be brought into greater agreement with the truth of God's word. The old man's deceitful desires must no longer supply the principles by which the Christian evaluates life.

The expression “the spirit of your mind” directs attention toward the inward disposition governing the believer's thoughts, priorities, judgments, and decisions. The Holy Spirit works within redeemed people, while Scripture provides the doctrine, correction, and instruction necessary for growth. Renewal does not mean abandoning sound reasoning, chasing extraordinary feelings, or replacing biblical doctrine with religious enthusiasm. It means learning to evaluate life according to God's revelation rather than the assumptions of the flesh. The central lesson is that Christian transformation must reach the mind before it can consistently govern the walk, and the believer who has received new life in Christ must no longer allow the old man's thinking to direct his conduct.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. The Former Mind Must Be Rejected

Ephesians 4:17 — “that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind,”
Ephesians 4:18 — “Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God”
Ephesians 4:22 — “That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;”
Ephesians 4:24 — “And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”

2. The Inward Man Must Be Renewed

Romans 12:2 — “but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind”
2 Corinthians 4:16 — “yet the inward man is renewed day by day.”
Colossians 3:10 — “And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:”
Titus 3:5 — “according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;”

3. The Spirit And The Mind Distinguished

Romans 8:16 — “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:”
1 Corinthians 2:11 — “For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him?”
2 Timothy 1:7 — “For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.”
1 Corinthians 2:16 — “But we have the mind of Christ.”

4. God's Word Corrects The Inner Life

John 17:17 — “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.”
Colossians 3:16 — “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom”
2 Timothy 3:16 — “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:”
Psalm 119:11 — “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.”

5. Bringing Thoughts Under Christ's Authority

2 Corinthians 10:5 — “and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;”
Colossians 3:2 — “Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.”
Philippians 4:8 — “whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just”
Romans 8:6 — “For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.”

6. Salvation And Daily Renewal Distinguished

Ephesians 2:8 — “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:”
Ephesians 2:10 — “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works”
Romans 6:11 — “Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”
Galatians 5:16 — “Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.”

7. A Renewed Mind Produces Changed Conduct

Ephesians 4:25 — “Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour”
Ephesians 4:29 — “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth”
Ephesians 4:31 — “Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:”
Ephesians 4:32 — “And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.”

5. Reflection

Ephesians 4:23 exposes one of the most common failures in Christian living: attempting to change outward conduct while leaving the inward thinking that produces it largely untouched. A man may abandon a sinful habit because it has become embarrassing, financially expensive, or damaging to his reputation without ever submitting his heart to the truth of Scripture. Such outward changes may be beneficial, but they are not necessarily evidence of spiritual maturity. Paul commands believers to be renewed in the spirit of their minds because the Christian walk must be governed by more than appearances. A man who changes his conduct merely because circumstances demand it may return to the same conduct when the circumstances change. The believer must learn to reject sin because God's word identifies it as sin, not merely because somebody might discover it.

The distinction between regeneration and renewal must also remain firmly established. Salvation is received through faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ, whose death, burial, and resurrection provide the sufficient basis of redemption. The believer does not earn a new spiritual position through the gradual improvement of his thinking. He receives eternal life through Jesus Christ and is sealed with the Holy Spirit unto the day of redemption. Nevertheless, that completed spiritual standing does not eliminate the necessity of ongoing growth. Romans 12:2 commands transformation through the renewing of the mind because saved people still encounter worldly influences and fleshly desires. The Christian is not renewing his mind to purchase the salvation he lacks, but because the salvation he possesses establishes a new responsibility. Grace secures his standing and instructs him concerning his walk.

The expression “the spirit of your mind” requires believers to examine the principles governing their decisions. A person may possess correct doctrinal knowledge while allowing resentment, pride, covetousness, or selfish ambition to determine how he treats other people. He may explain eternal security with accuracy while using that truth to excuse conduct Scripture condemns. Another may understand the distinction between

Israel and the Church but remain unwilling to acknowledge his own need for correction. Such contradictions reveal why biblical education must involve more than memorizing answers. The Lord intends His truth to govern the believer's reasoning and conduct. A Christian who can correct every theological error in somebody else's thinking while refusing to examine his own motives still has considerable renewing ahead of him. Knowledge must become obedient understanding.

The practical means of renewal must never be separated from the written word of God. Second Timothy 3:16 establishes Scripture as profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness. Those functions involve far more than providing interesting information for religious discussion. Scripture exposes wrong assumptions, challenges sinful desires, establishes sound priorities, and directs the believer toward obedience. A Christian who repeatedly feeds his mind upon influences contrary to Scripture should not be surprised when his values begin reflecting those influences. Yet the answer is not simply adopting a collection of outward restrictions while refusing to consider the heart. The believer must learn to think according to what God has revealed. The Bible was not given merely to decorate the Christian's bookshelf or furnish ammunition for arguments. It was given to establish truth and correct the person reading it.

Renewal also involves practical choices about what the believer permits to occupy his thoughts. Philippians 4:8 directs Christians toward things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report. Colossians 3:2 commands them to set their affection on things above rather than upon earthly things. These instructions do not require believers to abandon ordinary responsibilities or pretend that every passing temptation constitutes deliberate sin. They require an intentional willingness to resist thoughts and desires that contradict God's word. The Christian should refuse to nurture bitterness, entertain dishonesty, or rehearse sinful ambitions as though their presence were harmless. He should replace such thinking with truth and conduct appropriate to his calling. A man cannot continually cultivate resentment in his imagination and expect charity to govern his tongue. What receives deliberate attention within the mind will often influence what eventually appears in the life.

Finally, Ephesians 4:23 establishes the necessary connection between putting off the old man and putting on the new man. The believer must not merely abandon outward habits while preserving the inward desires that produced them. Nor should he imagine that renewing the mind means attaining sinless perfection during this present life. The Christian still possesses the flesh and must continually submit himself to the Holy Spirit. Yet the Lord has supplied His word, established the believer's spiritual position in Christ, and commanded him to walk accordingly. Every Christian should therefore examine whether

Scripture is correcting his judgments or whether his personal preferences are continually being used to explain Scripture away. The old man thinks according to deceitful lusts, but the new man belongs to righteousness and true holiness. A renewed mind is the necessary connection between the position God has given us in Christ and the conduct He commands us to demonstrate before the world.

Ephesians 4:24 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 4:24

"And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"And that ye put on the new man"

Paul completes his threefold instruction concerning the believer's changed life with a command that reaches beyond outward religious improvement: "And that ye put on the new man." The expression connects directly with Ephesians 4:22–23, where Christians are told to put off the old man and be renewed in the spirit of their minds. Notice the order. The former conversation must be rejected, the mind must be renewed, and the new man must characterize the believer's conduct. Paul is not prescribing a spiritual costume change in which a man learns to look respectable while allowing the same corrupt desires to govern him privately. The new man is not the old man after several years of religious education, church attendance, and improved manners. Second Corinthians 5:17 declares, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." That new creation is the work of God, not the successful rehabilitation of fallen human nature. God did not save the sinner to make the old man more presentable. He gave the redeemed a new life that the old man could never produce.

The command "put on" must also be understood in relation to what God has already accomplished at salvation. Colossians 3:9–10 declares that believers have put off the old man with his deeds and have put on the new man, who is renewed in knowledge after the image of his Creator. Ephesians commands Christians to put on the new man, while Colossians describes that new identity as something already belonging to them. These passages do not contradict one another. They distinguish spiritual position from practical

conduct. Romans 6:6 declares that the old man is crucified with Christ, while Romans 6:11 commands believers to reckon themselves dead indeed unto sin and alive unto God through Jesus Christ. The Christian's spiritual standing is established through his union with Christ, but his daily conduct must be brought into agreement with that standing. A saved man does not create the new man by obeying God's commandments. He obeys God's commandments because the new man already belongs to the life he has received in Christ.

The expression also exposes the danger of treating Christian growth as nothing more than avoiding a collection of prohibited activities. The believer must certainly reject sinful practices, but the command to put on the new man establishes something positive. A thief must not merely stop stealing; Ephesians 4:28 commands him to labor honestly and become capable of giving to someone in need. The liar must not merely remain silent; verse 25 commands him to speak truth. The bitter Christian must not merely conceal his resentment; verse 32 commands kindness, tenderheartedness, and forgiveness. The new life is characterized by righteousness rather than by a carefully managed absence of public scandals. Romans 13:14 commands, “But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.” The Christian must not simply remove what is corrupt; he must live according to what is holy. The Lord did not command His people merely to empty the house of sin while leaving every room vacant for the old man to move back into whenever he pleases.

“which after God is created”

The next expression identifies the origin and character of the new man: “which after God is created.” Notice that Paul uses the word “created,” not educated, repaired, improved, or reorganized. The new man is the result of divine workmanship. Ephesians 2:10 has already established, “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.” This is why salvation cannot be accomplished through moral reformation. A man may improve his habits, abandon destructive practices, and become more useful within society without thereby producing the spiritual life that comes through Jesus Christ. The Lord's saving work is not merely the correction of a few undesirable behaviors. It establishes a new spiritual relationship and a new creation in Christ. Titus 3:5 declares, “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us.” God does not wait for sinners to manufacture their own spiritual renewal before granting salvation. A fallen man cannot create the new man any more than a corpse can arrange its own resurrection. Spiritual life must come from the God who gives life.

The words “after God” establish the divine pattern according to which the new man is created. Colossians 3:10 explains that the new man “is renewed in knowledge after the

image of him that created him." The believer's new life therefore reflects the character and righteousness of the Creator rather than the corrupt ambitions of fallen humanity. This does not mean that Christians become gods, acquire the divine attributes of omnipotence and omniscience, or possess the right to receive worship. Jesus Christ remains the eternal Son of God, and redeemed sinners remain creatures dependent upon His grace. Romans 8:29 identifies God's purpose that believers should be "conformed to the image of his Son." The objective is conformity to Christ in character and eventual glorification, not the transformation of redeemed people into additional divine beings. The new man is God's workmanship, created according to His righteousness and holiness. The Christian is being conformed to the likeness of his Saviour, not promoted into the Godhead because he has learned a few religious expressions about divine life.

This creation must also be distinguished from the corporate expression "one new man" in Ephesians 2:15. In that earlier passage, Paul explains how believing Jews and Gentiles are reconciled through Jesus Christ, with the middle wall of partition broken down and both brought into one spiritual body. The expression concerns the unity established between those formerly divided. Ephesians 4:24, however, concerns the believer's new life in contrast with the old man and his corrupt conduct. The two passages are related through Christ's redemptive work, but they do not emphasize precisely the same doctrinal matter. Neither passage authorizes the conclusion that Israel's national promises have been permanently cancelled or absorbed into the Church. Romans 11:29 declares, "For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." Rightly dividing the Scriptures preserves both the Church's present spiritual position and God's future purposes concerning Israel. A Bible student who treats every appearance of the words new man as though it must refer to the same subject has confused a shared expression with an identical context. God expects us to read the sentence, not merely recognize the vocabulary.

"in righteousness and true holiness"

The final expression establishes the moral character of the new man: "in righteousness and true holiness." Paul does not merely say that the new man possesses religious enthusiasm, denominational loyalty, or an impressive ability to discuss theological controversies. He identifies righteousness and holiness as characteristics of the life God has created. Righteousness concerns what is right according to God's revealed standard, while holiness emphasizes separation from sin and devotion to God. These qualities cannot be separated without corrupting the meaning of Christian obedience. A person may maintain outward respectability while privately nourishing desires that contradict God's word. Another may speak continually about personal holiness while dealing dishonestly with other people. Neither arrangement reflects the new man's character. Romans 6:18 declares, "Being then

made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness." The believer's new position establishes the responsibility to practice what agrees with God's character. A man who speaks beautifully about holiness while cheating his neighbor has not discovered a higher form of Christianity. He has discovered how to make unrighteousness sound religious.

The adjective "true" deserves particular attention because it distinguishes genuine holiness from counterfeit religious appearances. Not everything called holiness is holy in God's sight. The Pharisees possessed elaborate religious customs, outward separation, and considerable confidence in their own righteousness, yet Jesus Christ condemned their hypocrisy in Matthew 23. He compared them to whited sepulchres, beautiful outwardly but filled with uncleanness within. That warning was spoken in the historical setting of His earthly ministry to Israel, but the moral distinction between outward appearance and inward truth remains unmistakable. First Peter 1:15 commands, "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation." The Christian's holiness must therefore concern his conduct as a whole, not merely the religious habits other people can observe. A man may separate himself from every imaginable outward contamination and still carry enough pride, bitterness, and dishonesty in his heart to furnish a respectable collection of sins. White clothing cannot make a dirty heart clean.

Righteousness and true holiness also preserve the difference between the believer's standing before God and his continuing responsibility to live faithfully. Philippians 3:9 identifies the righteousness received through faith in Christ rather than through the law. That righteousness supplies the sinner's acceptance before God. Ephesians 4:24, however, concerns the practical character of the new man and the conduct appropriate to those already saved. First Thessalonians 4:7 declares, "For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness." The believer does not practice holiness to improve upon Christ's finished sacrifice, nor does the possession of eternal security excuse deliberate disobedience. The Lord has provided new spiritual life and commands His people to live consistently with it. This is why Ephesians 4:25–32 immediately addresses honesty, labor, speech, anger, kindness, and forgiveness. The righteousness that saves us belongs to Christ and is received through faith; the righteous conduct commanded afterward should demonstrate that the redeemed understand whose workmanship they have become.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 4:24 completes Paul's threefold instruction concerning the believer's changed life: putting off the old man, being renewed in the spirit of the mind, and putting on the new man. The verse identifies the new man as God's creation, not the result of human moral improvement. This distinction preserves salvation by grace through faith while establishing the believer's responsibility to live according to the new life received through Jesus Christ.

The old man is corrupt according to deceitful lusts, but the new man is created after God in righteousness and true holiness. The contrast concerns two fundamentally different governing principles, not merely two styles of religious behavior.

The verse also establishes that genuine Christian holiness must be more than outward respectability or obedience to man-made religious customs. Righteousness and holiness must operate together, producing conduct consistent with God's revealed character. The believer's spiritual standing is complete in Christ, but his practical growth continues through Scripture, the renewing of the mind, and submission to the Holy Spirit. The new man does not become divine, attain sinless perfection through the flesh, or replace the person of Jesus Christ. The central lesson is that God has created a new man in Christ, and the believer must now live according to that new creation rather than the corrupt desires of his former life.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. The New Man Is God's Creation

2 Corinthians 5:17 — “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”

Ephesians 2:10 — “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works”

Colossians 3:10 — “And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:”

Galatians 6:15 — “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.”

2. Putting Off The Old And Putting On The New

Ephesians 4:22 — “That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;”

Ephesians 4:23 — “And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;”

Colossians 3:9 — “Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;”

Romans 13:14 — “But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.”

3. Salvation Is By Grace And Not Works

Ephesians 2:8 — “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:”

Ephesians 2:9 — “Not of works, lest any man should boast.”

Titus 3:5 — “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us”

Romans 3:28 — “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.”

4. The Believer Is Called To Righteousness

Romans 6:13 — “but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.”

Romans 6:18 — “Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.”

2 Timothy 2:22 — “Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace”

Ephesians 4:25 — “Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour”

5. True Holiness Must Characterize The Walk

1 Peter 1:15 — “But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;”

1 Thessalonians 4:7 — “For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.”

2 Corinthians 7:1 — “let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”

Ephesians 5:3 — “But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints;”

6. The Holy Spirit And Renewed Mind

Romans 12:2 — “but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind”

Galatians 5:16 — “Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.”

Colossians 3:2 — “Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.”

2 Corinthians 3:18 — “are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

7. The New Man Demonstrates Practical Obedience

Ephesians 4:28 — “Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour”

Ephesians 4:29 — “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth”

Ephesians 4:31 — “Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:”

Ephesians 4:32 — “And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.”

5. Reflection

Ephesians 4:24 confronts the dangerous assumption that Christianity is merely an improved version of ordinary human morality. Paul does not instruct believers to repair the old man until he becomes respectable enough to receive God's approval. He commands them to put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. That language establishes a divine work far greater than education, discipline, or outward reform. The sinner receives new life through faith in Jesus Christ, not through his ability to eliminate every sinful habit before approaching God. Yet that new life establishes responsibilities that cannot be dismissed as unnecessary religious restrictions. The old man cannot be educated into the new man, and the new man was not created to spend his earthly life taking instructions from the old.

The distinction between spiritual standing and daily conduct must remain firmly established. Colossians 3:9–10 describes believers as having put off the old man and put on the new, while Ephesians 4 commands them to live according to that reality. The passages do not contradict one another; they demonstrate the relationship between God's completed saving work and the believer's continuing responsibility. Salvation is not earned through righteous conduct, nor is eternal security maintained by achieving a particular standard of personal holiness. Nevertheless, the saved person must not use grace as an excuse for deliberate disobedience. Romans 6:1–2 rejects continuing in sin so that grace may abound. The Lord who secured the believer's salvation through His blood did not thereby authorize the believer to continue serving the flesh as though redemption had accomplished nothing.

The expression “which after God is created” should also destroy the religious pride that frequently accompanies spiritual accomplishments. If the new man is God's creation, then no Christian can claim personal credit for producing the spiritual life he possesses. A preacher may have studied diligently, a teacher may possess considerable knowledge, and another believer may demonstrate remarkable patience under difficulty. Yet none of those accomplishments makes the individual the author of his regeneration. God supplies the new life, while His redeemed people remain responsible to exercise the grace and gifts they

have received. That truth should produce humility rather than boasting or competition. The Christian who takes personal credit for becoming a new creature has forgotten the identity of the Creator and begun congratulating the workmanship for performing the workman's task.

The words “righteousness and true holiness” expose the inadequacy of merely appearing separated from the world. A person may possess conservative religious habits, avoid certain entertainments, and maintain an impressive public testimony while privately cherishing pride, dishonesty, bitterness, or covetousness. Such behavior does not demonstrate the inward righteousness and holiness described by Paul. The new man's character must become evident in ordinary conduct, including truthful speech, honest labor, forgiveness, and the rejection of corrupt communication. Scripture does not permit believers to defend inward wickedness merely because their outward appearance remains acceptable. Neither does it establish man-made customs as substitutes for genuine holiness. A spotless religious reputation is worth very little when it conceals a heart deliberately refusing the correction of Almighty God's word.

This passage also establishes the necessity of practical obedience through the Holy Spirit rather than confidence in the flesh. The believer still encounters temptation, and the old nature does not become righteous merely because salvation has occurred. Galatians 5:16 commands Christians to walk in the Spirit, while Romans 12:2 directs them toward transformation through the renewing of their minds. These responsibilities belong together because genuine holiness requires a different governing authority over the believer's thoughts and conduct. The Christian must refuse sinful desires while pursuing what God has commanded. He should not merely abandon dishonesty, but practice truth; not merely restrain bitterness, but exercise forgiveness. Putting on the new man means allowing the righteousness God has created to become visible in the ordinary responsibilities of Christian living.

Finally, Ephesians 4:24 should produce both gratitude for salvation and a serious desire for spiritual maturity. The believer has received something the world cannot manufacture through education, religious ceremonies, or human determination. God has created a new man in Christ, and that new life is characterized by righteousness and true holiness. The Christian should therefore examine whether his daily conduct agrees with the spiritual position Scripture declares he possesses. He must reject the old man's deceitful desires, renew his mind through the written word, and walk in obedience to the Lord who purchased him. This growth does not make him sinlessly perfect during his present earthly life, but it should make his conduct increasingly consistent with his calling. God did not create the new man so the old man could continue ruling the household. The redeemed have been

given a new life, a new standing, and a new responsibility. Let the old man be put off, let the mind be renewed, and let the new man be seen in righteousness and true holiness.

Ephesians 4:25 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 4:25

"Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another."

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"Wherefore putting away lying"

Paul begins this verse with a word that connects the command directly to everything he has just established concerning the old man, the renewed mind, and the new man created in righteousness and true holiness. "Wherefore" means that what follows is the practical consequence of the doctrine already explained. Ephesians 4:22 commanded believers to put off the old man, verse 23 commanded renewal in the spirit of the mind, and verse 24 commanded them to put on the new man. Now Paul begins identifying the particular conduct that must accompany that change. The first thing he addresses is lying. That is significant because dishonesty is one of the most convenient instruments of the fallen nature. The old man lies to protect himself, impress others, conceal wrongdoing, obtain advantages, and escape responsibility. Colossians 3:9 gives the corresponding command: "Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds." The doctrine of the new man is not something to admire from a comfortable distance. It must govern what comes out of the believer's mouth. A Christian who claims to have put off the old man while deliberately practicing deceit has kept one of the old man's favorite tools in excellent working condition.

Notice that Paul commands believers to put away lying rather than merely become more skillful at avoiding detection. The flesh is remarkably creative when dishonesty offers some apparent advantage. A man can lie by speaking something false, deliberately misrepresenting facts, concealing information in a manner intended to deceive, or presenting an exaggerated account designed to create an impression that is not true. Not every omission is dishonest, because Scripture does not require Christians to disclose every private matter to every curious person. But the deliberate manipulation of another

person's understanding through falsehood belongs to the conduct Paul condemns. Proverbs 12:22 declares, “Lying lips are abomination to the LORD: but they that deal truly are his delight.” That language leaves little room for the fashionable notion that dishonesty becomes morally acceptable whenever it produces a convenient outcome. A lie does not become righteous because the truth would have been embarrassing, expensive, or inconvenient. The old man may call it protecting his interests, but God still knows what deception looks like.

The command also demonstrates that salvation by grace does not eliminate the believer's responsibility to reject particular sins. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes that sinners are saved by grace through faith and not of works. Yet the same epistle commands those already saved to put away lying. That is not a contradiction. Salvation concerns what Jesus Christ accomplished through His finished sacrifice, while Christian obedience concerns the conduct appropriate to the redeemed. A believer may commit a lie without that failure proving his salvation has disappeared, but eternal security does not provide permission to make dishonesty a settled practice. Ephesians 4:30 warns believers against grieving the Holy Spirit of God, whereby they are sealed unto the day of redemption. The Spirit's sealing establishes security, while the command not to grieve Him establishes responsibility. The blood of Jesus Christ does not need assistance from our truthfulness to accomplish redemption, but the Christian purchased by that blood has no business using his tongue to serve the father of lies.

“speak every man truth with his neighbour”

The second expression moves beyond the rejection of falsehood to the positive responsibility of honest communication: “speak every man truth with his neighbour.” Paul does not merely command believers to avoid being caught in a lie. He commands them to speak truth. That distinction matters because a man may avoid making a direct false statement while deliberately cultivating misunderstanding for personal advantage. The new man is called to something better than clever evasions and carefully managed appearances. Zechariah 8:16 contains a striking earlier command to Israel: “Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour.” That passage belongs to God's dealings with Jerusalem and should be understood in its original context, but the moral consistency with Ephesians 4:25 is unmistakable. God did not approve dishonesty under the law and then begin approving it under grace. The believer's present position in Christ establishes a deeper responsibility to demonstrate truthfulness in ordinary relationships. Christian honesty is not merely the ability to avoid an outright falsehood when somebody asks a direct question. It is the willingness to deal truthfully when deception would be easier and more profitable.

The expression “every man” also removes the convenient assumption that honesty is principally the responsibility of preachers, teachers, and religious leaders. Every member of Christ's body is accountable for his words. The Christian employer must not manipulate employees through false promises, and the Christian employee must not deceive his employer concerning his responsibilities. Husbands and wives must not cultivate dishonest arrangements that undermine trust, and believers must not circulate accusations they have never established as true. Proverbs 18:13 warns, “He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.” That principle is particularly important whenever an accusation, rumor, or emotionally charged account begins circulating. A statement does not become truthful because a hundred people repeat it, and an accusation does not become proven because the person making it sounds confident. A Christian who repeats an unverified accusation because it agrees with his personal suspicions has not demonstrated discernment. He has merely given a rumor another opportunity to travel while wearing the appearance of certainty.

Truthful communication must also remain consistent with the instruction in Ephesians 4:15 to speak the truth in love. The believer is not commanded to become needlessly cruel under the excuse that every unkind observation is technically accurate. Ephesians 4:29 requires speech that is good for edifying and ministers grace to the hearers. That does not forbid confronting error, exposing deception, or delivering necessary correction. Sometimes the most loving thing a Christian can do is speak an uncomfortable truth plainly. Nevertheless, there is a difference between faithful correction and using accurate information to embarrass, humiliate, or manipulate another person. Colossians 4:6 commands, “Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt.” The Christian should therefore consider whether his words are true, necessary, appropriately expressed, and directed toward a legitimate purpose. Truth is not a license for cruelty, and love is not permission to lie. The mature believer must learn to speak honestly without making his tongue an instrument of unnecessary destruction.

“for we are members one of another”

The final expression reveals why truthfulness possesses such importance within the Church: “for we are members one of another.” Paul is not simply demanding honesty because it produces a more respectable society. He connects truthful communication with the spiritual relationship believers possess as members of Christ's body. Ephesians 4:4 has already established “one body,” while First Corinthians 12:13 explains that believers are baptized by one Spirit into that body. Romans 12:5 declares, “So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.” The members are not independent religious businesses conducting occasional transactions with one another. They belong to

the same spiritual body under Jesus Christ. Deliberate dishonesty therefore damages more than the reputation of the person telling the lie. It injures trust within relationships that God intends to operate according to truth and love. When one member deceives another, he is not merely conducting a private arrangement with false information. He is damaging the confidence upon which members of the same body should be able to depend.

The body illustration makes the seriousness of deception particularly clear. First Corinthians 12:25 declares that the members should have the same care one for another. A physical body depends upon its members communicating and functioning together according to their appointed responsibilities. If the hand repeatedly receives false information concerning a danger, the entire body may suffer the consequences. Likewise, a congregation cannot function properly when believers habitually misrepresent facts, conceal misconduct through deception, or manipulate others for personal advantage. A pastor who lies to his congregation undermines the very trust necessary for spiritual leadership. A member who circulates dishonest accusations may divide believers who ought to be serving together. Yet honesty must also respect appropriate privacy and confidentiality; belonging to one body does not entitle every member to every private detail of another person's life. Christian fellowship requires truthfulness, not the reckless publication of everybody's personal affairs. The duty to speak truth is not permission to become a sanctified gossip.

This final phrase also establishes the connection between truthful communication and the unity Paul has emphasized throughout Ephesians 4. The unity of the Spirit is something believers are commanded to keep, while their growth toward unity of the faith requires sound teaching and mutual confidence. Falsehood undermines both practical fellowship and doctrinal maturity. The Church cannot defend the gospel of truth while allowing dishonesty to become an acceptable instrument of ministry. Neither can believers expect spiritual unity to flourish where personal manipulation has replaced honest dealing. Ephesians 4:16 describes the body making increase unto the edifying of itself in love, and verse 25 now establishes truthfulness as one of the necessary characteristics of that life. The body of Christ does not become stronger by learning to conceal its problems behind carefully polished religious statements. It becomes stronger when its members submit to the truth and deal faithfully with one another under the authority of Jesus Christ.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 4:25 establishes the first specific practical application of Paul's instruction concerning putting off the old man and putting on the new man. Lying belongs to the corrupt former conversation, while truthfulness belongs to the righteous conduct appropriate to those created anew in Christ. The command reaches beyond avoiding direct

false statements to the responsibility of dealing honestly with others. It also demands that truth be communicated according to biblical love rather than used as an excuse for cruelty, manipulation, or unnecessary disclosure of private matters. The believer is not merely commanded to stop lying; he is commanded to become a truthful person whose words agree with the new life he possesses in Jesus Christ.

The verse also connects individual conduct with the corporate unity of Christ's body. Christians are members one of another, and deliberate dishonesty injures the trust required for healthy fellowship, faithful ministry, and mutual edification. The command must be distinguished from the basis of salvation, since justification remains by grace through faith rather than personal truthfulness. Nevertheless, the redeemed are responsible to reject the old man's habits and practice the righteousness commanded by God. The central lesson is that lying contradicts the believer's new nature, undermines the fellowship of Christ's body, and must be replaced with honest communication governed by truth and love.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. Putting Off The Old Man And His Deeds

Ephesians 4:22 — “That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;”
Ephesians 4:23 — “And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;”
Ephesians 4:24 — “And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”
Colossians 3:9 — “Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;”

2. God Is Truth And Cannot Lie

Numbers 23:19 — “God is not a man, that he should lie;”
Titus 1:2 — “In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;”
John 14:6 — “I am the way, the truth, and the life:”
John 17:17 — “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.”

3. The Wickedness And Consequences Of Lying

Proverbs 12:22 — “Lying lips are abomination to the LORD: but they that deal truly are his delight.”
John 8:44 — “for he is a liar, and the father of it.”
Acts 5:3 — “Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost”

Proverbs 19:5 — “A false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall not escape.”

4. Believers Are Members One Of Another

Romans 12:5 — “So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.”
1 Corinthians 12:25 — “but that the members should have the same care one for another.”
1 Corinthians 12:26 — “And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it;”
Ephesians 4:16 — “maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.”

5. Truthful Speech Must Edify Others

Ephesians 4:15 — “But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:”
Ephesians 4:29 — “but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.”
Colossians 4:6 — “Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt”
James 1:19 — “let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:”

6. God's Commands Concerning Honesty And False Witness

Exodus 20:16 — “Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.”
Leviticus 19:11 — “Ye shall not steal, neither deal falsely, neither lie one to another.”
Zechariah 8:16 — “Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour;”
Proverbs 18:13 — “He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.”

7. Salvation By Grace And The Correction Of Sin

Ephesians 2:8 — “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:”
Romans 3:28 — “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.”
Proverbs 28:13 — “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.”
1 John 1:9 — “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

5. Reflection

Ephesians 4:25 ought to confront every Christian who has become comfortable treating dishonesty as an ordinary instrument of daily life. Paul does not reserve the command

against lying for criminals, politicians, or unbelievers. He addresses redeemed people who have been taught to put off the old man and live according to the new man created in righteousness and true holiness. That means honesty belongs to Christian obedience rather than merely respectable social behavior. A believer cannot consistently claim to love the truth of Scripture while deliberately practicing falsehood whenever it becomes convenient. The old man may consider deception a useful survival skill, but the new man belongs to a different governing principle. A lie does not become Christian because a Christian tells it, and the Lord has never required dishonesty to accomplish His purposes.

The example of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5 demonstrates that religious appearances can conceal deliberate deceit. They presented their offering in a manner intended to create a false impression, and Peter confronted the dishonesty rather than congratulating them for their outward generosity. The account belongs to the apostolic period and must not be treated as a promise that every dishonest Christian will immediately suffer the same judgment. Nevertheless, it reveals the seriousness of attempting to deceive while maintaining an appearance of spiritual devotion. A believer may desire recognition for sacrifices he never made or accomplishments he never achieved. Such behavior replaces genuine service with the pursuit of admiration. Religious hypocrisy becomes particularly dangerous when a man would rather appear faithful than actually be faithful.

The command to speak truth also reaches beyond the pulpit into ordinary relationships and responsibilities. A Christian should be truthful when discussing his work, describing his accomplishments, handling money, reporting another person's conduct, and explaining his own mistakes. He should not knowingly pass along false accusations simply because they support an opinion he already possesses. Neither should he exaggerate events to make himself appear courageous, mistreated, or unusually important. Scripture requires honest dealing, not the manufacturing of a favorable public reputation. This responsibility includes knowing when to remain silent rather than speaking about matters one does not understand. The Christian who cannot distinguish established facts from personal suspicions should learn to say, “I do not know,” before his tongue creates trouble that truthfulness could have prevented.

The phrase “for we are members one of another” reveals why dishonesty becomes especially destructive within Christian fellowship. A congregation depends upon trust between pastors, teachers, families, and individual believers. When that trust is repeatedly violated, cooperation becomes difficult and suspicion begins replacing confidence. The body cannot function properly when its members deliberately mislead one another. Yet Christian honesty must remain governed by love, discretion, and legitimate responsibility. Speaking truth does not authorize gossip, public humiliation, or revealing confidential

information without proper cause. The believer must seek to strengthen others rather than use accurate information as a weapon of personal revenge. Truth without love can become an instrument of cruelty, while love without truth becomes a convenient excuse for protecting deception.

This passage also requires a clear distinction between salvation and practical righteousness. No sinner becomes justified because he has achieved a perfect record of truthful speech. Romans 3:28 establishes justification by faith without the deeds of the law, and Ephesians 2:8–9 excludes works as the basis of salvation. Nevertheless, the saved individual remains responsible for the words he speaks. When a Christian lies, he should acknowledge the wrong rather than attempting to defend it through another deception. Where appropriate, he should correct the false statement and seek to repair the harm his dishonesty has caused. Eternal security does not make lying harmless, and confession should not become a ceremonial substitute for changed conduct. The Christian does not tell the truth to purchase redemption; he tells the truth because the Redeemer has commanded him to abandon the old man's deceitful ways.

Finally, Ephesians 4:25 establishes a necessary relationship between the truth Christians profess and the testimony their conduct presents before the world. The Church proclaims a gospel of truth concerning the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Its members should therefore demonstrate honesty in their dealings with others. A preacher who manipulates facts damages the credibility of his ministry, while a believer who habitually exaggerates makes his testimony unnecessarily difficult to trust. Every Christian should examine whether his speech reflects the new man or the convenient habits of his former life. The command is plain, the responsibility is personal, and the reason is grounded in our union with Christ. The body of Christ belongs to the Lord of truth, and its members should not need a collection of carefully arranged falsehoods to maintain their fellowship. Put away lying, speak truth, and let the new man's righteousness be heard in the words you speak.

Ephesians 4:26 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 4:26

“Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath:”

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

“Be ye angry”

Paul begins this remarkable verse with a statement that immediately overturns the popular assumption that every expression of anger must necessarily be sinful: “Be ye angry.” Notice that the Holy Ghost does not say, Never become angry under any circumstances. The instruction recognizes that anger itself is not automatically identical with unrighteousness. There are circumstances in which evil ought to provoke moral indignation rather than indifference. A Christian who witnesses deliberate cruelty, dishonesty, the corruption of God's word, or the exploitation of innocent people should not imagine that spiritual maturity requires applauding such conduct with a pleasant smile. Mark 3:5 records Jesus Christ looking upon the religious leaders “with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts.” There stands the sinless Son of God expressing anger while remaining perfectly righteous. The Christian who believes every expression of anger is automatically sinful has a considerable problem explaining why the Lord Jesus Christ Himself became angry. The question is not merely whether anger exists, but what provokes it, what governs it, and what the person does with it.

Nevertheless, the anger of Jesus Christ must never become a convenient excuse for the uncontrolled temper of fallen human nature. Mark 3:5 connects His anger with grief over hardened hearts, revealing a righteous concern rather than wounded personal pride. His response was not the tantrum of a man whose authority had been questioned. The Lord was confronting spiritual hardness and opposition to what was right. The cleansing of the temple likewise demonstrated His rightful authority over His Father's house, but that event does not authorize every offended Christian to imitate the Messiah's unique actions whenever a disagreement arises. John 2:16 records His command, “Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise.” A Christian may possess legitimate grounds for indignation while still lacking the authority to respond in whatever manner he pleases. Righteous anger is not measured by how loudly a man shouts, how forcefully he strikes the table, or how effectively he frightens everybody within hearing distance. The righteousness of the cause does not automatically sanctify every action taken in its defense.

This distinction becomes particularly important when examining the difference between concern for God's righteousness and resentment over personal inconvenience. Some men become furious when the Scriptures are mocked, and that concern may possess a legitimate moral foundation. Yet the same men become equally furious when somebody disagrees with their opinions, questions their decisions, or fails to treat them with the admiration they believe they deserve. Proverbs 16:32 declares, “He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.” That is not the

language of spiritual weakness. It identifies self-government as a form of strength superior to impressive outward power. A Christian who cannot control his temper should not congratulate himself for possessing unusual courage merely because other people have learned to avoid provoking him. The man who can conquer an argument but cannot govern his own spirit has won a remarkably small victory over another person while suffering a considerable defeat within himself. Biblical anger must remain subject to biblical authority.

“and sin not”

The second expression establishes the boundary that governs the first: “and sin not.” Paul does not grant anger unlimited authority merely because he acknowledges that anger can arise without sin. He immediately places a restraint upon its exercise. The believer may recognize genuine wrongdoing, experience moral indignation, and confront unrighteousness, but he must not permit that response to become sinful speech, personal revenge, cruelty, or uncontrolled retaliation. James 1:19–20 commands believers to be swift to hear, slow to speak, and slow to wrath, adding, “For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.” That warning explains why even legitimate indignation requires careful government. A man may begin by defending something true and end by conducting himself in a manner entirely contrary to the truth he claims to defend. Having a righteous reason to be angry does not give the flesh permission to choose an unrighteous method of expressing it. God's word must govern both the conviction and the conduct.

There is a connection here with Psalm 4:4, which declares, “Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah.” The wording in the King James Bible is not identical to Ephesians 4:26, and the original setting of the psalm must be respected. Nevertheless, the passages share the important principle that inward agitation must be restrained before it develops into wrongdoing. The man who feels anger rising should examine his motives, weigh the facts, and consider the consequences of his response. Proverbs 15:1 declares, “A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.” That does not prohibit firm rebuke, necessary confrontation, or plain speech concerning serious error. It recognizes that a reckless tongue often increases conflict rather than correcting its cause. Sometimes the most courageous thing an angry Christian can do is close his mouth long enough to allow Scripture to govern what he intends to say. Silence for a moment is not surrender when it prevents a lifetime of unnecessary regret.

The command “and sin not” must also be understood within the believer's continuing struggle against the flesh. Salvation by grace does not eradicate every sinful impulse, and eternal security does not make the Christian's conduct unimportant. Galatians 5:16 commands, “Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.” The Spirit's government is indispensable because anger can quickly become an occasion for pride,

bitterness, intimidation, and vengeance. Romans 12:19 commands believers, “Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath.” The passage subsequently identifies vengeance as belonging to the Lord. A Christian may be justified in identifying a wrong without possessing the right to appoint himself judge, jury, and executioner over everyone who has offended him. The believer's anger must never become a private courtroom where the flesh writes the charges, declares the verdict, and administers the punishment before God's word has been consulted. Righteous conviction requires righteous restraint.

“let not the sun go down upon your wrath”

The final expression establishes the urgency of dealing with anger before it becomes an established condition of the heart: “let not the sun go down upon your wrath.” Paul is not merely providing a picturesque description of the evening sky. He is warning believers against nursing resentment, rehearsing offenses, and allowing anger to develop into something that governs their thinking long after the original provocation has passed. The setting sun provides a vivid reminder that anger must not be permitted to settle into a permanent disposition. Ecclesiastes 7:9 declares, “Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry: for anger resteth in the bosom of fools.” Notice the danger of anger finding a resting place. A passing response to wrongdoing can become settled bitterness when the individual repeatedly returns to the offense for the pleasure of keeping resentment alive. Anger may arrive as an unwelcome visitor, but the Christian has no business preparing the guest room, handing it a permanent key, and allowing it to rearrange the furniture of his heart.

The instruction also leads directly into Ephesians 4:27: “Neither give place to the devil.” That connection is important because unresolved anger can provide an opportunity for temptation, division, accusation, and further wrongdoing. A believer who deliberately cultivates resentment may begin interpreting everything another person does according to the offense he remembers. Ordinary misunderstandings become evidence of hostility, imagined motives become established facts, and the desire for reconciliation is gradually replaced by an appetite for vindication. Hebrews 12:15 warns against a root of bitterness springing up and troubling many. Anger that remains ungoverned can therefore damage relationships far beyond the original disagreement. The Christian should seek to address wrongdoing promptly, acknowledge his own failures, and refuse to make resentment a continuing occupation. The devil does not need to invent every conflict among believers when the flesh is already willing to preserve old disagreements and furnish them with fresh ammunition every morning.

Nevertheless, this command should not be turned into another man-made rule requiring every disagreement to be completely resolved before the literal moment of sunset. Some

matters require investigation, careful conversation, repentance, or time for emotions to settle before responsible discussion becomes possible. A person cannot force another party to acknowledge wrongdoing or participate honestly in reconciliation. Nor does forgiveness require remaining in an unsafe situation, excusing ongoing abuse, or surrendering necessary boundaries. Romans 12:18 carefully states, “If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.” The believer is responsible for his own conduct, not for controlling another person's response. Paul's warning establishes urgency against cherished wrath rather than an artificial deadline for accomplishing what may require further attention. Do not carry unnecessary bitterness into tomorrow merely because you have become fond of yesterday's grievance; but do not confuse biblical peace with pretending that serious wrongdoing has been corrected when it has not.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 4:26 establishes the distinction between anger as a response to wrongdoing and sinful anger that produces unrighteous conduct. The command “Be ye angry, and sin not” recognizes that moral indignation is not automatically sinful, as demonstrated by the Lord Jesus Christ's anger toward hardened hearts. Nevertheless, every expression of anger must remain subject to God's word. The believer must distinguish righteous concern from wounded pride, personal resentment, and the desire for revenge. The legitimacy of an offense does not automatically justify the manner in which a Christian responds to it. Spiritual maturity requires self-government, patience, and the willingness to correct wrongdoing without surrendering to fleshly wrath.

The command concerning sunset establishes the danger of allowing anger to become a continuing disposition that produces bitterness, damages relationships, and provides an opportunity for the devil. The following verses connect anger with the believer's speech, conduct, kindness, and forgiveness. These responsibilities belong to Christian sanctification rather than the purchase of salvation. A saved person remains capable of becoming angry, but he is commanded to walk in the Spirit and refuse the flesh's desire for retaliation. The central lesson is that anger must be governed by righteousness, restrained before it produces sin, and addressed promptly rather than cultivated into bitterness.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. Righteous Anger Distinguished From Sin

Mark 3:5 — “And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts”

John 2:16 — “make not my Father's house an house of merchandise.”

Psalm 7:11 — “God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day.”

Nahum 1:3 — “The LORD is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked”

2. The Christian Must Be Slow To Wrath

James 1:19 — “let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:”

James 1:20 — “For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.”

Proverbs 14:29 — “He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding: but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly.”

Proverbs 16:32 — “he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.”

3. Angry Speech Must Be Governed

Proverbs 15:1 — “A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.”

Proverbs 29:11 — “A fool uttereth all his mind: but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards.”

Ephesians 4:29 — “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth”

Colossians 4:6 — “Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt”

4. Wrath Must Not Become A Settled Condition

Ephesians 4:26 — “Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath:”

Psalm 4:4 — “Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still.”

Ephesians 4:27 — “Neither give place to the devil.”

Ecclesiastes 7:9 — “Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry: for anger resteth in the bosom of fools.”

5. Revenge Belongs To God

Romans 12:18 — “If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.”

Romans 12:19 — “Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.”

Romans 12:21 — “Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.”

1 Peter 3:9 — “Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing;”

6. Bitterness Must Give Way To Forgiveness

Ephesians 4:31 — “Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:”

Ephesians 4:32 — “And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.”

Colossians 3:13 — “Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any:”

2 Corinthians 2:7 — “So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him”

7. The New Man Must Walk In The Spirit

Ephesians 4:24 — “And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”

Galatians 5:16 — “Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.”

Galatians 5:22 — “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,”

Romans 12:2 — “but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind”

5. Reflection

Ephesians 4:26 confronts two dangerous misconceptions concerning Christian conduct. One assumes that every expression of anger is automatically sinful, while the other insists that strong anger proves spiritual courage regardless of how it is expressed. Paul rejects both extremes by commanding believers to be angry and sin not. The Lord Jesus Christ demonstrated righteous indignation toward hardened hearts, but His anger was never the uncontrolled rebellion of fallen human nature. The Christian must therefore examine the reason for his anger rather than immediately assuming that his feelings establish his righteousness. Personal embarrassment, wounded pride, jealousy, and resentment can masquerade as moral conviction when the flesh is determined to defend itself. A man who becomes furious whenever somebody questions his authority should not automatically congratulate himself for possessing the righteous indignation of Jesus Christ.

The command “and sin not” also places a necessary restraint upon the Christian's response to genuine wrongdoing. A believer may have legitimate grounds for anger because somebody has lied, acted cruelly, or committed a serious injustice. Nevertheless, that wrongdoing does not give him permission to retaliate through dishonesty, threats, humiliation, or deliberate cruelty. James 1:20 declares that the wrath of man does not work the righteousness of God. This is especially important when anger arises within families, congregations, or relationships where a careless response may produce lasting harm. The

believer must learn to distinguish confronting an offense from punishing a person through uncontrolled temper. Having the truth on your side does not place the flesh under divine inspiration, and winning an argument through sinful conduct is no victory worth celebrating.

The warning concerning sunset exposes how easily temporary anger becomes permanent bitterness. A Christian may spend hours mentally rehearsing an offense, imagining arguments, assigning motives, and preparing responses to conversations that have not occurred. Each repetition can strengthen resentment rather than correct the original problem. Meanwhile, the person who caused the offense may be entirely unaware that another believer has devoted the evening to conducting a private trial against him. Ephesians 4:27 warns against giving place to the devil, establishing the spiritual danger of allowing wrath to remain ungoverned. The Christian should seek to deal with wrongdoing promptly without demanding that every difficult matter be completely resolved within an arbitrary deadline. The sunset is a warning against nursing wrath, not permission to force a hurried reconciliation that leaves the actual wrong unaddressed.

This passage also exposes the connection between anger and the believer's speech. A person may spend years building a respectable Christian testimony and damage much of its credibility through a few reckless words spoken in anger. Proverbs 15:1 teaches that a soft answer turns away wrath, while grievous words stir up anger. That instruction does not require cowardice or silence concerning serious sin. It requires self-government so that the truth may be communicated without unnecessary hostility. A preacher who corrects false doctrine must not assume that the force of his language automatically proves the strength of his argument. Likewise, a believer who constantly insults others should not mistake their reluctance to engage with him for evidence that they cannot answer his doctrine. The tongue that claims to defend God's righteousness must itself remain subject to God's commandments.

The responsibility to govern anger must also be distinguished from salvation by works. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes that sinners are saved by grace through faith, while Ephesians 4 instructs those already redeemed concerning their daily conduct. The believer who becomes angry and sins has not thereby demonstrated that Christ's sacrifice was insufficient to save him. Nevertheless, he remains accountable for his actions and should acknowledge wrongdoing rather than appealing to eternal security as an excuse. Ephesians 4:30 commands believers not to grieve the Holy Spirit, whereby they are sealed unto the day of redemption. Spiritual security and practical responsibility therefore stand together without contradiction. The blood of Jesus Christ secures salvation, but it does not

authorize the redeemed to use anger as an instrument of personal revenge. Grace should produce greater self-control rather than greater confidence in the flesh.

Finally, Ephesians 4:26 should encourage believers to develop a disciplined response to anger before difficult circumstances arise. When provoked, the Christian should examine the facts, consider his motives, restrain reckless speech, and determine what Scripture requires. He may need to confront wrongdoing, acknowledge his own contribution to a disagreement, extend forgiveness, or establish appropriate boundaries against continuing harm. Some situations can be resolved quickly, while others require time, counsel, and careful decisions. The believer should not confuse forgiveness with pretending that serious offenses never occurred or that trust must be immediately restored. Yet he should refuse to cultivate bitterness simply because resentment feels satisfying. The Holy Spirit provides the power for conduct that the flesh cannot produce through self-righteous determination. Be angry when righteousness truly demands indignation, but sin not. Do not make wrath your companion, revenge your ambition, or bitterness your inheritance. The Christian who has put on the new man must learn to govern his anger before his anger begins governing him.

Ephesians 4:27 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 4:27

"Neither give place to the devil."

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"Neither give place"

Paul follows his instructions concerning anger with one of the shortest and most serious warnings addressed to the believer in the entire fourth chapter of Ephesians: "Neither give place." The word "Neither" connects this command directly to Ephesians 4:26, where Christians are instructed, "Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath." The connection is deliberate. Anger that remains uncontrolled can develop into resentment, bitterness, revenge, and destructive conduct, creating an opportunity for the enemy to exploit what the flesh has already begun. The expression "give place" concerns yielding ground, allowing an opportunity, or permitting influence where resistance should have been exercised. Paul is not describing a ceremony in which someone formally invites

the devil into his life. He is warning believers against allowing sinful conduct to provide the adversary with an advantage. The devil does not need a Christian to sign a written agreement with him when that Christian is already willing to give his flesh permission to disregard the word of God.

The warning is particularly important because the immediate context concerns the believer's new manner of life. Ephesians 4:22 commands Christians to put off the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, while verse 24 instructs them to put on the new man created in righteousness and true holiness. Between those instructions stands the necessity of renewing the mind. Consequently, giving place to the devil involves conduct that contradicts the new life received through Jesus Christ. Romans 6:12 commands, “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.” The same principle appears in Romans 13:14, which commands believers to make no provision for the flesh. A Christian who continually entertains dishonesty, nourishes bitterness, or deliberately arranges opportunities for sinful indulgence should not be surprised when those habits become increasingly difficult to resist. A man who leaves the door open to temptation every evening has no business acting astonished when the same temptation returns the following morning. Spiritual vigilance requires more than recognizing danger after the damage has been done.

Nevertheless, the command must not be twisted into the doctrine that every sinful thought automatically places a Christian under demonic control. Temptation is not identical to deliberate obedience, and Scripture distinguishes the believer's flesh from the personal activity of the devil. James 1:14 declares, “But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.” The flesh possesses sufficient corruption to create serious trouble without requiring a separate demonic explanation for every failure. Neither does Ephesians 4:27 teach that a genuinely saved person loses his salvation whenever he gives the devil an opportunity. Ephesians 4:30 identifies the same believers as sealed unto the day of redemption. Their spiritual security rests upon Christ's finished work, while their daily conduct remains subject to divine correction. Eternal security does not make the devil harmless, and spiritual warfare does not make the blood of Jesus Christ insufficient. The believer must neither exaggerate Satan's authority nor underestimate the danger of yielding ground through disobedience.

“to the devil”

The second expression identifies the adversary who must not be given an opportunity: “to the devil.” Paul does not describe an imaginary principle of evil, a mere symbol for human weakness, or an impersonal force representing the darker side of man's personality. Scripture presents the devil as a personal adversary who deceives, tempts, accuses, and

opposes the purposes of God. First Peter 5:8 declares, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.” The warning is directed to believers, establishing that Christians must remain watchful even though they belong to Jesus Christ. Second Corinthians 11:3 recalls the serpent's deception of Eve and warns concerning the corruption of minds through his subtilty. The devil's activity therefore includes deception rather than merely open persecution. Satan does not have to appear with horns, flames, and a public announcement of his intentions. Deception is considerably more effective when the lie arrives dressed as something reasonable, attractive, or spiritually impressive.

The devil's methods must also be understood according to the immediate context of Ephesians. Paul has just warned against allowing wrath to remain unresolved, and he will subsequently command believers to put away lying, corrupt communication, bitterness, malice, and other sins. These are practical matters in which sinful human conduct can create opportunities for temptation and division. Second Corinthians 2:10–11 connects forgiveness with the danger of Satan obtaining an advantage, declaring, “Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.” That passage concerns the restoration and comfort appropriate to a repentant offender, and it demonstrates how mishandling an offense can become spiritually damaging. The adversary may exploit bitterness where forgiveness is appropriate, pride where humility is required, and dishonesty where truthfulness should prevail. Yet believers must not blame every disagreement or hardship upon a direct satanic attack. Sometimes the devil's opportunity begins with a Christian's ordinary refusal to obey an ordinary commandment. The supernatural enemy does not make the flesh's personal responsibility disappear.

The proper response to the devil is neither fascination nor fear, but submission to God and resistance grounded in Scripture. James 4:7 declares, “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” Notice the order. Submission to God precedes resistance to the adversary. Ephesians 6:11 commands believers to put on the whole armour of God so they may stand against the wiles of the devil. The Christian is not instructed to invent private revelations, collect dramatic stories about demonic encounters, or spend his life attributing every difficulty to invisible enemies. He is commanded to stand in the Lord's strength, believe God's truth, and exercise faith and obedience. First John 4:4 declares, “greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.” The believer's confidence therefore rests upon the Lord rather than upon his ability to impress the devil with loud religious declarations. The Christian who spends more time studying Satan's supposed secrets than obeying God's revealed commandments has allowed the enemy to become the center of attention. Spiritual victory begins by giving the Lord His rightful place, not by giving the devil another audience.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 4:27 establishes the believer's responsibility to deny the devil opportunities created through sinful conduct. The warning follows Paul's command concerning anger, making unresolved wrath an especially important example of how the flesh may provide an opening for further temptation and spiritual damage. The devil is presented throughout Scripture as a real adversary who deceives, accuses, and seeks to harm God's people. Nevertheless, his activity must be distinguished from the corruption of the flesh, and believers must not automatically attribute every sinful desire or personal difficulty to direct demonic influence. The command concerns refusing the adversary an advantage through conduct that contradicts the new life received in Jesus Christ.

The verse also requires a proper distinction between salvation and spiritual warfare. Believers are saved by grace through faith, sealed with the Holy Spirit, and secure in Jesus Christ, yet they remain responsible to resist temptation, govern anger, reject bitterness, and stand against the devil's devices. The Christian's security does not remove the necessity of vigilance, nor does the devil possess authority equal to that of Almighty God. The believer must respond through submission to the Lord, the written word, prayer, and obedience rather than fear or religious sensationalism. The central lesson is that the redeemed must not provide the devil with opportunities through deliberate disobedience, but should stand in the strength of Jesus Christ and refuse the fleshly conduct that gives the adversary an advantage.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. Anger Must Not Give The Devil An Opportunity

Ephesians 4:26 — “Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath:”

Ephesians 4:27 — “Neither give place to the devil.”

Ephesians 4:31 — “Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:”

James 1:20 — “For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.”

2. The Devil Is A Real Adversary

1 Peter 5:8 — “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:”

John 8:44 — “for he is a liar, and the father of it.”

2 Corinthians 11:14 — “And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.”

Revelation 12:10 — “for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.”

3. Satan Uses Deception And Spiritual Snares

Genesis 3:1 — “Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made.”

2 Corinthians 11:3 — “as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty”

Ephesians 6:11 — “Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.”

2 Timothy 2:26 — “And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.”

4. Bitterness And Unforgiveness Create Danger

2 Corinthians 2:10 — “To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also:”

2 Corinthians 2:11 — “Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.”

Hebrews 12:15 — “lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;”

Ephesians 4:32 — “And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.”

5. The Flesh Must Not Be Given Provision

Romans 6:12 — “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.”

Romans 13:14 — “But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.”

Galatians 5:16 — “Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.”

James 1:14 — “But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.”

6. The Believer Must Resist And Stand

James 4:7 — “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”

Ephesians 6:16 — “Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.”

1 Peter 5:9 — “Whom resist stedfast in the faith”

2 Corinthians 10:5 — “and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;”

7. Christ Secures And Strengthens His Redeemed

Ephesians 1:13 — “in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,”

Ephesians 4:30 — “And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.”

Colossians 1:13 — “Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:”

1 John 4:4 — “greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.”

5. Reflection

Ephesians 4:27 exposes one of the most dangerous habits in Christian living: treating deliberate disobedience as though it carries no spiritual consequences because salvation is secure. Paul does not warn the unsaved Gentiles in this verse; he addresses believers who have been instructed to put off the old man and put on the new. Their redemption rests upon Jesus Christ, but their conduct remains their responsibility. The devil does not need to overturn the finished work of Calvary to damage a Christian's testimony, fellowship, or usefulness. He can exploit the opportunities provided by anger, bitterness, dishonesty, and fleshly indulgence. The believer who continually leaves room for sin should not be surprised when that room becomes occupied by trouble.

The connection with anger is particularly important because resentment can become a habit that gradually shapes a person's entire outlook. A Christian may experience a legitimate offense and begin with a sincere desire for justice, only to discover that wounded pride has turned his concern into personal revenge. He rehearses conversations, assumes motives, and interprets everything through the injury he remembers. Before long, he is defending conduct that Scripture condemns because he believes the original offense gives him permission to retaliate. Yet James 1:20 declares that the wrath of man does not work the righteousness of God. The flesh has a remarkable talent for transforming a legitimate

grievance into an excuse for illegitimate conduct. The believer must refuse that transformation.

This warning also demands discernment concerning the devil's methods. Scripture presents him as a deceiver, accuser, and adversary, but that does not make every unpleasant circumstance a personal attack from Satan. Christians can create considerable trouble through ordinary foolishness without requiring a supernatural explanation for every mistake. A man who refuses biblical counsel, cultivates bitterness, and mistreats his family should not attempt to excuse his conduct by announcing that the devil has attacked his household. The Scriptures command personal responsibility, repentance, correction, and submission to God. The adversary's activity never eliminates the accountability of the person who yields to temptation. Blaming the devil for conduct the flesh willingly performed does not produce spiritual victory; it merely gives disobedience another excuse.

The practical answer is found in submission to the Lord rather than fascination with the enemy. James 4:7 commands believers to submit themselves to God and resist the devil. Ephesians 6 explains the armour God has provided, including truth, righteousness, faith, salvation, and the word of God. Those provisions direct attention toward divine strength rather than human religious excitement. A Christian does not become spiritually mature by collecting sensational accounts of demons or constantly announcing that every disagreement represents invisible warfare. He becomes established through Scripture, obedience, prayer, and faithful dependence upon the Lord. The safest place for the believer is not in the center of an argument about Satan's power, but in submission to the authority of Jesus Christ.

The warning must also be distinguished from the doctrine of eternal security. Ephesians 4:30 declares that believers are sealed unto the day of redemption, even while commanding them not to grieve the Holy Spirit. That combination establishes both assurance and accountability. A Christian may damage his fellowship, testimony, relationships, and opportunities for service through deliberate disobedience without thereby proving that Christ's sacrifice has failed. Nevertheless, the Lord's chastening and the future examination of Christian works demonstrate that sinful conduct is never harmless. The proper response is neither despair nor complacency. The believer should acknowledge wrongdoing, receive correction, and return to faithful obedience. Eternal security guarantees the sufficiency of the Saviour; it never guarantees that rebellion will be free from consequences.

Finally, Ephesians 4:27 should encourage every Christian to examine the opportunities he may be providing through his daily decisions. Are there resentments being deliberately

preserved, dishonest practices being defended, or fleshly desires receiving attention that Scripture has forbidden? Are disagreements being handled according to truth and love, or has personal pride become more important than obedience? The believer must not become obsessed with searching for the devil behind every inconvenience, but he must take seriously the command not to give him place. God has provided His word, His Spirit, and the strength necessary for faithful living. The devil is an adversary to resist, not a guest to accommodate. Give him no place through cherished sin, cultivated bitterness, or deliberate rebellion. The Christian belongs to Jesus Christ, and his life ought to be governed by the Lord who purchased him.

Ephesians 4:28 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 4:28

"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."

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"Let him that stole steal no more"

Paul begins this verse with a command so plain that it requires considerable religious ingenuity to misunderstand it: "Let him that stole steal no more." Notice that he is addressing believers, not merely preaching against the sins of the unconverted world. The preceding verses have established the necessity of putting off the old man, renewing the mind, and putting on the new man created in righteousness and true holiness. Now the apostle applies those doctrines to something as practical as another person's property. The old man takes what does not belong to him; the new man must reject that conduct. Exodus 20:15 declared to Israel, "Thou shalt not steal." Ephesians 4:28 establishes the corresponding moral responsibility for the Church without placing believers under Israel's Mosaic covenant. Grace did not make theft righteous, and the cross did not transform dishonesty into a spiritual gift. The Christian who has been redeemed by Jesus Christ must no longer conduct his affairs according to the corruption of his former life.

The expression "him that stole" also acknowledges the reality of a sinful past. Some of the believers receiving Paul's instruction may have previously practiced theft, dishonesty, or other forms of taking what belonged to someone else. The apostle does not declare that

their former wrongdoing makes genuine salvation impossible. First Corinthians 6:9–11 identifies serious sins formerly practiced by some of the Corinthians, then declares, “And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified.” God's saving grace can reach the thief just as surely as it can reach the religious hypocrite who has never been arrested for anything. Nevertheless, forgiveness does not transform the former offense into acceptable behavior. A genuinely saved thief is not authorized to continue stealing because the Lord has forgiven his sins. The command is to stop. The gospel can save a thief without pretending he was never a thief, but the new life in Christ gives him no permission to make theft his continuing occupation.

The command reaches beyond the obvious picture of somebody breaking into a house or stealing merchandise from a store. A person may steal through dishonest financial dealings, deliberate fraud, falsified records, withheld wages, or the misuse of property entrusted to his care. He may take credit for another person's labor or obtain money through representations he knows to be false. The precise circumstances differ, but the governing principle remains the same: a Christian must not deliberately appropriate what does not rightfully belong to him. Proverbs 20:17 warns, “Bread of deceit is sweet to a man; but afterwards his mouth shall be filled with gravel.” The immediate profit of dishonesty can conceal consequences that eventually prove bitter. Zacchaeus demonstrated the seriousness of repentance in Luke 19:8 when he spoke of restoring what he had wrongfully taken. A Christian who stops stealing deserves to be encouraged, but where restitution is possible and appropriate, repentance should not become merely a religious announcement that leaves the injured person bearing the entire cost of the wrongdoing.

“but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good”

The second expression establishes a remarkable contrast because Paul does not stop with prohibiting theft. He commands the former thief to become a productive worker: “but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good.” The word “rather” introduces the opposite manner of conduct. Instead of taking what belongs to another person, the believer should earn through legitimate labor what he requires for his responsibilities. The word “labour” implies effort, diligence, and the willingness to perform useful work rather than expecting others to finance deliberate idleness. First Thessalonians 4:11 commands believers “to do your own business, and to work with your own hands.” That instruction does not make every Christian responsible to pursue the same occupation, nor does it make physical labor the only respectable form of employment. Paul is dignifying honest work and rejecting the assumption that a person may support himself through dishonest gain. The thief once employed his hands to obtain what

belonged to another; now those hands are to become instruments of useful service rather than unlawful acquisition.

The expression “the thing which is good” is equally important because not every activity that produces income is automatically legitimate in God's sight. A man may work long hours, demonstrate remarkable determination, and become financially successful while engaging in fraud or other conduct contrary to righteousness. The Bible does not sanctify an enterprise merely because its owner calls it hard work. The labor must itself be good, honest, and consistent with the responsibilities God has established. Second Thessalonians 3:12 commands disorderly believers “that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.” That passage addresses those unwilling to work rather than people genuinely prevented from working through disability, illness, age, or circumstances beyond their control. The Church must never confuse deliberate idleness with legitimate need. Likewise, a Christian who cares for dependent family members or performs useful responsibilities without receiving ordinary wages is not thereby living a worthless life. The Lord values honest and useful labor; He does not measure every person's faithfulness by the size of a paycheck or the amount of physical strength remaining in his body.

The apostle Paul demonstrated this principle through his own conduct. Acts 20:34 records his testimony, “Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me.” Paul possessed extraordinary apostolic authority, yet he was not ashamed to perform ordinary labor when circumstances required it. His work did not diminish the gospel or make his ministry less spiritual. First Corinthians 9 establishes that those preaching the gospel may legitimately receive material support, while Paul's personal example demonstrates that earning through honest employment is likewise honorable. These truths must remain together. A faithful minister may receive support without being a thief, and another may labor with his hands without demonstrating superior spirituality. What matters is honesty, responsibility, and faithfulness to God's calling. A man does not become more holy merely because he possesses a religious title, and he does not become less useful to God because his hands carry the marks of an honest day's work.

“that he may have to give to him that needeth”

The final expression reveals the extraordinary purpose toward which Paul's instruction has been moving: “that he may have to give to him that needeth.” The progression is striking. The former thief is not merely commanded to stop taking from other people and earn enough to satisfy his own desires. He is instructed to labor so that he may possess something to share with those who have genuine needs. The old man takes; the new man gives. The old man measures success by how much he can obtain; the new man recognizes

opportunities to assist others. Acts 20:35 records Paul's instruction to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” This does not make receiving legitimate help a disgrace, nor does it mean every believer must give away everything he earns. It establishes generosity as an important characteristic of redeemed conduct. The gospel does more than tell a thief to keep his hands out of another man's pocket. It teaches him to use those same hands to help the man whose burdens he might once have ignored.

Notice also that the giving is directed toward “him that needeth.” Paul identifies genuine need rather than the unlimited satisfaction of somebody else's desires. Christian generosity should involve compassion, discernment, and responsible stewardship. Galatians 6:10 declares, “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.” That instruction demonstrates concern for fellow believers without eliminating responsibility toward others. Second Corinthians 8:12 further explains that a willing offering is accepted according to what a person possesses rather than what he does not possess. The believer should therefore avoid both selfishness and the manipulation sometimes employed by religious fundraising arrangements. Giving should not become an instrument through which people are pressured into neglecting their families or contributing money they do not possess. God commands generosity, but He has never authorized a preacher to turn another man's compassion into a financial obligation manufactured through guilt and religious intimidation.

The purpose of giving also exposes the difference between genuine charity and a religious performance designed to attract admiration. Second Corinthians 9:7 declares, “Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.” Paul does not present generosity as a competition in which believers prove their spirituality through public displays of wealth. Nor does he teach that a financial gift purchases justification, guarantees prosperity, or places Almighty God under obligation to enrich the giver. The Christian should first recognize that salvation comes through faith in Jesus Christ, apart from works, and that giving belongs to the conduct appropriate afterward. The practical objective is to meet genuine needs and glorify the Lord through faithful stewardship. The old man may steal because he wants more for himself, and he may even give because he wants everybody to admire him. The new man should give because another person needs help and the Lord has provided the opportunity to supply it.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 4:28 establishes a threefold transformation in the believer's conduct: stop stealing, begin honest labor, and become a giver to those in need. The command follows

Paul's teaching concerning the old man, the renewed mind, and the new man created in righteousness and true holiness. The former thief is not instructed merely to abandon his previous offense but to replace dishonest gain with legitimate work and selfish acquisition with responsible generosity. This demonstrates that biblical sanctification involves both rejecting evil and pursuing good. The verse also preserves the distinction between the Mosaic law given to Israel and the Church's present responsibilities under grace, while recognizing the consistent righteousness of God's moral standards.

The passage further distinguishes salvation from Christian conduct, honest work from deliberate idleness, and genuine generosity from religious manipulation. Justification comes through faith in Jesus Christ rather than labor, restitution, or charitable giving. Nevertheless, the redeemed must practice honesty, fulfill legitimate responsibilities, and assist others according to their means and opportunities. Christian charity should neither excuse deliberate exploitation nor neglect those genuinely unable to provide for themselves. The central lesson is that the new man must no longer take dishonestly from others but should work faithfully so that he may become a blessing to those who need assistance.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. The Old Man Must Be Put Off

Ephesians 4:22 — “That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;”

Ephesians 4:24 — “And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”

Colossians 3:9 — “Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;”

Ephesians 4:25 — “Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour”

2. Theft Is Condemned And Restitution Matters

Exodus 20:15 — “Thou shalt not steal.”

Leviticus 19:11 — “Ye shall not steal, neither deal falsely, neither lie one to another.”

Proverbs 20:17 — “Bread of deceit is sweet to a man; but afterwards his mouth shall be filled with gravel.”

Luke 19:8 — “and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.”

3. Honest Labor Is Honourable

1 Thessalonians 4:11 — “and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you;”

2 Thessalonians 3:12 — “that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.”

Acts 20:34 — “these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me.”

Proverbs 14:23 — “In all labour there is profit: but the talk of the lips tendeth only to penury.”

4. Work And Responsibility Must Be Distinguished From Genuine Need

1 Timothy 5:8 — “But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.”

2 Thessalonians 3:10 — “that if any would not work, neither should he eat.”

Galatians 6:2 — “Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.”

Ephesians 4:28 — “that he may have to give to him that needeth.”

5. Christian Generosity Must Be Willing And Genuine

Acts 20:35 — “It is more blessed to give than to receive.”

2 Corinthians 9:7 — “for God loveth a cheerful giver.”

2 Corinthians 8:12 — “it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.”

Galatians 6:10 — “let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.”

6. Salvation And Good Works Must Be Rightly Divided

Ephesians 2:8 — “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:”

Ephesians 2:9 — “Not of works, lest any man should boast.”

Ephesians 2:10 — “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works”

Titus 3:5 — “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us”

7. Every Responsibility Should Glorify God

Colossians 3:23 — “And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;”

1 Corinthians 10:31 — “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.”

Romans 12:13 — “Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.”

1 Peter 4:10 — “As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”

5. Reflection

Ephesians 4:28 presents one of the clearest pictures of practical transformation in the Christian life. Paul does not merely command the thief to stop stealing and congratulate himself for becoming a respectable citizen. He commands the former thief to work honestly and become capable of giving to someone in need. That is a remarkable reversal of conduct. The same hands once employed to acquire another person's possessions are now to become instruments of useful labor and generosity. This is what the doctrine of the new man should produce when applied to ordinary life. The gospel does not merely teach the thief to keep his hands to himself; it teaches him to use those hands for the benefit of others. The change demonstrates the practical purpose of God's saving grace.

The command also exposes the inadequacy of repentance that consists entirely of words. A man may announce that he has abandoned dishonesty while continuing to enjoy the proceeds of fraud or refusing to correct wrongdoing that remains within his ability to address. Zacchaeus demonstrated a different disposition when he spoke of restoring what he had wrongfully taken. That example belongs to its historical setting and does not establish a universal mathematical formula for restitution under grace. Nevertheless, it shows that genuine concern for righteousness can produce a willingness to repair harm. Where restitution is appropriate and possible, the Christian should take that responsibility seriously. A confession that protects the offender's reputation while deliberately leaving the injured person to bear the loss may sound religious, but it has not necessarily addressed the wrong.

The dignity of honest labor must also remain firmly established. Paul himself worked with his hands, demonstrating that useful employment is not beneath a servant of Jesus Christ. A Christian should therefore approach legitimate responsibilities with diligence rather than imagining that ordinary work possesses no spiritual significance. Yet this instruction must

never become an excuse for condemning people who are genuinely unable to work. Disability, serious illness, advanced age, and responsibilities involving the care of dependent people require compassion and discernment. The biblical distinction concerns deliberate unwillingness rather than every circumstance in which someone lacks employment or income. A man who refuses honest work while expecting others to finance his idleness needs correction, but the person who cannot work and genuinely needs assistance should not be treated as though weakness were rebellion.

The final purpose of the verse introduces a necessary correction to selfish ambition. Paul does not tell believers to work merely so they can accumulate possessions and admire their financial success. He directs them toward generosity, especially when another person possesses a genuine need. Money earned honestly may provide for a family, fulfill obligations, and create opportunities for charitable assistance. These are legitimate responsibilities that should not be placed in unnecessary competition. Christian giving should be willing and proportionate to actual means rather than produced through fear, manipulation, or promises of guaranteed material prosperity. Second Corinthians 9:7 establishes the importance of cheerful giving. The Lord does not need religious salesmen promising extraordinary returns in order to make generosity a Christian virtue. The command itself supplies sufficient reason to help others.

This passage also preserves the essential distinction between justification and sanctification. No sinner purchases eternal life by abandoning theft, working diligently, restoring stolen property, or giving generously to the poor. Salvation rests upon the finished sacrifice of Jesus Christ and is received through faith apart from works. Nevertheless, the person who has received that salvation possesses responsibilities that should increasingly reflect the righteousness of the new man. A saved person may fail in those responsibilities without proving that Christ's blood has become insufficient. Yet eternal security must never become an excuse for deliberate dishonesty or exploitation. The Lord's grace teaches His people to live differently. Good works cannot purchase the new birth, but the new birth establishes a life in which good works ought to become increasingly evident.

Finally, Ephesians 4:28 brings the entire discussion of the old man and new man into the practical world of employment, possessions, honesty, and personal generosity. The believer does not need an impressive religious title to obey this command. He needs to reject dishonesty, perform whatever legitimate work he is able to undertake, fulfill his responsibilities, and recognize opportunities to assist others. The Christian should examine not merely whether he possesses enough money but whether his attitude toward money reflects the Lord's instructions. He should also remember that the purpose of service is not personal recognition but faithfulness to Jesus Christ. The old man takes

because he wants what belongs to another. The new man works because he recognizes his responsibilities and gives because he sees an opportunity to help. The hands have changed their occupation because the heart has received a new Master.

Ephesians 4:29 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 4:29

"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."

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth"

Paul continues his instructions concerning the new man's conduct by addressing something that gets more Christians into trouble than almost any other member of the human body: the mouth. Ephesians 4:25 commanded believers to put away lying. Verse 26 warned against sinful anger. Verse 27 instructed Christians not to give place to the devil, and verse 28 commanded the former thief to abandon stealing and pursue honest labor. Now Paul turns to communication. That progression is deliberate. The old man is not merely corrupt in his outward actions; his corruption also reveals itself through his words. Colossians 3:8 commands believers to put away "anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth." The expression "corrupt communication" concerns speech that is morally rotten, damaging, unwholesome, or contrary to the righteousness expected of God's people. It includes far more than the obvious use of filthy language. Lying, slander, malicious accusations, destructive gossip, and words deliberately intended to injure others all belong within the danger Paul is addressing. A man can keep his vocabulary free from four-letter words and still possess a tongue capable of tearing an entire congregation to pieces.

Notice the force of the command: "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth." Paul does not instruct believers to reduce their corrupt speech to an acceptable percentage. He commands them to reject it. The Christian is responsible for what he allows to proceed from his mouth, even when his emotions are stirred or another person has behaved offensively. James 3:10 declares, "Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be." That passage exposes the

contradiction of praising God while using the same tongue to curse or maliciously injure people. The believer should not imagine that religious activity cancels the consequences of sinful speech. A man may teach a Bible class, lead a prayer meeting, and quote dozens of verses, yet still damage his testimony through uncontrolled words. The flesh has a remarkable ability to turn an ordinary conversation into a demonstration of its own corruption. The tongue does not become holy merely because it has spent Sunday morning quoting Scripture. What matters is whether the words spoken throughout the week agree with the truth being professed.

The expression “proceed out of your mouth” also directs attention toward the relationship between the heart and speech. The Lord Jesus Christ declared in Matthew 12:34, “for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” In its immediate setting, that statement confronted wicked religious opposition to Christ, but the principle concerning the relationship between inward corruption and outward expression remains instructive. Words do not emerge independently of the thoughts, desires, and attitudes that give them direction. A person who repeatedly speaks with malice should examine what he has been cultivating inwardly. Similarly, a believer who constantly exaggerates, complains, or assumes the worst about others may need more than a temporary resolution to speak less. He needs the renewal of mind commanded in Ephesians 4:23. The solution is not merely to polish the outward vocabulary while preserving inward bitterness. The mouth may be the instrument that delivers the message, but the heart often provides the material. If the message keeps coming out rotten, somebody ought to examine what has been stored inside.

“but that which is good to the use of edifying”

The second expression establishes the positive responsibility that must replace corrupt communication: “but that which is good to the use of edifying.” Paul does not merely require Christians to stop saying wicked things. He commands them to speak in a manner that serves a constructive spiritual purpose. The word “edifying” concerns building up, strengthening, and contributing toward the spiritual development of others. Ephesians 4:12 has already identified the edifying of the body of Christ as an important purpose of the ministry gifts given by the risen Lord. Ephesians 4:16 likewise describes the body making increase “unto the edifying of itself in love.” The connection is unmistakable. Believers are members of one body, and their communication should contribute toward that body's health rather than its destruction. Speech that encourages faithfulness, explains Scripture, corrects misunderstanding, comforts the suffering, and strengthens obedience can serve this purpose. The Christian's tongue was not redeemed so it could become a wrecking ball

swinging through the fellowship. It ought to become an instrument through which truth strengthens the people of God.

Nevertheless, edifying speech must not be confused with perpetual flattery, religious sweetness, or the refusal to address serious wrongdoing. The Bible does not teach that every statement must make its hearer feel comfortable. Second Timothy 4:2 commands, “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.” There is room in biblical ministry for reproof and rebuke because error and sin sometimes require direct confrontation. Titus 1:13 even commands sharp rebuke in the particular circumstances described there, with the purpose “that they may be sound in the faith.” Notice the purpose. The rebuke is directed toward soundness, not toward satisfying the speaker's appetite for humiliation. A truthful correction may initially hurt while ultimately contributing to spiritual growth. Conversely, flattering words may feel pleasant while leaving a person established in error. The preacher who refuses to correct sin because somebody might become uncomfortable has confused edification with entertainment. But the preacher who enjoys cruelty has confused biblical boldness with the flesh's appetite for a fight.

The phrase “good to the use of edifying” also requires discernment concerning the occasion, audience, and actual need. Proverbs 25:11 declares, “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.” The value lies not only in the truth of the statement but also in its appropriate application. A grieving Christian may require comfort rather than an argument. A confused believer may need patient instruction rather than a public rebuke. A dishonest teacher may require direct correction rather than polite encouragement to continue spreading error. Romans 14:19 commands believers to follow after the things “wherewith one may edify another.” That does not mean every conversation must become a formal Bible lesson. Ordinary expressions of kindness, gratitude, encouragement, and honest concern can strengthen relationships when governed by biblical principles. The Christian should learn to speak with purpose instead of assuming that every thought entering his mind deserves immediate publication. Having something to say does not automatically establish that it needs to be said, and possessing a true statement does not eliminate the responsibility to deliver it wisely.

“that it may minister grace unto the hearers”

The final expression identifies the intended benefit of the believer's speech: “that it may minister grace unto the hearers.” Notice that Paul is concerned not merely with the speaker's intentions but also with the effect his words should have upon those who receive them. Communication must serve others rather than simply provide an outlet for personal emotion. Colossians 4:6 gives a corresponding instruction: “Let your speech be alway with

grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man." Grace-filled speech does not require surrendering truth, concealing sin, or flattering people into spiritual complacency. It means that our words should be governed by the gracious character appropriate to those who have received mercy through Jesus Christ. A correction can be gracious when it is truthful, necessary, and directed toward another person's spiritual good. Grace in conversation is not the absence of conviction. It is conviction exercised without unnecessary malice.

The expression "minister grace" must also be rightly divided from the doctrine of salvation. Paul is not teaching that a Christian's pleasant conversation regenerates sinners, purchases forgiveness, or communicates saving grace through some mysterious power residing in his vocabulary. Ephesians 2:8 establishes that salvation is by grace through faith, while Romans 10:17 declares, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." The gospel must be communicated faithfully because the message concerns what Jesus Christ accomplished through His death, burial, and resurrection. Nevertheless, the particular emphasis in Ephesians 4:29 concerns the appropriate speech of those already instructed concerning their new life in Christ. Their words should minister benefit, encouragement, correction, and instruction according to the needs of their hearers. A Christian does not become a dispenser of eternal life merely by speaking kindly, but his words can certainly direct people toward the Lord and strengthen those who already belong to Him.

Finally, the reference to "the hearers" reminds believers that their words affect real people. Communication may encourage someone who is discouraged, clarify a difficult doctrine, correct a dangerous misunderstanding, or strengthen a believer who is struggling to remain faithful. It may also cause unnecessary injury when spoken recklessly. Proverbs 12:25 declares, "Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop: but a good word maketh it glad." This does not make every listener's reaction the speaker's responsibility; even the Lord Jesus Christ encountered people who rejected the truth He spoke. Nevertheless, Christians are accountable for whether their words are truthful, appropriate, and directed toward a righteous purpose. Ephesians 4:30 immediately warns believers not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God. The progression should make every careless speaker consider his conduct. The tongue that has been used to confess the Saviour should not become a convenient instrument for corrupting, discouraging, or destroying the people that Saviour purchased.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 4:29 establishes the difference between corrupt communication and speech that builds others up in the faith. The command belongs to Paul's larger instruction

concerning putting off the old man and putting on the new man. Corrupt speech includes more than profanity; it encompasses dishonesty, malice, slander, destructive gossip, and words governed by sinful motives. Christians must reject such communication and replace it with words that serve a legitimate purpose. Edification does not mean avoiding necessary correction, since Scripture commands faithful reproof and rebuke when appropriate. The governing question is whether our speech serves truth and righteousness or merely gives the flesh another opportunity to express itself.

The verse also connects communication with Christian grace, spiritual responsibility, and the welfare of the body of Christ. Words should minister benefit to hearers rather than become instruments of personal revenge or self-promotion. This instruction concerns practical sanctification rather than earning salvation, which remains the gift of God through faith in Jesus Christ. The believer should therefore cultivate truthful, wise, gracious communication while remembering that even necessary correction must be governed by biblical purpose. The central lesson is that the new man's speech should reject corruption, strengthen others through truth, and minister grace rather than satisfy the sinful impulses of the old nature.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. The Old Man And Corrupt Communication

Ephesians 4:22 — “That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;”

Ephesians 4:24 — “And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”

Colossians 3:8 — “But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.”

Colossians 3:9 — “Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;”

2. The Mouth Reveals The Heart

Matthew 12:34 — “for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.”

Luke 6:45 — “for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.”

Proverbs 4:23 — “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.”

James 3:10 — “Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.”

3. Corrupt Speech Must Be Rejected

Ephesians 5:4 — “Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks.”

James 4:11 — “Speak not evil one of another, brethren.”

Proverbs 16:28 — “A froward man soweth strife: and a whisperer separateth chief friends.”

Proverbs 10:19 — “In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise.”

4. Truthful Speech Should Edify

Ephesians 4:15 — “But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:”

Ephesians 4:25 — “Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.”

1 Thessalonians 5:11 — “Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.”

Romans 14:19 — “Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.”

5. Necessary Correction Is Not Corrupt Speech

2 Timothy 4:2 — “reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.”

Titus 1:13 — “Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith;”

Galatians 4:16 — “Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?”

Proverbs 27:6 — “Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.”

6. Speech Should Minister Grace

Colossians 4:6 — “Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.”

Proverbs 15:1 — “A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.”

Proverbs 25:11 — “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.”

Proverbs 12:25 — “Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop: but a good word maketh it glad.”

7. The Believer's Speech Must Honour God

Ephesians 4:30 — “And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.”

Ephesians 5:1 — “Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children;”

1 Corinthians 10:31 — “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.”

James 1:19 — “let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:”

5. Reflection

Ephesians 4:29 confronts a problem that has followed the people of God through every generation: the astonishing contradiction between a mouth that professes righteousness and a tongue that practices corruption. A Christian may spend hours discussing sound doctrine, defending the King James Bible, and correcting the errors of others while remaining remarkably careless about his own speech. Yet the apostle does not permit biblical knowledge to become an excuse for personal disobedience. The man who knows the truth must also learn to speak according to that truth. James 3 describes the tremendous influence of the tongue and warns against blessing God while cursing men. A Christian who can identify the doctrinal errors of ten denominations but cannot control his own malicious tongue has discovered a serious problem considerably closer to home. The new man must govern ordinary conversation as surely as public teaching.

The command against corrupt communication reaches into private conversations, family disagreements, church relationships, and the public exchange of opinions. Gossip does not become righteous because somebody introduces it as a prayer request. An unverified accusation does not become established truth because it has been repeated by several people who happen to dislike the accused. Nor does a personal insult become biblical correction merely because the speaker attaches a Scripture reference. Proverbs 18:13 warns against answering a matter before hearing it, establishing the importance of judgment before speech. Christians should distinguish facts from suspicions and necessary warnings from malicious speculation. The old man enjoys the excitement of repeating damaging information, but the new man must consider whether the words are truthful, necessary, and profitable to those who hear them.

At the same time, Ephesians 4:29 must never be twisted into a commandment against strong preaching or necessary doctrinal correction. The same apostle who instructed believers to minister grace also commanded Timothy to reprove and rebuke with longsuffering and doctrine. Biblical preaching is not required to become a pleasant

collection of flattering statements designed to protect everyone from discomfort. Sin must be confronted, false doctrine must be exposed, and dangerous teachings must be answered according to Scripture. Nevertheless, the authority belongs to God's word rather than the preacher's temper. A man may deliver a forceful rebuke without surrendering to personal malice, just as another may speak softly while deliberately deceiving his listeners. The measure of edifying speech is not whether everybody applauds it, but whether it faithfully serves the truth and the spiritual good of those who hear it.

The instruction concerning edification also requires Christians to develop wisdom about the timing and purpose of their words. Not every person requires the same response, and not every occasion calls for an argument. A discouraged believer may need encouragement, while someone persisting in serious error may require direct correction. A grieving family may benefit from compassionate silence more than a lengthy explanation of suffering. The Christian who always insists upon offering his opinion may need to consider whether he is ministering grace or merely satisfying his desire to be heard. Proverbs 25:11 praises a word fitly spoken, reminding believers that appropriate communication involves discernment. There is a difference between having something true to say and possessing sufficient wisdom to know when, how, and whether that particular truth should be spoken.

This responsibility must remain distinguished from salvation by works. No sinner receives eternal life because he has successfully purified his vocabulary or developed a reputation for pleasant conversation. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes salvation by grace through faith, apart from human works. Nevertheless, those who have received salvation are commanded to live according to the righteousness of the new man. Ephesians 4:30 immediately warns believers against grieving the Holy Spirit, whereby they are sealed unto the day of redemption. That connection preserves both eternal security and Christian responsibility. The believer's standing in Christ is not purchased through good speech, but his conduct can certainly contradict the holiness appropriate to someone indwelt by God's Spirit. Grace does not excuse corruption; it establishes a new life in which the redeemed are responsible to reject it.

Finally, every Christian should examine whether his words leave others strengthened in truth or unnecessarily wounded by the flesh. Consider what is spoken at home, how disagreements are handled, and whether personal frustration is permitted to govern conversations. Examine the things written publicly, the accusations repeated privately, and the manner in which genuine errors are corrected. There will be occasions when faithfulness requires firmness, but firmness should never become an excuse for deliberate cruelty. There will also be occasions when kindness requires patience rather than immediate confrontation. The Lord has provided sufficient instruction for both

circumstances. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth. Speak what is true, useful, and appropriate. Correct what must be corrected, encourage those who need strengthening, and refuse to let the old man turn your tongue into an instrument of destruction. The same mouth that proclaims the grace of Jesus Christ ought to minister grace unto the hearers.

Ephesians 4:30 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 4:30

"And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"And grieve not"

Paul introduces one of the most solemn instructions concerning the believer's relationship with the Holy Ghost: "And grieve not." Notice that this command appears in a chapter devoted to the practical conduct of saved people. He has addressed lying, sinful anger, giving place to the devil, stealing, and corrupt communication. Now he reveals that these matters concern more than personal morality or outward reputation. The Christian's conduct has a direct relationship to the Holy Spirit who indwells him. The word "grieve" indicates that the believer can act contrary to the holiness and will of the Spirit, bringing grief rather than pleasing Him. This does not mean the Holy Ghost becomes unstable, helpless, or subject to human emotions in the manner of fallen men. It establishes that He is personally concerned with the conduct of God's redeemed people. The Christian who imagines his private sins concern nobody but himself has overlooked the divine Person dwelling within him.

The conjunction "And" connects this warning with the instruction immediately preceding it. Ephesians 4:29 commands, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth." Consequently, corrupt speech is not merely an unfortunate failure of manners. It contradicts the holiness appropriate to someone indwelt by the Spirit of God. A Christian may speak the truth with malicious intentions, circulate damaging accusations, or use his tongue to humiliate another believer. He may defend such conduct by announcing that he was simply expressing himself or standing for righteousness. Yet Scripture requires speech that ministers grace unto the hearers. The Holy Spirit did not inspire Ephesians 4:29 so that

believers could ignore it whenever their tempers become excited. A man who uses his mouth to tear down the people of God should not congratulate himself for spiritual boldness merely because he managed to attach a Bible verse to the wreckage.

The command also establishes a distinction between the presence of the Spirit and the believer's practical fellowship with Him. Ephesians 4:30 does not say that the Holy Spirit immediately departs whenever a Christian disobeys. It warns someone already sealed by the Spirit not to grieve Him. That distinction is essential. A believer may resist biblical correction, yield to sinful desires, and conduct himself carnally without thereby proving that the Spirit has abandoned him. Nevertheless, such conduct remains serious because the Christian belongs to Jesus Christ. First Thessalonians 5:19 likewise commands, “Quench not the Spirit.” Grieving and quenching are related warnings, although they emphasize different aspects of resisting the Spirit's holy work. The Christian should neither disregard His conviction nor attempt to manufacture supernatural experiences as a substitute for obedience. The answer to grieving the Holy Spirit is not another emotional performance. It is repentance, submission to Scripture, and a walk that agrees with the Lord who redeemed us.

“the holy Spirit of God”

The expression “the holy Spirit of God” establishes the identity of the One whom believers are commanded not to grieve. The Holy Spirit is not merely a religious influence, a burst of enthusiasm, or an impersonal force distributed in varying quantities according to somebody's spiritual excitement. He is the Holy Spirit of God, possessing divine attributes and exercising personal ministry. Acts 5:3 records Peter asking Ananias, “why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost,” and verse 4 identifies the offense as lying unto God. John 14:26 presents the Holy Ghost as the Comforter who teaches, while John 16:13 declares that the Spirit of truth guides into truth. Such activities cannot be reduced to an impersonal energy operating without knowledge or purpose. The Spirit teaches, guides, witnesses, and can be grieved. A force cannot be lied to in the manner described in Acts 5, and an electrical current does not personally teach the Scriptures. The Holy Ghost is God, not religious electricity.

The word “holy” also governs the entire command. The Holy Spirit's character stands in direct opposition to the corrupt conduct Paul has been condemning. He does not approve dishonesty because the believer finds it convenient. He does not endorse bitterness because somebody has been genuinely offended. He does not delight in malicious speech because the speaker possesses correct doctrine. Galatians 5:22–23 identifies the fruit of the Spirit as love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance. Those characteristics reveal the kind of conduct appropriate to His

government. A Christian cannot honestly claim to be walking in the Spirit while deliberately cultivating the opposite fruit. Scripture does not demand that believers become incapable of temptation, but it does command them to refuse the flesh. The Holy Spirit has not changed His standards merely because the old man has become skilled at explaining why his latest act of disobedience was entirely reasonable.

The Spirit's personal ministry must also be distinguished from the believer's ability to speak confidently about Him. A man may understand the doctrine of the Trinity, explain spiritual baptism, and defend eternal security while behaving in a manner that grieves the very Spirit whose work he accurately describes. Knowledge remains essential, for spiritual maturity cannot be built upon ignorance of God's word. Nevertheless, knowledge must produce obedience rather than become an ornament displayed upon an unchanged character. First Corinthians 6:19 declares that the believer's body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, and verse 20 commands Christians to glorify God in their body and spirit. The Spirit's indwelling therefore establishes responsibility in ordinary conduct, not merely a doctrine for classroom discussion. It is possible to explain the indwelling of the Holy Ghost with admirable precision while treating the divine Resident with remarkably little practical consideration. Sound doctrine ought to correct that contradiction, not provide a hiding place for it.

“whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption”

The final expression establishes one of the clearest statements concerning the believer's security in Jesus Christ: “whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.” Notice the wording carefully. Paul does not declare that believers remain sealed until their next failure, their next moment of anger, or their next imperfect decision. He identifies a particular duration: “unto the day of redemption.” Ephesians 1:13 supplies the order of salvation: “in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise.” The sealing follows faith in Jesus Christ, not the successful completion of a program of personal righteousness. Salvation is received by grace through faith, and the Holy Spirit seals those who believe. This sealing belongs to God's work rather than man's accomplishment. The believer's eternal security rests upon the faithfulness of the One who seals him, not upon the daily perfection of the sinner who has been sealed.

The word “sealed” communicates divine ownership, identification, and security. Ephesians 1:14 further identifies the Holy Spirit as “the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession.” Second Corinthians 1:22 declares that God “hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.” An earnest is a pledge concerning what is yet to come. The Spirit's presence therefore witnesses to the certainty of the believer's promised inheritance. This doctrine must not be confused with the idea

that Christians can behave irresponsibly without consequences. The very verse establishing the seal also commands believers not to grieve the Spirit. Position and practice must remain properly distinguished. The believer's standing in Christ is secure, but his conduct may require correction, and his works remain subject to examination at the judgment seat of Christ. A seal that lasts unto the day of redemption is not a temporary religious permit renewed whenever the Christian manages to behave himself for another twenty-four hours.

The expression “the day of redemption” directs attention toward the completion of the believer's redemption, particularly the redemption of the body. Romans 8:23 declares that believers are waiting for “the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.” Philippians 3:21 promises that Jesus Christ “shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body.” First Corinthians 15:51–52 likewise reveals the future transformation of believers. The Christian possesses eternal life now, but he continues inhabiting a mortal body subject to weakness and the struggle against the flesh. The sealing of the Holy Spirit extends through this present condition to the promised redemption ahead. The distinction between David's prayer in Psalm 51:11 and the Church's sealing in Ephesians 4:30 must also be respected. David prayed, “take not thy holy spirit from me,” within the historical setting of God's dealings with Israel's king. The Church is explicitly promised the Spirit's seal unto redemption. The Christian is not waiting to discover whether the Holy Ghost will remain faithful until the finish line. God has already declared the duration of the seal, and the promise reaches all the way to redemption day.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 4:30 establishes the personal holiness of the Holy Spirit, the seriousness of grieving Him through sinful conduct, and the security of the believer who has been sealed unto the day of redemption. The immediate context concerns practical Christian behavior, particularly corrupt communication, while the surrounding passage includes anger, bitterness, dishonesty, malice, kindness, and forgiveness. These matters are not merely questions of outward respectability. They concern the conduct of people indwelt by the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit is a divine Person who indwells the redeemed, and the Christian must not treat deliberate disobedience as though it were spiritually insignificant.

The verse also provides a necessary distinction between salvation and sanctification. Sealing belongs to God's saving work and continues unto redemption, while the command not to grieve the Spirit concerns the believer's daily responsibility. The Christian does not earn the seal through obedience, nor does every failure destroy the security Christ has provided. Nevertheless, the Spirit's indwelling calls for holiness, truthful speech, self-control, and practical submission to Scripture. The central lesson is that believers are

eternally secured by the Holy Spirit and therefore responsible to live in a manner that does not grieve the One who has sealed them.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. The Holy Spirit Can Be Grieved

Ephesians 4:30 — “And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.”

Isaiah 63:10 — “But they rebelled, and vexed his holy Spirit:”

1 Thessalonians 5:19 — “Quench not the Spirit.”

Ephesians 4:29 — “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth”

2. The Holy Spirit Is A Divine Person

Acts 5:3 — “why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost”

Acts 5:4 — “thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.”

John 14:26 — “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things”

John 16:13 — “Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth:”

3. Believers Are Sealed By The Holy Spirit

Ephesians 1:13 — “in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,”

2 Corinthians 1:22 — “Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.”

Ephesians 1:14 — “Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession”

Romans 8:9 — “Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.”

4. The Seal Continues Unto Redemption

Romans 8:23 — “waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.”

Philippians 3:21 — “Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body”

1 Corinthians 15:52 — “and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.”

2 Corinthians 5:5 — “who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.”

5. The Spirit Produces Holy Conduct

Galatians 5:16 — “Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.”

Galatians 5:22 — “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,”

Romans 8:13 — “but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.”

Ephesians 5:18 — “And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;”

6. Security Does Not Remove Accountability

Ephesians 2:8 — “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:”

Ephesians 4:24 — “And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”

2 Timothy 2:19 — “Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.”

1 Corinthians 3:15 — “he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.”

7. The Spirit's Work Must Be Rightly Divided

Psalm 51:11 — “Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me.”

1 Samuel 16:14 — “But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him.”

John 14:16 — “that he may abide with you for ever;”

1 Corinthians 6:19 — “your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God”

5. Reflection

Ephesians 4:30 establishes a truth that every born-again Christian ought to consider carefully: the Holy Spirit who seals the believer is personally concerned with the manner in which that believer lives. Paul does not present the Spirit as an impersonal influence that becomes active only during unusual religious experiences. He is the Holy Spirit of God,

dwelling within those who have believed the gospel of Jesus Christ. That means the Christian's conduct matters even when nobody else knows what he has said, thought, or done. Sin does not become harmless merely because it remains private. The believer may conceal an offense from his neighbours, but he cannot conceal it from the God who indwells him. A Christian who carefully protects his public reputation while deliberately entertaining private corruption has forgotten that the Holy Ghost is not an occasional visitor who disappears when the meeting is over.

The immediate context makes this warning particularly practical. Paul has been discussing lying, anger, stealing, corrupt communication, and the conduct expected of the new man. These are ordinary matters in which believers may either obey Scripture or accommodate the flesh. A man may grieve the Spirit through malicious speech while imagining that his forceful personality demonstrates spiritual courage. Another may cultivate resentment while insisting that forgiveness would somehow compromise righteousness. Ephesians 4:31–32 corrects that reasoning by commanding the removal of bitterness, wrath, malice, and evil speaking while requiring kindness and forgiveness. The Spirit does not endorse the old man's conduct simply because the Christian can explain why he became angry. The flesh has an endless supply of excuses, but the Holy Ghost has already supplied the commandments by which those excuses must be judged.

This passage also exposes the error of confusing spiritual enthusiasm with spiritual maturity. A believer may become emotionally excited during worship, speak passionately about biblical doctrine, or describe powerful religious experiences without consistently yielding to the Holy Spirit's instruction. None of those outward experiences proves that his ordinary conduct is pleasing to God. Galatians 5:22–23 identifies the fruit of the Spirit through qualities such as love, longsuffering, gentleness, and temperance. Ephesians 5:18 commands believers to be filled with the Spirit, demonstrating that the indwelling Spirit's presence and the believer's practical submission must be distinguished. The Christian should therefore examine his obedience rather than merely evaluating the strength of his emotions. A man who shouts about being filled with the Holy Ghost while treating everybody around him with contempt has confused spiritual power with the volume of his own personality.

The sealing of the Spirit also settles a controversy that has unnecessarily troubled many believers. Ephesians 4:30 declares that Christians are sealed unto the day of redemption, not until their next spiritual failure. Ephesians 1:13 identifies that sealing as following belief in Jesus Christ. Salvation is therefore grounded in God's gracious work rather than maintained through the believer's ability to achieve sinless perfection. Nevertheless, this assurance does not authorize deliberate rebellion. The same apostle who establishes the

permanence of the seal commands believers not to grieve the One who seals them. Position and practice must remain distinct without becoming enemies. Eternal security is not permission to sin; it is assurance that salvation rests upon the faithful Saviour rather than the fluctuating performance of the saved sinner.

The expression concerning redemption also directs attention toward the Christian's future hope. Romans 8:23 explains that believers await the redemption of their bodies, while Philippians 3:21 promises that Jesus Christ will change their vile bodies to be fashioned like His glorious body. Until that moment, believers continue experiencing weakness, temptation, and the conflict between the flesh and the Spirit. Yet the Holy Ghost remains the earnest of their inheritance. The sealing does not depend upon every passing feeling of confidence or discouragement. The Christian may experience conviction after wrongdoing without concluding that the Spirit has abandoned him. He should confess sin, submit to the Scriptures, and return to faithful obedience. The Lord has not promised that His children will never require correction, but He has promised a redemption that reaches beyond the limitations of their present mortal bodies.

Finally, Ephesians 4:30 should produce both gratitude and a serious desire for holiness. The believer has received a privilege greater than any earthly distinction: the Holy Spirit of God dwells within him and seals him unto redemption. Such a privilege ought not become a doctrine admired intellectually while ignored practically. The Christian should examine his words, relationships, motives, and habits according to Scripture. Where dishonesty exists, truth must replace it. Where bitterness has taken root, biblical forgiveness and appropriate correction must be pursued. Where the flesh demands obedience, the believer must walk in the Spirit rather than surrender to sinful desires. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God. He has sealed you unto the day of redemption, and that glorious security should produce reverence rather than carelessness. The Spirit who guarantees your future inheritance deserves obedience in your present walk.

Ephesians 4:31 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 4:31

“Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:”

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

“Let all bitterness”

Paul begins this remarkable collection of sins with something that often escapes public detection while quietly poisoning the Christian's inward life: bitterness. Notice the word “all.” The Holy Ghost does not command believers to put away only the bitterness they find embarrassing or difficult to conceal. He commands them to remove it entirely. Bitterness is resentment that has been retained, nourished, and allowed to influence the way a person thinks about others. It may begin with a genuine offense, an unanswered accusation, an unjust decision, or a painful betrayal. But instead of dealing with the matter according to Scripture, the offended person begins cultivating the injury until it becomes part of his identity. Hebrews 12:15 warns, “lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.” A root operates beneath the surface before its fruit becomes visible. Likewise, a Christian can maintain an outward appearance of respectability while privately feeding resentment that eventually affects his words, decisions, and relationships. Bitterness is an old wound that the flesh refuses to let heal because it has discovered a certain pleasure in keeping the injury alive.

The immediate context makes the warning particularly serious. Ephesians 4:30 commands believers not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God, whereby they are sealed unto the day of redemption. Verse 31 then identifies attitudes and behaviors that must be removed from the Christian's life. Bitterness is therefore not simply an unfortunate personality trait or evidence that somebody possesses an unusually strong memory. It is a disposition contrary to the righteousness expected of the new man. That does not mean every painful memory is sinful or that every injured person must immediately restore trust in someone who remains dishonest or dangerous. Forgiveness, reconciliation, and restored confidence are related matters, but they are not identical. A believer may establish necessary boundaries while refusing personal hatred and revenge. Romans 12:18 declares, “If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.” The Christian is responsible for his own conduct even when another person refuses to behave properly. You may not be able to correct yesterday's injustice, but you are responsible for whether yesterday's injustice becomes the master of today's conduct.

“and wrath, and anger”

The next expression identifies two closely related manifestations of the old nature: “wrath, and anger.” Wrath may reveal itself in an eruption of hostility, while anger may remain as an inward disposition that continues seeking expression. Paul is not establishing an elaborate psychological classification in which every unpleasant feeling must be assigned to a

separate compartment. He is condemning the destructive passions that arise when the flesh refuses biblical restraint. The preceding instruction in Ephesians 4:26 declared, “Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath.” Some readers imagine a contradiction between that verse and the present command. There is none. Verse 26 recognizes that anger can arise without being sinful, while verse 31 commands believers to remove the sinful anger and wrath that belong to the corrupt conduct of the old man. Mark 3:5 records the Lord Jesus Christ looking upon hardened hearts with anger, yet His anger remained perfectly righteous. The fact that Jesus Christ became angry does not authorize every Christian to baptize his bad temper and announce that the Holy Ghost has endorsed his tantrum.

The believer must learn to distinguish righteous opposition to wrongdoing from wounded pride demanding satisfaction. A man may become angry because someone has mistreated an innocent person, and that concern may possess a legitimate moral foundation. Yet the same man may become equally furious when somebody questions his opinion or fails to acknowledge his importance. James 1:20 declares, “For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.” Proverbs 16:32 places extraordinary value upon self-government, declaring that the person who rules his spirit is better than one who takes a city. The world may admire the individual who intimidates others through explosive reactions, but Scripture identifies restraint as genuine strength. A Christian who must have the final insult, the loudest voice, and the most dramatic response has not demonstrated spiritual courage. He has merely advertised that his emotions can be provoked into taking command. The man who cannot control his temper is not frightening because he possesses great spiritual power. He is dangerous because he has surrendered the government of his conduct to the flesh.

“and clamour, and evil speaking”

Paul now moves from inward resentment and hostile emotion to the outward conduct that often accompanies them: “clamour, and evil speaking.” Clamour describes noisy contention, the uproar that develops when anger becomes a public disturbance. Not every loud voice is sinful, and the Bible certainly does not require preachers to whisper while confronting serious error. The issue is the kind of commotion produced by uncontrolled hostility. Proverbs 15:1 declares, “A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.” A Christian may possess a legitimate complaint yet handle it so recklessly that the original issue disappears beneath the conflict he has created. Arguments grow louder, accusations become sharper, and every participant begins speaking more aggressively while listening less carefully. Before long, nobody is particularly interested in resolving the matter; everybody is simply determined not to lose. Clamour is what happens when the

flesh mistakes an increase in volume for an increase in righteousness. The Holy Ghost does not measure the truth of an argument by the number of decibels its defenders can produce.

The expression “evil speaking” reaches further into the misuse of the tongue. It includes malicious speech, slanderous accusations, reviling, and other forms of communication intended to injure rather than edify. Ephesians 4:29 has already commanded believers to reject corrupt communication and speak what is good for edifying. A Christian can violate that command without employing a single vulgar expression. He may circulate an accusation without establishing the facts, deliberately misrepresent another person's position, or use truthful information with the intention of humiliating someone unnecessarily. James 4:11 warns, “Speak not evil one of another, brethren.” That command does not prohibit correcting false doctrine, warning against genuine danger, or confronting wrongdoing through proper biblical means. Second Timothy 4:2 still commands reproof and rebuke with longsuffering and doctrine. But necessary correction differs from malicious personal destruction. The man who uses biblical truth as ammunition for personal revenge has not made revenge holy. He has merely placed a Scripture reference beside the weapon. Truth must remain governed by truthfulness, righteousness, and legitimate purpose.

“be put away from you, with all malice”

The final expression establishes the action required of believers: “be put away from you, with all malice.” Paul does not instruct Christians merely to recognize bitterness, admire the seriousness of wrath, and develop an intellectual understanding of malicious communication. He commands them to put these things away. The language corresponds to Ephesians 4:22, where believers are instructed to put off the old man, and verse 24, where they are commanded to put on the new man created in righteousness and true holiness. Colossians 3:8 supplies a close parallel: “But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.” Sanctification involves the rejection of conduct that contradicts the believer's new identity in Christ. This does not mean that a Christian manufactures salvation through moral effort, nor that the old flesh can be permanently perfected through discipline. It means that the redeemed must refuse to obey sinful desires and walk according to the Spirit. God never commanded the Christian to decorate the old man's corruption with religious language. He commanded him to put it off.

The expression “with all malice” reaches the underlying intention that can produce the entire collection of sins. Malice is the disposition that wishes harm upon another person or deliberately seeks his injury. It is more serious than an unpleasant passing feeling because

it involves hostility that may become a governing motive. First Peter 2:1 commands believers to lay aside malice, guile, hypocrisies, envies, and evil speakings. Notice how these sins frequently operate together. A person who harbors malice may resort to deceit, conceal his real intentions, resent another person's blessings, and use destructive speech to accomplish his purposes. That is why Ephesians 4:32 immediately presents the opposite conduct: kindness, tenderheartedness, and forgiveness. The answer is not a sentimental refusal to recognize wrongdoing, but the rejection of personal cruelty and revenge. A believer may firmly oppose error without desiring the destruction of the person promoting it. The Christian who wants another person's downfall more than he wants God's righteousness has allowed malice to take the place that obedience ought to occupy.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 4:31 exposes the progression of sinful hostility from inward resentment to outward destruction. Bitterness corrupts the attitude, wrath and anger disturb self-government, clamour turns contention into open disturbance, and evil speaking uses words to injure others. Malice reveals the harmful intention that may operate beneath these sins. Although these expressions are related, Paul names them individually so that believers cannot excuse one form of sinful hostility simply because they have managed to avoid another. The Christian who has put on the new man must not permit the old man's resentment, temper, or destructive speech to govern his conduct.

The verse also demonstrates the relationship between Christian sanctification, the indwelling Holy Spirit, and the believer's responsibility toward others. Ephesians 4:30 establishes that Christians are sealed unto the day of redemption, while verses 31–32 command them to reject fleshly attitudes and practice kindness, tenderheartedness, and forgiveness. Salvation remains by grace through faith, but saved people are responsible to walk according to the righteousness of their new life in Christ. Biblical correction remains necessary, yet personal revenge and malicious conduct are forbidden. The central lesson is that God commands believers to remove not merely the outward expressions of hostility, but the bitterness and malice that give those expressions their strength.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. Bitterness Corrupts The Heart

Hebrews 12:15 — “lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;”
James 3:14 — “But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth.”
Ecclesiastes 7:9 — “Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry: for anger resteth in the bosom of

fools."
Colossians 3:13 — "Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any:"

2. Wrath And Anger Must Be Governed

Ephesians 4:26 — "Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath:"
James 1:19 — "let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:"
James 1:20 — "For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God."
Proverbs 16:32 — "he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city."

3. Clamour And Contention Destroy Peace

Proverbs 15:1 — "A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger."
Proverbs 29:11 — "A fool uttereth all his mind: but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards."
Proverbs 17:14 — "The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water: therefore leave off contention, before it be meddled with."
James 3:16 — "For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work."

4. Evil Speaking Must Be Put Away

Ephesians 4:29 — "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth"
Titus 3:2 — "To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men."
James 4:11 — "Speak not evil one of another, brethren."
1 Peter 2:1 — "Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings,"

5. Malice And Personal Revenge Are Forbidden

Romans 12:17 — "Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men."
Romans 12:19 — "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord."
1 Peter 3:9 — "Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing;"
Galatians 5:20 — "hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,"

6. The Old Man Must Be Put Off

Ephesians 4:22 — "That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;"
Ephesians 4:23 — "And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;"
Ephesians 4:24 — "And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

Colossians 3:8 — “But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.”

7. Kindness And Biblical Correction Must Replace Hostility

Ephesians 4:32 — “And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.”
Romans 12:18 — “If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.”
Galatians 6:1 — “restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.”
2 Timothy 4:2 — “reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.”

8. Eternal Security Does Not Excuse Sinful Conduct

Ephesians 4:30 — “And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.”
Ephesians 1:13 — “after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,”
Ephesians 2:8 — “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:”
1 Corinthians 3:15 — “he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.”

5. Reflection

Ephesians 4:31 confronts a condition that can quietly destroy a Christian's usefulness while leaving his outward religious appearance remarkably undisturbed. A believer may continue attending church, studying Scripture, teaching doctrine, and defending the faith while nursing bitterness against another person. He may possess perfectly correct answers concerning salvation, eternal security, and the body of Christ while allowing resentment to govern his personal relationships. Yet doctrinal knowledge does not excuse conduct that the same Bible condemns. The Holy Ghost commands believers to put away all bitterness, not merely the bitterness that becomes inconvenient to conceal. A Christian who continually rehearses old offenses must recognize that remembering an injustice and cultivating hatred are two different things. The flesh can make a hobby out of yesterday's injuries while convincing its owner that he is merely standing for righteousness.

The command concerning wrath and anger requires equally serious examination. Scripture does not teach that righteous indignation is always sinful, for the Lord Jesus Christ Himself became angry at hardened hearts. Nevertheless, the example of Christ cannot be used to justify the uncontrolled temper of fallen humanity. A man may begin with a legitimate complaint and quickly descend into personal insults, exaggerated accusations, and deliberate attempts to humiliate another person. James 1:20 warns that the wrath of man does not work the righteousness of God. The Christian must therefore examine not only the

reason for his anger but also the manner in which he expresses it. Spiritual maturity is demonstrated through self-government rather than the ability to intimidate everyone within hearing distance. The man who believes every explosion of his temper is righteous indignation has confused the holiness of Christ with the volatility of his own flesh.

Paul's warning against clamour and evil speaking also reaches directly into the believer's ordinary conversations. Arguments can become destructive when individuals are more concerned with winning than understanding the facts or correcting the actual problem. This danger becomes particularly evident when accusations circulate publicly before anyone has established their truthfulness. A Christian should be willing to defend Scripture, expose genuine error, and confront wrongdoing when necessary. Nevertheless, deliberate misrepresentation, malicious gossip, and personal ridicule are not transformed into holy conduct merely because the speaker believes his doctrine is correct. Second Timothy 4:2 commands reproof and rebuke with longsuffering and doctrine, establishing both the necessity of correction and the manner in which it should be exercised. Truth does not need the assistance of a dishonest accusation, and sound doctrine gains nothing when its defender abandons biblical conduct.

The final expression concerning malice exposes the motives that frequently operate beneath destructive behavior. A person may claim to seek justice while secretly enjoying the prospect of another person's humiliation or downfall. He may present himself as concerned about righteousness while deliberately arranging circumstances intended to injure someone he dislikes. Such conduct cannot be excused through an appeal to religious conviction. Romans 12:19 establishes that vengeance belongs to the Lord, while Romans 12:18 requires believers to pursue peace as far as their own responsibility permits. This does not prohibit necessary boundaries, legitimate accountability, or the biblical exposure of serious wrongdoing. It prohibits allowing personal cruelty to become the governing intention behind those actions. A Christian may oppose another person's wrongdoing without making that person's destruction the object of his personal satisfaction.

This passage must also remain properly distinguished from the doctrine of salvation. Ephesians 4:30 declares that believers are sealed unto the day of redemption, while verse 31 immediately commands them to put away sinful attitudes and behavior. The presence of such commands demonstrates that saved people remain capable of serious personal failures. Their security rests upon Jesus Christ rather than their ability to maintain perfect emotional control. Nevertheless, eternal security does not make bitterness, wrath, or malice harmless. The Christian's conduct may grieve the Holy Spirit, damage fellowship, and bring consequences requiring repentance and correction. God does not command His

children to earn a place in His family through perfect behavior; He commands those already redeemed to conduct themselves according to their new life. Grace establishes the believer's security, but it never establishes a right to keep the old man's corruption as a permanent companion.

Finally, Ephesians 4:31 prepares the way for the glorious instruction immediately following it. Verse 32 commands kindness, tenderheartedness, and forgiveness because the Christian life involves more than merely suppressing outward hostility. The believer must replace fleshly conduct with attitudes and actions consistent with the new man. This requires renewed thinking, honest examination of motives, willingness to acknowledge wrongdoing, and dependence upon the Holy Spirit. Where bitterness has been cultivated, it must be rejected. Where anger has become sinful, self-government must replace reckless retaliation. Where malicious speech has damaged relationships, truthfulness and appropriate correction must take its place. Put away bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, evil speaking, and malice. Do not polish these sins, defend them, or disguise them with religious language. The old man may enjoy carrying a lifetime of grievances, but the new man has been created in righteousness and true holiness. Live according to the new life that Jesus Christ has given you.

Ephesians 4:32 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 4:32

“And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.”

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

“And be ye kind one to another”

Paul closes the fourth chapter of Ephesians with a command that ought to straighten out a considerable amount of religious foolishness: “And be ye kind one to another.” Notice that this instruction follows verse 31, where believers are commanded to put away bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, evil speaking, and malice. The connection is deliberate. The Holy Ghost does not merely command Christians to stop behaving wickedly; He commands them to replace the old man's conduct with something that agrees with the new man created in righteousness and true holiness. Kindness is therefore not an optional

decoration attached to Christian character. It is a direct commandment to saved people. A man may understand dispensations, defend the gospel of grace, explain eternal security, and identify doctrinal errors with remarkable precision, yet still disobey this verse through deliberate cruelty toward other believers. Ephesians 4:24 declares that the new man is created in righteousness and true holiness. A Christian who has plenty of doctrine in his head but no kindness in his dealings with others needs to allow that doctrine to travel a little farther south.

The expression “one to another” establishes the mutual responsibility believers possess as members of Christ's body. Ephesians 4:25 has already explained that Christians are members one of another, while Romans 12:10 commands, “Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another.” Kindness involves more than pleasant words spoken when everybody agrees. It includes patience with weakness, consideration for genuine needs, honesty without unnecessary cruelty, and a willingness to treat other believers with the respect appropriate to those purchased by Jesus Christ. It does not require approving false doctrine, ignoring serious wrongdoing, or permitting abusive conduct. The same apostle who commands kindness also commands reproof and rebuke when necessary. But correction should be directed toward righteousness rather than personal humiliation. Kindness is not cowardice, and firmness is not permission to be cruel. The Christian who cannot distinguish those two things has confused the strength of his convictions with the sharpness of his temper.

“tenderhearted”

The next word moves beyond outward conduct to the inward disposition from which genuine kindness should proceed: “tenderhearted.” A person may behave politely because circumstances require it while privately harboring contempt for everybody around him. He may speak graciously in public because he wants to preserve his reputation, yet become entirely different when dealing with people who possess no influence over his circumstances. Paul commands something deeper. Tenderheartedness involves compassion, mercy, and genuine concern rather than the cold performance of respectable behavior. Colossians 3:12 commands believers to put on “bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering.” These are not substitutes for biblical truth; they are qualities that should accompany its practical application. The Christian who understands the mercy of God ought not become so impressed with his own spiritual accomplishments that he loses patience with everyone else's weakness. A hard heart can quote a soft answer, but it takes more than memorized vocabulary to make a man genuinely merciful.

Tenderheartedness must also be distinguished from sentimental foolishness. Compassion does not mean accepting every accusation without evidence, abandoning discernment, or refusing to confront dangerous behavior. The Lord Jesus Christ demonstrated compassion toward suffering people while speaking plainly against hypocrisy and unbelief. The apostle Paul likewise instructed believers to restore those overtaken in a fault, declaring in Galatians 6:1 that such restoration should be undertaken "in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." That is tenderheartedness governed by truth. The goal is not to make sin comfortable but to deal with the sinner responsibly. A struggling believer may need correction, encouragement, instruction, or practical assistance according to his circumstances. Tenderheartedness considers the person rather than merely enjoying the opportunity to deliver a rebuke. A surgeon who refuses to cut when surgery is necessary is not compassionate, but a surgeon who enjoys inflicting pain has no business bragging about his medical skill. Biblical correction should be governed by the desire to heal, not the pleasure of hurting.

"forgiving one another"

Paul now addresses one of the most difficult responsibilities in Christian fellowship: "forgiving one another." The command assumes that believers will sometimes offend, disappoint, misunderstand, or wrong one another. The Church is composed of redeemed sinners who possess new spiritual life while continuing to inhabit mortal bodies subject to weakness and temptation. Consequently, personal offenses should not surprise anyone who has read Romans 7 or Galatians 5. Colossians 3:13 commands, "Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye." Notice that forgiveness is placed alongside forbearance. Christians must learn to distinguish serious wrongdoing requiring attention from minor irritations that can be handled through patience. Not every disappointment deserves a public hearing, and not every disagreement requires an elaborate investigation. Some Christians can forgive a man for a terrible offense but cannot tolerate another believer choosing a different time for a fellowship meeting. The flesh is remarkably selective about what it considers unbearable.

Forgiveness involves relinquishing personal revenge and refusing to cultivate bitterness as a permanent disposition. Romans 12:19 declares, "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath." Nevertheless, forgiving a person does not necessarily mean pretending the offense never happened, immediately restoring broken trust, or abandoning appropriate accountability. Serious misconduct may require restitution, correction, protection of the vulnerable, or lawful intervention. Second Corinthians 2:7 provides an example of forgiveness and comfort in the treatment of a repentant offender,

showing that correction should not become endless punishment after its proper purpose has been served. Restoration may be appropriate when repentance and changed conduct provide grounds for it, but reconciliation cannot always be accomplished through one person's willingness alone. Romans 12:18 wisely states, “If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.” Forgiveness releases the personal claim to revenge; it does not require handing an unrepentant offender the keys to repeat the offense.

“even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you”

The final expression supplies the foundation for everything Paul has commanded: “even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.” Here stands the great doctrinal distinction that must govern Christian forgiveness. Paul does not tell saved people to forgive others so that their own salvation may eventually be purchased or secured. He commands them to forgive because God has already forgiven them through Jesus Christ. Notice the past tense: “hath forgiven.” The believer's forgiveness is presented as an accomplished blessing, not an uncertain possibility awaiting the successful completion of a lifetime of charitable conduct. Ephesians 1:7 declares, “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.” The foundation is the blood of Christ, not the personal merit of the forgiven sinner. Romans 5:8 declares that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. God did not forgive you because your record finally became impressive enough to deserve mercy. He forgave you for Christ's sake, and the Christian who understands that should think carefully before demanding perfect personal merit from everyone else.

The words “for Christ's sake” also establish the proper ground of divine forgiveness. God does not overlook sin by simply deciding that righteousness no longer matters. Jesus Christ bore our sins, died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and rose again the third day. Second Corinthians 5:21 declares, “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” Colossians 2:13 identifies God's forgiveness of believers as extending to “all trespasses.” That is why Christian forgiveness must be rightly divided from the attempt to earn justification through forgiving others. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes salvation by grace through faith, not of works. The instructions to Israel in the earthly ministry of Christ must be interpreted in their proper setting rather than used to overturn the completed revelation concerning the Church's standing in Christ. The believer's forgiveness of others is evidence of obedience, not a payment added to Calvary. The cross is not a down payment awaiting the Christian's good behavior to complete the transaction. God forgave us for Christ's sake, and our responsibility is to deal with others according to the mercy we have already received.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 4:32 presents the positive conduct that must replace the sins condemned in verse 31. Bitterness must give way to kindness, malicious hardness must give way to tenderheartedness, and resentment must give way to forgiveness. These qualities are not merely agreeable personality traits; they are commandments addressed to members of Christ's body. Kindness must remain governed by truth, compassion must not become an excuse for tolerating wrongdoing, and forgiveness must not be confused with the automatic restoration of trust. The Christian who has put off the old man must demonstrate the new man's righteousness in the way he treats people, especially when personal offenses make obedience difficult.

The doctrinal foundation of this verse is God's forgiveness of believers “for Christ's sake.” The Church is instructed to forgive on the basis of forgiveness already received through the blood of Jesus Christ. Salvation is by grace through faith, while kindness and forgiveness belong to the Christian's subsequent responsibility. God has not commanded His redeemed people to earn forgiveness by becoming sufficiently merciful. He has commanded those already forgiven to extend mercy to others. The central lesson is that Christians should practice kindness, compassion, and forgiveness because God has already forgiven them through Jesus Christ.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. The New Man Must Replace The Old Man

Ephesians 4:22 — “That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man”

Ephesians 4:24 — “which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”

Ephesians 4:31 — “Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:”

Colossians 3:12 — “Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness”

2. Kindness Belongs To Christian Fellowship

Romans 12:10 — “Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love;”

1 Thessalonians 5:15 — “but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men.”

Ephesians 4:29 — “that it may minister grace unto the hearers.”

Galatians 6:10 — “let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.”

3. Tenderheartedness Requires Compassion

Romans 12:15 — “Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.”

1 Peter 3:8 — “having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous:”

Colossians 3:12 — “humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;”

James 2:13 — “and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.”

4. Forgiveness Must Replace Personal Revenge

Colossians 3:13 — “even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.”

Romans 12:19 — “Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath:”

2 Corinthians 2:7 — “ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him”

Ephesians 4:32 — “forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.”

5. God's Forgiveness Rests Upon Jesus Christ

Ephesians 1:7 — “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins”

Colossians 2:13 — “having forgiven you all trespasses;”

Romans 5:8 — “while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

2 Corinthians 5:21 — “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin”

6. Forgiveness Does Not Eliminate Biblical Correction

Galatians 6:1 — “restore such an one in the spirit of meekness;”

Luke 17:3 — “If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him.”

Romans 12:18 — “If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.”

2 Timothy 4:2 — “reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.”

7. Salvation By Grace Produces Godly Conduct

Ephesians 2:8 — “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:”

Ephesians 2:9 — “Not of works, lest any man should boast.”

Ephesians 2:10 — “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works”

Titus 3:5 — “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us”

5. Reflection

Ephesians 4:32 confronts a peculiar contradiction that appears among Christians who possess sound doctrine but demonstrate remarkably little kindness. A man may explain salvation by grace, defend eternal security, and preach against the corruption of the world while treating fellow believers with unnecessary contempt. Yet Paul does not present kindness as an optional characteristic reserved for Christians who happen to possess agreeable personalities. He commands every believer to be kind one to another. The instruction follows an entire list of sins that must be removed from Christian conduct. The Christian who can defend the doctrines of grace but cannot demonstrate ordinary kindness has learned how to explain grace without allowing it to govern his behavior.

Tenderheartedness requires Christians to recognize that other believers possess weaknesses, burdens, and circumstances that may not be immediately visible. A struggling brother may need correction, but he may also need patience and encouragement. A grieving sister may require compassion rather than an unnecessary lecture concerning everything she should have handled differently. Scripture never commands believers to abandon discernment or excuse serious wrongdoing in the name of mercy. Nevertheless, the duty to correct others does not eliminate the responsibility to treat them with consideration. Galatians 6:1 requires restoration in the spirit of meekness. The man who cannot correct another Christian without enjoying his humiliation ought to examine whether he is serving righteousness or merely satisfying his own pride.

Forgiveness presents an even greater challenge because personal offenses often awaken the flesh's desire for revenge. A Christian may know precisely what Scripture commands while continuing to rehearse an injury for months or years. He may publicly declare that he has forgiven someone while privately hoping for that person's downfall. Yet the Holy Ghost commands believers to forgive one another, not cultivate bitterness behind respectable religious expressions. Forgiveness does not require denying wrongdoing, removing necessary boundaries, or immediately restoring broken trust. Serious offenses may still require accountability and appropriate correction. The believer is not commanded to pretend an offense never occurred, but he is forbidden to make personal revenge the governing purpose of his response.

The foundation of Christian forgiveness is established by the final expression: “even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.” That statement settles the difference between the gospel of grace and the religious notion that sinners must earn God's acceptance through

their treatment of others. Ephesians 1:7 establishes redemption and forgiveness through the blood of Jesus Christ. Ephesians 2:8–9 declares salvation by grace through faith, apart from works. The believer's forgiveness of others therefore follows salvation rather than purchasing it. Nevertheless, the forgiveness already received establishes a serious obligation concerning personal conduct. God did not forgive you because you were worthy of mercy; He forgave you for Christ's sake, and that truth ought to govern how you deal with those who have offended you.

This passage also exposes the danger of confusing Christian kindness with weakness or doctrinal compromise. The same apostle who commands tenderheartedness instructs ministers to reprove, rebuke, and exhort with longsuffering and doctrine. A faithful Christian must sometimes confront false teaching, address serious sin, and establish boundaries against harmful behavior. Those responsibilities do not contradict kindness when they are exercised according to Scripture. What Scripture forbids is using correction as an opportunity for unnecessary cruelty or personal satisfaction. There is a difference between exposing error and enjoying the destruction of another person's reputation. Truth does not become more biblical because its defender becomes more hateful, and kindness does not become less biblical because correction occasionally requires firmness.

Finally, Ephesians 4:32 brings the chapter's teaching concerning the old man and new man to a practical conclusion. The believer must put away bitterness, wrath, clamour, evil speaking, and malice while cultivating kindness, compassion, and forgiveness. These changes are not the means by which eternal life is obtained, but the conduct appropriate to those who already belong to Jesus Christ. Every Christian should examine whether his relationships demonstrate the mercy he professes to have received. Where correction is necessary, let it be truthful and righteous. Where forgiveness is appropriate, refuse the pleasure of retaliation. Be kind, be tenderhearted, and forgive one another. The Lord has already supplied the greatest reason for doing so: “God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.”

Chapter 5

Ephesians 5:1 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 5:1

"Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children;"

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"Be ye therefore followers of God"

Paul opens the fifth chapter of Ephesians with a command that reaches considerably higher than the ordinary standards of religious respectability: "Be ye therefore followers of God." Notice that little word "therefore." It connects the instruction directly to the conclusion of chapter 4, where believers were commanded to put away bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, evil speaking, and malice. Ephesians 4:32 then declares, "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." There is the foundation. Because God has forgiven His redeemed people for Christ's sake, they are commanded to demonstrate the character appropriate to those who belong to Him. The apostle does not begin with a religious philosopher's speculation concerning what God might be like. He begins with what God has revealed concerning His mercy, righteousness, holiness, and forgiveness. The Christian is to follow God according to His revealed character, not according to whatever image of God the flesh finds convenient. A man who claims to follow God while refusing the commandments God has plainly given is not following the Lord. He is following a god of his own imagination and hoping the resemblance will escape examination.

The word "followers" establishes the responsibility to imitate God's righteous character and obey His revealed will. It does not mean that believers become gods, acquire divine attributes, or possess the authority to perform whatever Almighty God alone can accomplish. God is eternal, omnipotent, omniscient, and sovereign. The Christian does not imitate those attributes by pretending to possess them. Rather, Scripture directs believers toward qualities that should govern their conduct. First Peter 1:15 declares, "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation." That command concerns practical holiness rather than an attempt to acquire the divine nature of God's eternal being. Likewise, Ephesians 4:32 presents divine forgiveness as the pattern for Christian forgiveness. The believer is commanded to demonstrate mercy because God has shown mercy, pursue righteousness because God is righteous, and practice truthfulness because the God he serves cannot lie. The fellow who announces that he is becoming divine while continuing to lie, gossip, and mistreat his neighbours has managed to misunderstand both the nature of God and the purpose of Christian obedience.

This command must also remain properly distinguished from the gospel of salvation. Paul is addressing believers who have already received eternal life through Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes that salvation is by grace through faith, not of works, lest any man should boast. Ephesians 1:13 identifies believers as sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise after believing the gospel. Consequently, “Be ye therefore followers of God” is not an invitation for lost sinners to earn regeneration through improved behavior. No amount of moral imitation can transform fallen flesh into a new creature. The sinner must receive Jesus Christ through faith, while the saved person must learn to walk according to the new life he possesses. Ephesians 2:10 declares, “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.” The order cannot be reversed without corrupting the gospel. Good works follow salvation; they do not purchase it. God does not adopt sinners because they have become such impressive imitators of His righteousness. He saves them through Jesus Christ and then commands His redeemed children to conduct themselves according to the family into which His grace has brought them.

“as dear children”

The second expression establishes the relationship upon which the command rests: “as dear children.” Paul does not merely say that believers are servants performing duties for a distant Master, although the Scriptures certainly teach that Christians serve the Lord. He identifies them as children who are dear to their heavenly Father. The word “dear” communicates affection, value, and a relationship grounded in love. Ephesians 1:5 declares that God has predestinated believers “unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.” That is a tremendous distinction. The Christian does not approach God as a stranger attempting to purchase acceptance through religious performance. He belongs to the household of God through Jesus Christ. Romans 8:15 declares, “but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.” The believer's relationship with God has been established through redemption, not earned through the successful completion of a spiritual improvement program. You do not become God's dear child because you finally learned to behave like one. You are commanded to behave like His child because, through Jesus Christ, God has already made you His own.

The expression must not be confused with the popular religious claim that every human being is already a redeemed child of God simply because God created mankind. Scripture certainly teaches that God created humanity, but regeneration and adoption into His redeemed family are not automatically possessed by every descendant of Adam. John 1:12 declares, “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.” The passage connects becoming sons of God with receiving Jesus Christ through faith. Galatians 4:6 likewise declares, “And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.”

The relationship is spiritual and redemptive, not merely biological. Furthermore, the believer's adoption does not eliminate the unique identity of Jesus Christ as God's eternal Son. Christians become children of God through His grace; Jesus Christ is not merely another redeemed sinner admitted into the same family. The religious slogan that everybody is already God's child may sound wonderfully charitable, but it leaves the new birth standing outside the door while human sentiment conducts the service. The Bible says men must receive Jesus Christ.

Finally, the words “dear children” reveal the spirit in which Christian obedience should be exercised. The child who knows he is loved by his father has a reason for obedience greater than the fear of being permanently disowned after every mistake. Ephesians 4:30 establishes that believers are sealed unto the day of redemption, while Ephesians 5:1 commands them to follow God as beloved children. Those truths stand together without contradiction. The Christian's security does not remove the seriousness of disobedience; it establishes the certainty of the relationship within which correction and growth occur. Hebrews 12:6 declares, “For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.” Chastening is not another payment for sin added to the finished sacrifice of Jesus Christ. It is the Father's correction of His children. The redeemed should therefore pursue holiness with reverence, gratitude, and love rather than imagining that every failure overturns Calvary. A child who understands his father's love should not become more eager to rebel. He should become more ashamed of treating that love as permission to misbehave. The certainty of God's affection is an argument for obedience, not an excuse for carelessness.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 5:1 establishes God's revealed character as the pattern for the believer's conduct. The command grows directly out of the instructions concerning kindness, tenderheartedness, and forgiveness in Ephesians 4:32. Christians are not commanded to invent a personal standard of righteousness or imitate whatever religious personalities happen to impress them. They must follow God according to His word. This means rejecting the old man's corruption and demonstrating holiness, mercy, truthfulness, and love. The following verse identifies Christ's sacrificial love as the supreme demonstration of the conduct Paul is commanding. The Christian is not called merely to become more respectable than the surrounding world. He is called to reflect the character of the God who redeemed him.

The expression “as dear children” establishes adoption, divine affection, and the proper motivation for obedience. Believers are God's children through faith in Jesus Christ, not through natural birth, moral achievement, or religious ceremony. Their salvation is secured

by grace, while their daily conduct must increasingly agree with their position in Christ. Following God does not mean becoming divine, acquiring sinless flesh, or purchasing a place in heaven through imitation. It means living as redeemed children whose Father has already demonstrated His mercy through Jesus Christ. The central lesson is that God's children must follow their Father's righteous example because His grace has made them His own, not because their obedience makes them worthy of adoption.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. The Command Grows Out Of Christian Forgiveness

Ephesians 4:31 — “Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:”

Ephesians 4:32 — “forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.”

Ephesians 5:1 — “Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children;”

Ephesians 5:2 — “And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us”

2. God's Holiness Establishes The Pattern

Leviticus 19:2 — “Ye shall be holy: for I the LORD your God am holy.”

1 Peter 1:15 — “But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;”

1 Peter 1:16 — “Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.”

Matthew 5:48 — “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”

3. Believers Become God's Children Through Christ

John 1:12 — “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God”

Ephesians 1:5 — “Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself”

Romans 8:15 — “but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.”

Galatians 4:6 — “And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.”

4. Salvation Must Precede Christian Obedience

Ephesians 2:8 — “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:”

Ephesians 2:9 — “Not of works, lest any man should boast.”

Ephesians 2:10 — “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works”

Titus 3:5 — “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us”

5. God's Children Must Demonstrate Love And Mercy

Luke 6:36 — “Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.”

Colossians 3:13 — “even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.”

1 John 4:11 — “Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.”

Romans 12:9 — “Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.”

6. Jesus Christ Demonstrates The Father's Character

John 13:34 — “That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.”

Philippians 2:5 — “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:”

1 Peter 2:21 — “because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:”

1 John 2:6 — “He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.”

7. Beloved Children Must Walk Worthy Of Their Calling

Ephesians 4:1 — “that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,”

Ephesians 4:30 — “And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.”

Romans 8:16 — “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:”

Philippians 2:15 — “that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke”

5. Reflection

Ephesians 5:1 begins with a word that should prevent the Christian from separating doctrine from conduct: “therefore.” Paul has spent the preceding chapter explaining how those who belong to Jesus Christ ought to walk, and now he identifies Almighty God as the pattern for that walk. The instruction is not a pleasant religious suggestion designed to make believers appear agreeable before society. It is a command grounded in the character of the One who redeemed them. The Christian who has received forgiveness from God must learn to forgive others, and the believer who has received divine mercy must not become a willing instrument of cruelty. Ephesians 4:32 and 5:1 belong together. A man who rejoices that God has forgiven his sins while refusing to show mercy to anyone who has offended him has managed to appreciate the benefits of grace while resisting its practical demands.

The command to follow God also exposes the foolishness of attempting to manufacture holiness through mere religious imitation. A sinner cannot become justified by copying the outward behavior of Jesus Christ, joining a respectable congregation, or adopting the manners of a devout Christian. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes that salvation is by grace through faith rather than works. Only after the believer's redemption has been established does the apostle command conduct appropriate to that new standing. Nor does following God mean that Christians become little gods possessing divine authority or supernatural attributes belonging to the Creator alone. The command concerns obedience to His revealed righteousness. The Christian who begins claiming divine powers while neglecting ordinary commandments concerning honesty, kindness, and forgiveness has traded biblical holiness for religious imagination.

The expression “as dear children” should also correct the dangerous notion that God's love must be purchased through perfect performance. Ephesians 1:5 establishes the believer's adoption through Jesus Christ, while Romans 8:15 identifies the Spirit of adoption received by God's redeemed people. The relationship is established through salvation rather than maintained by repeated efforts to earn entrance into the family. Nevertheless, a child who recognizes his father's love should have a greater desire to honor him. The certainty of God's affection does not make disobedience righteous or eliminate the need for divine correction. Hebrews 12:6 connects the Father's chastening with His love. Eternal security does not mean that God has become indifferent to His children's conduct; it means their security rests upon His faithfulness rather than their fluctuating performance.

The immediate application of following God concerns the treatment of other believers. Ephesians 4:31 commands Christians to put away bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, evil speaking, and malice, while verse 32 commands kindness, tenderheartedness, and forgiveness. Consequently, Ephesians 5:1 cannot be properly understood apart from the

practical demands already established. The child who follows his Father should increasingly demonstrate the qualities that Scripture reveals concerning Him. This does not forbid necessary rebuke, biblical separation from false doctrine, or appropriate accountability for serious wrongdoing. It forbids allowing personal revenge and malicious intentions to become the governing principles of Christian conduct. Following God does not require approving evil, but it certainly does not authorize becoming evil in the process of opposing it.

The relationship between Ephesians 5:1 and verse 2 further establishes Jesus Christ as the supreme example of divine love. Paul immediately commands believers to walk in love, reminding them that Christ loved us and gave Himself for us. His sacrifice was not merely an impressive example of kindness; it accomplished the redemption that sinners could never secure through their own works. That distinction must remain clear. The Christian follows Christ's example because he has been saved through Christ's sacrifice, not because imitating that sacrifice can purchase forgiveness. The Lord's earthly ministry to Israel must likewise be understood within its proper dispensational setting without denying the moral consistency of God's character. Rightly dividing Scripture never gives the Christian permission to divide God's holiness from his own responsibility to obey Him.

Finally, the command “Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children” ought to become a practical examination of the believer's daily walk. Is his conduct governed by the Scriptures or by whatever personal feelings happen to dominate the moment? Does he demonstrate kindness when irritated, truthfulness when dishonesty would be profitable, and forgiveness when the flesh demands revenge? Does he seek the Lord's righteousness or merely the approval of people impressed by religious appearances? These questions concern practical obedience rather than the purchase of eternal life. The Holy Spirit has sealed the believer unto the day of redemption, and the Father's gracious acceptance provides sufficient reason for grateful service. You do not have to become God to follow God. You do not have to earn adoption to live as His child. You belong to Jesus Christ through faith, and that glorious relationship should become visible in the manner of your life. Follow your Father, not the old man. Walk as a dear child of God.

Ephesians 5:2 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 5:2

“And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.”

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

“And walk in love”

Paul continues the fifth chapter of Ephesians with a command that exposes the difference between genuine Christian love and the sentimental counterfeit that religious people often mistake for it: “And walk in love.” Notice that he does not merely command believers to talk about love, admire love, or occasionally demonstrate affection when circumstances are agreeable. He commands them to walk in it. Walking describes the continuing manner of life that should characterize those who belong to Jesus Christ. Ephesians 4:1 commands believers to walk worthy of their calling, while Ephesians 4:17 warns them not to walk as other Gentiles walk in the vanity of their minds. Now, having instructed Christians to put away bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, evil speaking, and malice, Paul commands them to walk in love. The connection is unmistakable. The new man's conduct must differ from the old man's corruption. A Christian who can deliver an impressive lecture on brotherly love while spending the remainder of the week cultivating grudges has confused discussing a doctrine with obeying it. Biblical love must govern conduct rather than remain a pleasant subject for religious conversation.

This command must also be distinguished from the notion that love requires the abandonment of truth, holiness, or necessary correction. Ephesians 4:15 commands believers to speak “the truth in love,” demonstrating that the two principles belong together. Romans 12:9 declares, “Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.” Genuine love does not approve every desire, endorse every teaching, or pretend that serious wrongdoing has become righteous because confrontation might make somebody uncomfortable. A parent who genuinely loves his child may be required to correct disobedience. A faithful minister who loves the people of God must sometimes expose destructive doctrine. A Christian who loves his brother should not encourage him to continue in conduct that Scripture plainly condemns. Nevertheless, correction must serve righteousness rather than personal revenge. Love without truth becomes religious flattery, while truth wielded without love can become a convenient weapon for the flesh. God has not commanded believers to choose between them. Walking in love means conducting ourselves according to the truth and the righteous purposes of God.

“as Christ also hath loved us”

The second expression supplies the standard by which Christian love must be measured: “as Christ also hath loved us.” Paul does not tell believers to determine the meaning of love through public opinion, emotional excitement, or the shifting standards of human relationships. He directs them to Jesus Christ. The Lord's love was not merely a feeling expressed when humanity deserved admiration. Romans 5:8 declares, “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” That verse destroys the religious imagination that sinners must first become sufficiently respectable before God will love them. Christ died for sinners, not for a collection of already perfected saints who had finally earned a divine compliment. His love was demonstrated through deliberate action, costly sacrifice, and obedience to the Father's will. The believer must therefore evaluate his own conduct according to something greater than personal affection or convenience. The love of Christ is not measured by how pleasant sinners were to Him, but by what He willingly accomplished for sinners who could never have purchased their own redemption.

The word “also” connects the believer's commanded walk with the love already demonstrated by Christ. First John 4:19 declares, “We love him, because he first loved us.” The order is essential. Christian love does not originate as a human achievement that persuades God to extend salvation. It responds to the gracious love God has already revealed. John 13:34 records the Lord's command, “That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.” That statement was delivered to His disciples during His earthly ministry, while Ephesians supplies the corresponding instruction to the Church through the apostle Paul. The command is not that believers reproduce Christ's unique work of redemption, for no sinner can become another Saviour. Rather, they must demonstrate the selfless concern, mercy, truthfulness, and willingness to serve others that His love supremely reveals. The Christian cannot die for another man's sins, but he can certainly stop treating another man's inconveniences as though they were an intolerable assault upon his own importance. Christ's love establishes the pattern; the believer's conduct should reflect it.

“and hath given himself for us”

The third expression moves from Christ's love to the supreme demonstration of that love: “and hath given himself for us.” There is the heart of the gospel. The Lord Jesus Christ did not merely contribute religious instruction, establish a moral example, or offer a collection of suggestions for improving human society. He gave Himself. Galatians 2:20 records Paul's declaration concerning the Son of God, “who loved me, and gave himself for me.” The sacrifice was personal, voluntary, and sufficient to accomplish what fallen sinners could never achieve. John 10:18 records Christ declaring, “No man taketh it from me, but I lay it

down of myself." His death was not an unfortunate defeat that interrupted an otherwise successful religious career. It was the fulfillment of God's redemptive purpose. First Corinthians 15:3 declares, "how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;" The following verse records His burial and resurrection. Calvary was not merely the world's rejection of a good teacher. It was the voluntary sacrifice of the sinless Son of God for sinners who possessed neither the righteousness nor the ability to redeem themselves.

The words "for us" must not be reduced to an emotional declaration that Christ felt sympathy for human suffering. They establish the substitutionary character of His sacrifice. First Peter 3:18 declares, "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." Second Corinthians 5:21 explains that God made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. There was no personal wickedness in Christ requiring punishment, and no human righteousness sufficient to satisfy God's justice apart from Him. The believer's forgiveness rests upon what Jesus Christ accomplished, not upon his attempts to imitate that accomplishment through charitable behavior. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes salvation by grace through faith, apart from works. The order in Ephesians 5:2 must therefore remain clear: Christ loved us and gave Himself for us, and believers are subsequently commanded to walk in love. The cross does not need the sinner's good works to finish redemption, and Christian love is not a second payment added to Christ's sacrifice. We love because He first loved us, and we serve because He has already accomplished what no service of ours could accomplish.

"an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour"

The final expression takes the reader directly into the language of sacrifice: "an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour." This wording is not accidental religious decoration. The Old Testament sacrifices repeatedly employed the language of offerings presented to the LORD as a sweet savour. Leviticus 1:9 describes the burnt offering as "an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the LORD." Those offerings belonged to the sacrificial system God established for Israel under the law, and their historical setting must not be confused with the Church's present standing under grace. Nevertheless, the sacrifices furnished prophetic pictures of the greater work Jesus Christ would accomplish. Animal blood could not finally remove sin, as Hebrews 10:4 plainly declares. The offerings pointed beyond themselves toward the sufficient sacrifice of Christ. The apostle now identifies His giving of Himself as an offering and sacrifice presented to God. The altar, the victim, and the language of acceptable sacrifice did not disappear into meaningless religious history. They pointed toward the Lamb of God whose sacrifice would accomplish what the blood of animals never could.

The words “to God” establish the divine direction and acceptability of Christ's offering. Jesus Christ did not die merely to create an inspiring story of selflessness or to persuade sinful humanity that sacrificial love is admirable. His death addressed the problem of sin before a holy God. Hebrews 9:14 describes Christ as the One “who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God.” Isaiah 53:10 presents the suffering servant in connection with an offering for sin, while Isaiah 53:6 declares, “and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.” The sacrifice was therefore not an attempt to excuse wickedness by pretending that righteousness no longer mattered. God's justice was not suspended so that grace could operate. Christ satisfied what sinners could not satisfy through their own efforts. The language of a sweetsmelling savour communicates the acceptance and pleasing character of His offering before God. Calvary was not the triumph of sentimental religion over divine holiness. It was the demonstration that God's righteousness and God's mercy meet in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

The completeness of this sacrifice also exposes the error of treating Christ's death as something that must be continually repeated or supplemented by human religious works. Hebrews 10:12 declares, “But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God.” Verse 14 continues, “For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.” Christ's sacrifice is sufficient. The Christian is not instructed to present another offering for sin to complete what the Saviour left unfinished. Romans 12:1 commands believers to present their bodies as living sacrifices, but that concerns reasonable service, not another atonement. Hebrews 13:15–16 identifies praise, doing good, and sharing with others as sacrifices pleasing to God through Christ. These belong to Christian worship and conduct, not the purchase of redemption. The believer may offer praise, service, thanksgiving, and practical love, but he cannot offer a second Calvary. The sacrifice that saves was offered once, and the Saviour who offered it has sat down because the work is finished.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 5:2 establishes Christ's sacrificial love as both the pattern for Christian conduct and the foundation of the believer's salvation. The command to walk in love follows Paul's instruction to put away bitterness, wrath, malice, and corrupt communication and to practice kindness and forgiveness. Love must therefore be demonstrated through truthful, righteous, selfless conduct rather than mere emotion or religious flattery. Christ loved us and gave Himself for us, revealing a love that acted for the benefit of sinners at tremendous personal cost. Yet His unique sacrifice must remain distinguished from the believer's responsibility to imitate His love. Christians can follow His example of selflessness, but

only Jesus Christ could offer Himself as the sinless sacrifice that accomplishes redemption.

The verse also connects the finished work of Christ with the sacrificial language of the Old Testament. The offerings under the law furnished pictures that pointed toward His acceptable sacrifice, but animal sacrifices could never accomplish the complete redemption secured through His blood. Jesus Christ offered Himself to God, and His offering was accepted as a sweetsmelling savour. Salvation consequently rests upon His sufficient sacrifice rather than human religious works or repeated offerings for sin. The Church is called to respond through love, thanksgiving, holy conduct, and sacrificial service. The central lesson is that Christ's love accomplished our redemption through His once-for-all sacrifice, and those redeemed by His blood must now walk in love toward others.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. Walking In Love As Redeemed Children

Ephesians 5:1 — “Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children;”

Ephesians 5:2 — “And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us”

Ephesians 4:32 — “forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.”

1 John 4:11 — “Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.”

2. Christ's Love Was Demonstrated Through His Death

Romans 5:8 — “while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

Galatians 2:20 — “who loved me, and gave himself for me.”

John 15:13 — “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”

1 John 3:16 — “because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.”

3. Christ Gave Himself Voluntarily

John 10:18 — “No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself.”

Galatians 1:4 — “Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world”

Titus 2:14 — “Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity”

Hebrews 9:14 — “who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God”

4. The Sacrifice Was Substitutionary

1 Corinthians 15:3 — “how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;”

1 Peter 3:18 — “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God”

Isaiah 53:6 — “and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

2 Corinthians 5:21 — “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin”

5. The Sweet Savour And Acceptable Offering

Leviticus 1:9 — “an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the LORD.”

Genesis 8:21 — “And the LORD smelled a sweet savour”

Ephesians 5:2 — “an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.”

Philippians 4:18 — “an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God.”

6. Christ's Sacrifice Is Complete And Sufficient

Hebrews 10:4 — “For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.”

Hebrews 9:26 — “but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.”

Hebrews 10:12 — “after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;”

Hebrews 10:14 — “For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.”

7. Salvation By Grace Produces Sacrificial Service

Ephesians 2:8 — “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:”

Ephesians 2:10 — “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works”

Romans 12:1 — “present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.”

Hebrews 13:16 — “But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.”

5. Reflection

Ephesians 5:2 establishes a standard of Christian love that exposes the difference between genuine spiritual obedience and religious sentimentality. Paul does not command believers merely to admire the sacrifice of Jesus Christ while continuing to conduct themselves according to the selfish desires of the flesh. He commands them to walk in love. That instruction reaches into ordinary conversations, family responsibilities, disagreements among believers, and the treatment of those who cannot provide some immediate personal advantage. A Christian may possess sound doctrine while remaining impatient, unkind, or unnecessarily harsh toward others. Yet the same Bible that establishes his doctrine commands him to demonstrate the love of Christ. The Christian who can explain the sacrifice of Calvary but refuses every opportunity to sacrifice his own convenience has learned the language of love without becoming particularly interested in practicing it.

The expression “as Christ also hath loved us” also corrects the mistaken notion that love depends entirely upon another person's worthiness. Romans 5:8 establishes that Christ died for us while we were yet sinners. He did not wait until humanity became morally attractive or spiritually deserving. Nevertheless, this truth does not require believers to approve wicked conduct or pretend that serious wrongdoing is harmless. Love may require necessary correction, protective boundaries, and the refusal to participate in another person's sin. Ephesians 4:15 commands speaking the truth in love, demonstrating that affection and righteousness must operate together. The believer must therefore distinguish selfless concern from the desire to remain universally popular. The love of Christ was willing to bear tremendous personal cost, but it never required the Lord to abandon holiness in order to make sinners comfortable.

The words “hath given himself for us” bring the entire discussion back to the foundation of salvation. Christ's death was not merely an extraordinary example intended to inspire sinners toward better behavior. He died for our sins according to the Scriptures, bearing the punishment that fallen humanity could never remove through religious effort. His sacrifice accomplished redemption rather than simply encouraging moral improvement. That distinction must remain clear whenever Christian love is discussed. A person cannot earn eternal life through charitable deeds, personal suffering, or attempts to imitate the Lord's selflessness. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes salvation by grace through faith, apart from works. Calvary is not a lesson teaching sinners how to save themselves. It is the finished work through which Jesus Christ saves those who cannot save themselves.

The description of Christ's offering as “a sweetsmelling savour” further establishes the acceptability of His sacrifice before God. The Old Testament offerings provided pictures of sacrifice, but their repeated presentation demonstrated that they could not accomplish the final removal of sin. Hebrews 10 explains that Jesus Christ offered one sacrifice for sins forever. His blood is sufficient, His offering is complete, and His resurrection declares the triumph of the Saviour who died for our sins. Christians must not attempt to supplement His sacrifice through religious ceremonies or personal merit. Nor should they confuse their own sacrifices of service and thanksgiving with the unique offering that accomplished atonement. The believer may present his body as a living sacrifice unto God, but he cannot improve upon the sacrifice of the Lamb of God. The work that purchased redemption belongs to Christ alone.

This verse also provides a necessary correction to selfishness within Christian fellowship. Walking in love means considering the genuine needs of others rather than making every relationship a contest for personal advantage. The believer should be willing to forgive personal offenses, assist those in need, and demonstrate patience where the flesh would prefer immediate retaliation. That does not mean every request must be granted or that irresponsible conduct should be rewarded. Biblical love requires discernment, truthfulness, and proper stewardship. Yet those responsibilities should not become convenient excuses for refusing every opportunity to serve. First John 3:18 declares, “My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.” A profession of love that never costs anything, changes anything, or produces any useful action deserves careful examination against the example of Jesus Christ.

Finally, Ephesians 5:2 should leave every believer with both assurance concerning salvation and responsibility concerning daily conduct. The Christian is not commanded to reproduce Christ's atoning sacrifice, for that work is finished and sufficient forever. He is commanded to walk in the love demonstrated by the Saviour who willingly gave Himself for sinners. Such a walk requires humility, forgiveness, truthfulness, compassion, and the rejection of the old man's selfishness. It demands more than impressive religious language or occasional demonstrations of generosity. It requires a manner of life governed by the word of God and the Holy Spirit. Do not attempt to earn the love of God through your obedience, and do not use His love as an excuse for disobedience. Christ loved us and gave Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour. The sacrifice that saved you is complete. Now walk in the love of the One who made it.

Ephesians 5:3 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 5:3

"But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints;"

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"But fornication, and all uncleanness"

Paul begins this verse with a word that establishes a direct contrast with the glorious truth he has just proclaimed concerning the love and sacrifice of Jesus Christ: "But." Ephesians 5:2 commands believers to walk in love, reminding them that Christ loved us and gave Himself for us as an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour. Now the apostle identifies conduct that has no rightful place in the lives of those redeemed by that sacrifice. The first sin mentioned is "fornication." The Holy Ghost does not apologize for the word, surround it with comforting explanations, or suggest that sexual immorality becomes righteous whenever two people develop sufficiently powerful feelings. Fornication concerns sexual relations outside the lawful marriage relationship established by God. Hebrews 13:4 declares, "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge." There is the distinction between the honorable marriage bed and sexual conduct that violates God's established boundaries. The world may continually revise its moral vocabulary, but changing the name of a sin does not change its character. The flesh has spent centuries attempting to make fornication respectable, but God has never required a committee of modern philosophers to explain to Him what holiness means.

The expression "all uncleanness" widens the prohibition beyond a single category of sexual wrongdoing. Paul is addressing moral corruption that contradicts the holiness expected of those who belong to Jesus Christ. The word "all" matters because the flesh enjoys dividing wickedness into categories of respectable and embarrassing behavior. A man may condemn outward fornication while deliberately entertaining filthy desires, exploiting another person for gratification, or encouraging corrupt influences that nourish his appetites. Another may pride himself on avoiding certain scandalous practices while maintaining habits that plainly contradict biblical purity. Colossians 3:5 commands believers to mortify their members upon the earth, identifying fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness. First Thessalonians 4:7 declares, "For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness." This is moral uncleanness, not a command to place members of Christ's body under Israel's ceremonial

regulations concerning ritual defilement. Rightly dividing Scripture preserves the distinction between the Mosaic law and the Church's instructions under grace without converting moral corruption into Christian liberty. The Christian is not under the law of Moses as his covenant, but he is certainly not authorized to make the new man behave like the old man merely because the word grace appears in his doctrinal vocabulary.

“or covetousness”

The next expression introduces a sin that many religious people are much more willing to tolerate than the offenses listed before it: “or covetousness.” That placement is significant. Paul does not isolate sexual immorality as something uniquely serious while treating greed as a harmless personal preference. He includes covetousness in the same instruction concerning conduct unbecoming to saints. Covetousness involves an excessive or wrongful desire to possess what one does not rightfully have, or an appetite for gain that refuses the boundaries of righteousness and contentment. Luke 12:15 records the Lord Jesus Christ warning, “Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.” Notice that the Lord connects the warning with a false measurement of human life. A covetous person begins evaluating worth according to possessions, opportunities, influence, or advantages he believes should belong to him. He may possess considerable wealth and remain unsatisfied, or possess very little and still be governed by an insatiable desire for more. Covetousness is not cured by finally acquiring the thing you wanted, because the flesh has already prepared another list of things it insists you cannot live without.

The connection between uncleanness and covetousness also exposes the selfish appetite operating beneath many forms of sin. Both can involve treating another person or another person's possessions as something to be obtained for personal satisfaction without proper regard for God's commandments. Colossians 3:5 identifies covetousness as idolatry, demonstrating how an unlawful desire can occupy a place of authority that belongs to God. Nevertheless, Scripture does not condemn ordinary employment, responsible provision, legitimate ownership, or the enjoyment of possessions received with thanksgiving. First Timothy 6:10 carefully declares, “For the love of money is the root of all evil.” The verse does not say money itself is the root of all evil. The problem concerns the corrupt love of gain and the destructive desires associated with it. Hebrews 13:5 commands, “Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have.” The Christian must therefore examine not merely what he possesses but what possesses his affections. A man can condemn the immorality of the world while bowing every morning before the idol of personal gain. He may have avoided one category of uncleanness only to discover that another has been sitting comfortably in the counting room.

“let it not be once named among you”

The third expression establishes the seriousness with which the Church must regard these sins: “let it not be once named among you.” Paul is not suggesting that Christians should avoid reading biblical passages identifying fornication, uncleanness, or covetousness. He has just named all three himself, and the Scriptures repeatedly expose particular sins so that believers may recognize and reject them. The instruction concerns the presence and acceptance of such conduct among God's people. These things should not characterize Christian fellowship or become practices that the Church knowingly excuses as ordinary expressions of personal freedom. First Corinthians 5:1 reports a scandal involving fornication within the Corinthian congregation, while the following verses confront the congregation's improper response. Rather than treating the matter with appropriate seriousness, they had become puffed up. That example demonstrates that a church can fail not only through individual misconduct but also through its willingness to tolerate what Scripture condemns. The command does not mean the Church should conceal sin so that nobody hears about it. It means the Church should not become so comfortable with sin that nobody thinks it needs correcting.

This instruction must also be distinguished from the careless assumption that every accusation establishes guilt. A congregation should never treat an unverified rumor as proof merely because the alleged offense falls within a serious category. First Timothy 5:19 commands that an accusation against an elder not be received except before two or three witnesses. Although that instruction concerns a particular matter of church responsibility, it demonstrates the importance of evidence and proper judgment. A believer falsely accused of immorality should not be condemned simply because somebody found an audience willing to believe the accusation. Conversely, a genuine offender should not be protected through dishonest concealment merely because his reputation or financial influence makes correction inconvenient. The Church must practice truthfulness while maintaining biblical holiness. Serious misconduct requires appropriate investigation, accountability, and protection of those harmed. A church that ignores genuine wickedness has abandoned holiness, while a church that destroys innocent people through rumors has abandoned righteousness. Neither failure can be defended from Ephesians 5:3.

The strength of Paul's language also challenges the notion that Christians should continually approach temptation as though they were required to discover how closely they could come to sin without technically committing it. The question should not be how much uncleanness a believer can accommodate while retaining a respectable public reputation. It should be how faithfully his conduct reflects the Lord who purchased him. First Corinthians 6:18 commands, “Flee fornication.” Second Timothy 2:22 likewise commands

believers to flee youthful lusts and follow righteousness, faith, charity, and peace. Those commands establish separation from sinful conduct rather than experimentation with its boundaries. Yet fleeing temptation is not the same as declaring that every involuntary temptation constitutes an act of sin. The believer must distinguish an unwanted temptation from deliberately nourishing a corrupt desire or acting upon it. Scripture commands resistance and obedience, not a life governed by fear of every passing thought. The Christian has not been called to conduct a scientific investigation into precisely how much corruption the flesh can tolerate before obedience becomes necessary. God has already supplied the command: put it away.

“as becometh saints”

The final expression identifies the spiritual identity that makes these commands appropriate: “as becometh saints.” The word “saints” is not reserved in Paul's epistles for an exceptional class of deceased religious celebrities whose accomplishments have been certified by an earthly institution. Ephesians 1:1 addresses the letter “to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus.” These were living believers, possessing ordinary responsibilities and still requiring correction concerning their conduct. First Corinthians 1:2 likewise addresses those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be saints, even though the Corinthian congregation subsequently required correction for serious spiritual failures. The designation concerns their position in Christ, not a declaration that their mortal flesh has become incapable of wrongdoing. The expression “as becometh” therefore establishes conduct suitable to the identity God has already given them. The Christian is not commanded to live holy so that an earthly committee might eventually pronounce him a saint. He is commanded to live holy because God has already set him apart in Jesus Christ.

This verse must also be read in harmony with the warnings that follow. Ephesians 5:5 declares that no whoremonger, unclean person, or covetous idolater has inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. That warning must not be weakened until wickedness becomes harmless, nor should it be twisted into a denial of the eternal security established in Ephesians 1:13 and 4:30. Scripture distinguishes the redeemed person's standing in Christ from the sinful conduct he must reject. First Corinthians 6:9–11 warns against unrighteousness and then reminds believers, “And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified.” Salvation produces a new position and calls for a different walk. Persistent, unrepentant wickedness is therefore a serious matter that should produce honest examination rather than confidence in a mere religious profession. At the same time, individual failures do not make Christ's finished sacrifice insufficient to save those who have genuinely trusted Him. Grace does not permit a man to

purchase salvation with his morality, and it does not permit him to treat immorality as the natural uniform of a child of God. Saints should live like saints because the Saviour who redeemed them is holy.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 5:3 establishes the incompatibility between the sacrificial love of Jesus Christ and the moral corruption of the old man. Paul identifies fornication, all uncleanness, and covetousness as conduct that must not be tolerated or normalized among those who belong to the Lord. Fornication violates God's boundaries for sexual conduct, uncleanness encompasses broader moral impurity, and covetousness reveals the idolatrous appetite that seeks personal satisfaction apart from God's righteousness. The command does not prohibit biblical instruction concerning these sins; it requires Christians to reject their practice and refuse their acceptance within the Church. The believer's conduct must be governed by holiness rather than by the world's changing opinions concerning what should be considered respectable.

The expression “as becometh saints” establishes the relationship between spiritual position and practical obedience. Believers are saints because God has sanctified them in Jesus Christ, not because they have achieved salvation through spotless behavior. Nevertheless, that position carries responsibilities concerning personal purity, contentment, truthfulness, and Christian fellowship. The distinction between salvation by grace and holy living must remain intact without allowing either doctrine to destroy the other. The central lesson is that those whom God has set apart in Christ must reject the fornication, uncleanness, and covetousness that contradict their identity as His saints.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. Walking In Love Requires Moral Holiness

Ephesians 5:2 — “And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us”
Ephesians 5:3 — “But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness”
Romans 12:9 — “Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.”
1 Corinthians 13:6 — “Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;”

2. Fornication Must Be Rejected

1 Corinthians 6:18 — “Flee fornication.”
1 Thessalonians 4:3 — “that ye should abstain from fornication:”
Hebrews 13:4 — “Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled:”
2 Timothy 2:22 — “Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace,”

3. Uncleanness Contradicts God's Calling

1 Thessalonians 4:7 — “For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.”
Colossians 3:5 — “fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:”
2 Corinthians 7:1 — “let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit”
Mark 7:21 — “For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts”

4. Covetousness Is A Form Of Idolatry

Luke 12:15 — “Take heed, and beware of covetousness:”
Colossians 3:5 — “and covetousness, which is idolatry:”
Hebrews 13:5 — “Let your conversation be without covetousness;”
1 Timothy 6:10 — “For the love of money is the root of all evil:”

5. Sin Must Not Be Tolerated Or Concealed

1 Corinthians 5:1 — “It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you,”
1 Corinthians 5:6 — “Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?”
1 Corinthians 5:13 — “Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.”
1 Timothy 5:19 — “Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses.”

6. Saints Are Called To Holy Conduct

1 Corinthians 1:2 — “to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints,”
Ephesians 1:1 — “to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus:”
Ephesians 4:24 — “which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”
1 Peter 1:15 — “so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;”

7. Salvation By Grace Does Not Excuse Wickedness

Ephesians 2:8 — “For by grace are ye saved through faith;”
1 Corinthians 6:11 — “And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified”
Ephesians 4:30 — “whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.”
Ephesians 5:5 — “For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.”

5. Reflection

Ephesians 5:3 confronts a dangerous contradiction in modern Christianity: the attempt to celebrate the love of Jesus Christ while treating the sins He condemns as ordinary expressions of human freedom. Paul has just commanded believers to walk in love,

reminding them that Christ gave Himself as a sacrifice for us. He immediately follows that glorious truth with a prohibition against fornication, uncleanness, and covetousness. The connection is not accidental. Biblical love does not require the abandonment of moral righteousness, and grace does not transform immorality into holiness. The Christian must reject the notion that personal desire becomes the supreme authority whenever Scripture interferes with it. The Saviour did not die for our sins so that the redeemed could spend their lives explaining why those sins should no longer be considered sinful.

The command against fornication also requires believers to understand the difference between genuine purity and outward religious appearances. A person may avoid a public scandal while deliberately cultivating desires and practices that contradict the holiness commanded in Scripture. Another may condemn sexual immorality in public while secretly arranging opportunities to indulge it. Such hypocrisy cannot be excused by the ability to quote correct doctrine. First Thessalonians 4:3 commands abstinence from fornication, while First Corinthians 6:18 commands believers to flee it. The appropriate response is obedience rather than experimentation with temptation. Nevertheless, someone who has suffered sexual wrongdoing must not be treated as guilty of another person's offense. God's commandments are not weapons for condemning the innocent; they establish responsibility for those who commit the wrong.

Covetousness deserves particular attention because religious people frequently recognize outward immorality while overlooking the greed governing their own decisions. A man may condemn fornication and still spend his life measuring success by possessions, influence, and financial advantage. Another may become so consumed with acquiring what others possess that gratitude disappears from his daily conduct. Colossians 3:5 identifies covetousness as idolatry because wrongful desire can become an object of devotion. Scripture does not condemn honest labor, responsible provision, or the legitimate enjoyment of God's blessings. It condemns the disordered appetite that refuses contentment and righteousness. The fellow who has made money his master should not imagine that his idol is more respectable merely because it can be deposited in a bank.

The command that these sins not be once named among believers establishes a responsibility for the Church itself. A congregation should not knowingly normalize conduct that Scripture plainly condemns, regardless of the offender's popularity, influence, or financial importance. Nevertheless, biblical holiness must operate together with truthfulness and proper judgment. The Church must not invent accusations, spread unverified rumors, or punish innocent people merely to demonstrate its seriousness about purity. Nor should it conceal genuine wrongdoing when responsible correction or protection is necessary. First Corinthians 5 demonstrates that serious sin cannot simply be

ignored because confronting it would create inconvenience. A church does not become holy by hiding wickedness from public view, and it does not become righteous by condemning people without establishing the facts.

The expression “as becometh saints” provides the proper doctrinal foundation for Christian conduct. Believers are saints because they have been sanctified in Jesus Christ, not because they have earned an exceptional religious title through moral achievement. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes salvation by grace through faith, while Ephesians 4:30 declares that believers are sealed unto the day of redemption. Those truths must not be surrendered to a system that makes eternal life dependent upon flawless human performance. Yet the warning in Ephesians 5:5 must not be dismissed either. Persistent wickedness contradicts the character of the redeemed and should provoke serious examination of one's profession and conduct. The grace that secures salvation does not excuse rebellion, and the holiness commanded of saints does not become the price of their redemption.

Finally, Ephesians 5:3 demands a practical examination of what Christians are willing to tolerate in their own lives. Are desires being cultivated that Scripture commands believers to reject? Have greed, sexual temptation, or worldly approval begun governing decisions that should be submitted to the Lord? The answer is not to construct a collection of man-made regulations and mistake them for salvation. It is to believe what God has said, refuse the flesh, renew the mind, and walk in the Spirit. Those who have failed should not conclude that Christ's grace is insufficient, but neither should they defend what Scripture condemns. Put away fornication, reject uncleanness, refuse covetousness, and live according to the righteousness of the new man. You are not commanded to become a saint through personal achievement. If you belong to Jesus Christ, you are commanded to live as one.

Ephesians 5:4 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 5:4

“Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks.”

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

“Neither filthiness”

Paul continues his instructions concerning the conduct of God's saints by addressing something that reveals the condition of the old nature with remarkable accuracy: “Neither filthiness.” The preceding verse condemns fornication, uncleanness, and covetousness, declaring that such things should not be once named among believers as becometh saints. Now the apostle moves directly into the expressions of corruption that often accompany those sins. The connection is important. The flesh does not merely desire wickedness; it enjoys discussing, celebrating, and making entertainment out of wickedness. A man may publicly condemn sexual immorality while privately delighting in filthy conversations and suggestive amusement. Another may insist that he would never commit certain sins while finding considerable pleasure in making those same sins the subject of his humor. Colossians 3:8 commands believers to put away “anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.” The Christian is not authorized to make filth respectable by speaking it through a religious vocabulary. The old man may wear a clean shirt to church, but that does not mean he has cleaned up what he enjoys saying when he gets home.

The word “filthiness” must be understood according to the moral setting of the passage rather than reduced to a list of expressions that happen to offend polite society. Paul is dealing with conduct contrary to holiness. Second Corinthians 7:1 commands believers to cleanse themselves “from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” That principle reaches beyond particular words into the desires, motives, and practices that produce them. Scripture does not condemn ordinary discussion of serious moral subjects when instruction, warning, or necessary correction requires it. The Bible itself addresses sexual sin, idolatry, corruption, and wickedness with unmistakable plainness. There is a tremendous difference, however, between exposing wickedness because righteousness requires it and enjoying wickedness because the flesh finds it entertaining. First Thessalonians 4:7 declares, “For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.” A Christian who cannot discuss sin without turning the subject into entertainment ought to examine whether he is exposing corruption or enjoying another opportunity to handle it. Biblical plainness is not a license for moral uncleanness.

“nor foolish talking, nor jesting”

The next expression introduces two closely connected forms of communication: “nor foolish talking, nor jesting.” Foolish talking concerns speech that is empty, senseless, morally unprofitable, or governed by the kind of foolishness Scripture repeatedly condemns. Proverbs 15:2 declares, “The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright: but the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness.” Notice the contrast between wisdom and the

careless abundance of words that serve no righteous purpose. Some people seem to believe that every thought passing through their minds deserves immediate public delivery, preferably before anyone has had time to consider whether it is true. Proverbs 10:19 warns, “In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise.” That warning is not a prohibition against friendly conversation or innocent enjoyment. It concerns the danger of allowing speech to operate without judgment. A Christian should possess enough spiritual government to recognize that silence can sometimes accomplish considerably more than another unnecessary remark. The tongue that never consults the mind before opening for business will eventually produce merchandise nobody ought to purchase.

The expression “nor jesting” requires careful attention because some people have used this verse to condemn every smile, every humorous observation, and practically every occasion of laughter. That interpretation runs into difficulty with the rest of Scripture. Proverbs 17:22 declares, “A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones.” Ecclesiastes 3:4 recognizes “A time to weep, and a time to laugh.” The Bible itself contains striking irony, memorable comparisons, and pointed ridicule of religious foolishness. Elijah's confrontation with the prophets of Baal in First Kings 18:27 demonstrates that exposing the absurdity of idolatry can involve sharp language. Consequently, Ephesians 5:4 should not be converted into a universal command against humor. The context concerns speech unbecoming to saints, particularly the kind of jesting that makes moral corruption entertaining, treats serious sins lightly, or injures others for amusement. God did not save Christians so they could become humorless statues, but neither did He save them to become professional entertainers for the old man's filthy imagination.

There is also a form of jesting that deliberately disguises cruelty as entertainment. A person may embarrass another believer, repeat an unverified accusation, or deliver a carefully calculated insult and then announce that everyone should relax because he was only joking. Proverbs 26:19 describes “the man that deceiveth his neighbour, and saith, Am not I in sport?” The passage exposes the foolishness of using amusement to excuse wrongdoing. A joke does not become righteous merely because somebody laughs at it, and humiliation does not become charity because the person inflicting it calls himself humorous. Nevertheless, biblical wit and sharp rebuke can legitimately expose hypocrisy when governed by truth and a righteous purpose. The distinction concerns the character, content, and intention of the speech. Does it reveal truth, or does it celebrate corruption? Does it expose error, or does it simply provide an excuse for personal cruelty? The fellow who must explain every malicious remark by saying he was only joking may discover that

his real problem is not a shortage of appreciative listeners but a shortage of self-government.

“which are not convenient”

Paul now supplies the reason these forms of communication must be rejected: “which are not convenient.” The word convenient in this setting concerns what is suitable, appropriate, or fitting. It should not be reduced to the modern meaning of something easily arranged or requiring little effort. Paul is not saying that filthy conversation is troublesome merely because it might produce social embarrassment. He is declaring that such conduct is unbecoming to God's people. The preceding verse already established the standard with the expression “as becometh saints.” The same principle continues here. A Christian may possess the freedom to speak in many ordinary situations without being subject to a collection of man-made religious regulations, but that freedom does not make every expression appropriate. First Corinthians 10:23 declares, “All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.” The Christian must consider more than whether a particular statement can be defended through some technical argument. The old man asks whether he can get away with saying something; the new man ought to ask whether saying it becomes a child of God.

The standard of what becomes a saint cannot be determined merely by personal taste, social customs, or the preferences of whoever happens to be most easily offended. Scripture must govern the judgment. Colossians 4:6 commands, “Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.” That instruction does not require blandness or forbid necessary reproof. Second Timothy 4:2 still commands ministers to “reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.” Sometimes the most appropriate words are firm because the circumstances demand correction. At other times, wisdom requires patience, restraint, or compassionate silence. What Paul condemns in Ephesians 5:4 is communication that contradicts the holiness expected of those belonging to Jesus Christ. The Christian should not be governed by the world's appetite for vulgarity, irreverence, or amusement at another person's expense. Speaking plainly about wickedness is not the same thing as speaking wickedly, and the ability to deliver a sharp biblical rebuke is not permission to turn every conversation into a contest of insults.

“but rather giving of thanks”

The final expression establishes what should replace the unprofitable and corrupt communication Paul has condemned: “but rather giving of thanks.” Notice that the apostle does not merely command silence. He directs the believer toward a positive expression

appropriate to the new man. Thanksgiving recognizes God's goodness, acknowledges His provision, and directs attention away from the flesh's endless appetite for personal satisfaction. First Thessalonians 5:18 declares, “In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.” The command does not mean that Christians must describe wickedness as good or pretend that every painful circumstance is enjoyable. It means that even amid difficulty, the believer can acknowledge the faithfulness of the Lord. The old man can find something to complain about in nearly every blessing; the new man should learn to recognize blessings even when circumstances provide plenty of reasons for concern.

Thanksgiving also provides a direct answer to the covetousness condemned in Ephesians 5:3. Covetousness is continually preoccupied with what remains unpossessed, while gratitude recognizes what has already been received. Philippians 4:11 records Paul's declaration, “for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.” That contentment was not dependent upon material abundance or a trouble-free ministry. Paul understood that godliness was not measured by the accumulation of possessions. First Timothy 6:6 declares, “But godliness with contentment is great gain.” The thankful Christian need not abandon legitimate ambitions, responsible employment, or opportunities for improvement. He must simply refuse to allow discontentment to become the master of his affections. A covetous man can possess a fortune and remain miserable because he measures happiness by what he lacks. A thankful Christian may possess considerably less while recognizing riches the flesh has never learned to count.

Finally, thanksgiving must be more than a decorative phrase added to a life otherwise governed by murmuring and disobedience. Ephesians 5:20 commands believers to give thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Colossians 3:17 likewise directs believers to do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him. Such thanksgiving belongs to a life submitted to the Lord, not merely to a vocabulary containing occasional religious expressions. The believer should consider whether his ordinary speech reflects appreciation for God's grace or a continual appetite for complaint, vulgar amusement, and self-importance. Thanksgiving turns attention toward the Giver, while corrupt speech so often draws attention toward the speaker. The Christian who remembers what Jesus Christ has accomplished for him should possess something better to contribute to a conversation than another helping of the old man's foolishness.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 5:4 establishes the responsibility of believers to reject communication inconsistent with their calling as saints. Filthiness, foolish talking, and improper jesting are

condemned because they conflict with the moral purity and spiritual maturity expected of those redeemed by Jesus Christ. The passage does not prohibit all humor, ordinary conversation, or necessary biblical rebuke. It condemns speech that celebrates corruption, makes light of wickedness, or uses amusement as an excuse for foolishness and cruelty. Christian liberty does not make corrupt communication appropriate, and sound doctrine does not excuse an undisciplined tongue.

The verse also presents thanksgiving as the positive alternative to corrupt speech. Gratitude acknowledges God's provision, resists the selfish appetites associated with covetousness, and directs attention toward the Lord rather than toward the gratification of the flesh. This command concerns practical sanctification rather than the means of salvation, which remains by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. The central lesson is that the new man's speech must reject moral corruption and foolishness while developing the gratitude appropriate to someone who has received God's abundant grace.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. The New Man Must Reject Corrupt Speech

Ephesians 4:22 — “That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man”

Ephesians 4:24 — “created in righteousness and true holiness.”

Ephesians 4:29 — “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth”

Colossians 3:8 — “filthy communication out of your mouth.”

2. Moral Filthiness Contradicts Holiness

Ephesians 5:3 — “But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness”

2 Corinthians 7:1 — “let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit”

1 Thessalonians 4:7 — “For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.”

1 Peter 1:15 — “so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;”

3. Foolish Talking Reveals A Lack Of Wisdom

Proverbs 10:19 — “In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin:”

Proverbs 15:2 — “but the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness.”

Proverbs 18:2 — “A fool hath no delight in understanding, but that his heart may discover itself.”

Ecclesiastes 5:3 — “and a fool's voice is known by multitude of words.”

4. Jesting Must Not Become An Excuse For Sin

Proverbs 26:19 — “So is the man that deceiveth his neighbour, and saith, Am not I in sport?”

Proverbs 12:18 — “There is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword:”

James 3:5 — “Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things.”

Proverbs 17:22 — “A merry heart doeth good like a medicine:”

5. Speech Must Be Appropriate And Edifying

Colossians 4:6 — “Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt”

Ephesians 4:15 — “But speaking the truth in love”

Ephesians 4:29 — “but that which is good to the use of edifying”

2 Timothy 4:2 — “reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.”

6. Thanksgiving Should Characterize Believers

1 Thessalonians 5:18 — “In every thing give thanks:”

Ephesians 5:20 — “Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father”

Colossians 3:17 — “giving thanks to God and the Father by him.”

Psalm 100:4 — “be thankful unto him, and bless his name.”

7. Gratitude Must Replace Covetousness

1 Timothy 6:6 — “But godliness with contentment is great gain.”

Hebrews 13:5 — “Let your conversation be without covetousness;”

Philippians 4:11 — “for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.”

Luke 12:15 — “Take heed, and beware of covetousness:”

5. Reflection

Ephesians 5:4 confronts the remarkable contradiction of Christians professing holiness while taking pleasure in communication that Scripture identifies as corrupt. Paul has just condemned fornication, uncleanness, and covetousness, and now he addresses the speech that frequently accompanies such conduct. The believer cannot reasonably claim to reject wickedness while continually finding amusement in its celebration. This does not mean that every difficult subject must be avoided or that plain biblical preaching should

become timid. It means that the Christian must distinguish exposing sin from entertaining himself with it. The man who continually laughs at corruption should examine whether he genuinely hates the wickedness he claims to oppose. The new man's conversation ought to reflect the righteousness of the Lord who redeemed him.

Foolish talking also exposes the danger of a tongue operating without biblical restraint. A Christian may possess considerable knowledge while repeatedly speaking before he has examined the facts or considered the consequences. Proverbs warns that a multitude of words creates opportunities for sin, and experience demonstrates the wisdom of that warning. Gossip, exaggeration, careless accusations, and unnecessary arguments often begin because somebody enjoys speaking more than understanding. This danger becomes especially serious when public communication allows an irresponsible statement to spread far beyond its original audience. The freedom to speak does not eliminate the responsibility to speak truthfully and wisely. Sometimes the most profitable contribution a Christian can make to a conversation is refusing to add another foolish remark.

The warning concerning jesting must likewise be understood without turning Christianity into a miserable prohibition against laughter. Proverbs 17:22 recognizes the value of a merry heart, and Scripture contains striking examples of irony directed against wickedness. Biblical humor can expose absurdity without celebrating sin. Nevertheless, the flesh often uses amusement to excuse vulgarity, dishonesty, and personal cruelty. A man may insult another person and then complain that nobody appreciates his sense of humor. Proverbs 26:19 exposes the danger of deception disguised as sport. A joke does not become righteous because the audience laughs, and cruelty does not become harmless because the offender calls it entertainment. Christians should exercise judgment over both the content and purpose of their humor.

The expression “which are not convenient” also establishes an important standard for Christian conduct. Paul is not discussing what happens to be socially fashionable or personally convenient. He is identifying communication inappropriate for those who belong to Jesus Christ. The believer's speech should agree with the holiness expected of the new man. Yet this standard must not be confused with a command to avoid every uncomfortable truth. Scripture still requires ministers to reprove and rebuke with longsuffering and doctrine. Strong correction can be entirely appropriate when directed toward righteousness. The question is not whether every listener enjoys what has been said, but whether the words are truthful, necessary, and fitting for someone who professes to follow the Lord.

Thanksgiving provides the positive alternative to the corrupt communication Paul condemns. A thankful Christian recognizes blessings that the flesh continually overlooks

while searching for something else to possess. Covetousness measures satisfaction by what remains unavailable, while gratitude acknowledges what God has already provided. This does not require pretending that suffering is pleasant or abandoning legitimate efforts to improve difficult circumstances. Paul learned contentment through changing conditions rather than through uninterrupted prosperity. First Thessalonians 5:18 commands believers to give thanks in everything. Gratitude does not deny the existence of trouble; it refuses to allow trouble to erase every reason for acknowledging God's goodness. A thankful tongue has better employment than continually advertising dissatisfaction.

Finally, this entire instruction must remain grounded in salvation by grace through faith. No sinner becomes justified by eliminating vulgarity, abandoning foolish jokes, or developing a grateful disposition. Redemption rests upon the finished sacrifice of Jesus Christ, not upon the perfection of human speech. Nevertheless, the redeemed are commanded to live according to the new man created in righteousness and true holiness. Their communication should increasingly demonstrate wisdom, purity, truthfulness, and thanksgiving. The Holy Spirit who seals believers unto redemption should not be grieved through deliberate corruption. Put away filthiness, refuse foolish talking, and do not disguise sin as harmless jesting. Let your words become instruments of truth rather than advertisements for the flesh. Above all, replace the old man's complaints with thanksgiving to the God who has already given you more in Jesus Christ than the world could ever provide.

Ephesians 5:5 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 5:5

"For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God."

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"For this ye know"

Paul begins this verse with a statement that leaves very little room for the religious ignorance so frequently displayed by people who profess to know the Scriptures: "For this ye know." Notice that he does not introduce some mysterious revelation reserved for an advanced circle of spiritual specialists. He reminds believers of something they should

already understand. The preceding verses have condemned fornication, uncleanness, covetousness, filthiness, foolish talking, and inappropriate jesting. Now Paul explains why such conduct must be taken seriously. The word “For” connects the warning directly to the commands already given. The apostle is not interrupting his discussion of Christian holiness with an unrelated theological observation. He is establishing that the moral character of those excluded from God's kingdom is fundamentally contrary to the conduct becoming His saints. Ephesians 5:3 declares that such sins should not be once named among believers. Verse 5 explains the solemn reason. When God has already spoken plainly, spiritual maturity does not require inventing another interpretation that makes disobedience more comfortable.

The expression also reveals the danger of possessing biblical information without allowing it to govern personal conduct. A Christian may understand that fornication is sinful, covetousness is idolatry, and uncleanness contradicts holiness while still entertaining those sins in his private life. Information alone does not sanctify the flesh. Romans 6:12 commands believers not to allow sin to reign in their mortal bodies, while Galatians 5:16 commands them to walk in the Spirit. Paul expects knowledge to produce sober consideration rather than careless familiarity. The next verse warns, “Let no man deceive you with vain words.” That warning is significant because deception often begins by persuading someone to disregard what Scripture has already made clear. Religious language can become remarkably sophisticated when the flesh wants permission to do something God forbids. The man who knows what his Bible says but spends his time finding excuses to avoid it does not have an information problem. He has an obedience problem.

“that no whoremonger, nor unclean person”

The next expression identifies persons whose conduct stands in direct opposition to the holiness of God's kingdom: “that no whoremonger, nor unclean person.” The word “whoremonger” identifies someone characterized by sexual immorality. Hebrews 13:4 declares, “Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.” Scripture distinguishes the honorable marriage relationship from sexual conduct outside the boundaries God has established. The world's willingness to rename immorality does not alter the divine judgment concerning it. A person may describe forbidden conduct as personal liberty, romantic fulfillment, or a modern understanding of relationships, but none of those expressions changes what God has said. The expression “unclean person” widens the warning beyond one particular offense to moral impurity more generally. First Thessalonians 4:7 declares, “For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.” The issue is not Israel's ceremonial regulations

concerning ritual uncleanness, but the moral corruption incompatible with the holy character expected of God's redeemed people. A new name for an old sin does not make the sin new, and modern approval has never possessed the authority to revise the holiness of Almighty God.

Nevertheless, the wording must be handled carefully. Paul is describing persons characterized by unrighteousness; he is not teaching that every saved believer who falls into a particular sin has thereby proved that Christ's blood was insufficient to redeem him. First Corinthians 6:9–11 provides an essential comparison. After warning that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God, Paul declares, “And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.” The gospel can save the immoral sinner and establish him in a new position before God. Yet that salvation does not make continued immorality acceptable. Persistent, deliberate wickedness is a serious contradiction of the Christian profession and demands honest examination rather than convenient excuses. A single failure must not be confused with the settled character of an unregenerate life, but neither should repeated rebellion be dismissed because someone once made a religious profession. Grace can save a whoremonger, but grace does not declare whoremongering to be the proper occupation of a saint.

“nor covetous man, who is an idolater”

The third expression introduces a sin that respectable religious society often finds considerably easier to excuse than sexual immorality: “nor covetous man, who is an idolater.” Notice that Paul identifies covetousness with idolatry. He does not place the greedy man in a harmless category reserved for ambitious businessmen and financially successful religious personalities. Colossians 3:5 likewise identifies “covetousness, which is idolatry.” The connection is doctrinally important. Idolatry involves giving something created the devotion, authority, or affection that belongs to God. A covetous person allows the desire for possessions, wealth, influence, or personal advantage to govern his conduct. He may own very little or possess considerable riches; the controlling issue is the appetite of his heart. Luke 12:15 declares, “for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.” That statement demolishes the foolish notion that earthly accumulation measures spiritual worth. A man does not have to bow before a golden calf to become an idolater. He can worship the gold while congratulating himself that he has never owned a calf.

The warning also exposes the inconsistency of condemning one form of wickedness while protecting another that happens to be socially profitable. A congregation may speak loudly against fornication while becoming strangely quiet when greed begins directing its financial

decisions. A preacher may condemn the moral corruption of the surrounding world while treating personal enrichment as the supreme evidence of divine favor. Yet First Timothy 6:10 warns, “For the love of money is the root of all evil.” Scripture does not condemn honest labor, responsible provision, legitimate ownership, or generosity made possible through material prosperity. It condemns the love of gain that corrupts judgment and replaces devotion to God. Hebrews 13:5 commands believers to live without covetousness and to be content with what they possess. The covetous man is therefore not merely somebody who would like to earn a better living. He is someone whose desires have become spiritually disordered. A bigger bank account cannot cure an appetite that refuses contentment, because covetousness is not fundamentally a shortage of money. It is a failure to keep money in its proper place.

“hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God”

The final expression brings Paul's warning to its solemn conclusion: “hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.” This is stronger than saying that immoral conduct damages a person's reputation or reduces the respect he receives from fellow Christians. Paul identifies exclusion from inheritance in the kingdom. First Corinthians 6:9 declares, “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived.” Galatians 5:21 issues a similar warning concerning those characterized by the works of the flesh. These passages must not be emptied of their force merely because their warnings make careless religious people uncomfortable. The wording concerns the kingdom belonging to Christ and God, not two competing divine kingdoms. It must also not be reduced automatically to the loss of a particular reward while ignoring Paul's express warning concerning inheritance. A preacher has no authority to remove the severity from God's warning simply because he prefers a conclusion that requires less examination of personal conduct.

At the same time, this warning must be interpreted alongside the completed revelation concerning salvation by grace and the security of the redeemed. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes salvation through faith rather than works. Ephesians 1:13 declares that those who believed were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, and Ephesians 4:30 establishes that the sealing continues unto the day of redemption. Paul is not contradicting himself within the same epistle. The distinction is between the unrighteous standing outside the saving relationship established through Christ and those whom God has washed, justified, and sealed. The description of wicked persons in Ephesians 5:5 must not be treated as a license to pronounce every struggling believer lost whenever he fails. Nevertheless, a sustained profession of Christianity accompanied by deliberate, defended wickedness presents a contradiction that Scripture does not invite us to overlook. Second Corinthians

13:5 commands, “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith.” Eternal security belongs to those genuinely saved through Jesus Christ; a religious claim that has never been grounded in saving faith cannot manufacture that security by repeating the right words.

Finally, the promise of an inheritance directs attention away from the temporary rewards sought by the old nature toward the eternal blessings secured through Christ. Ephesians 1:11 declares, “In whom also we have obtained an inheritance,” while verse 14 identifies the Holy Spirit as the earnest of that inheritance. The believer's future rests upon God's saving work, not upon the accumulation of possessions or the gratification of sinful appetites. First Corinthians 3:15 also establishes that saved people may suffer loss concerning their works while remaining saved. That truth must be distinguished from the exclusion described in Ephesians 5:5 rather than confused with it. The passage warns against assuming that the unredeemed inherit God's kingdom merely because they possess a religious reputation. It also reminds the redeemed why the old man's conduct is utterly inappropriate. A Christian who possesses an inheritance through Jesus Christ should not spend his earthly life behaving as though the temporary pleasures of sin were the only riches worth having.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 5:5 establishes the seriousness of fornication, moral uncleanness, and covetousness by identifying them with the unrighteous character of those who have no inheritance in God's kingdom. Covetousness receives particular emphasis because Scripture identifies it as idolatry, exposing how the love of possessions can replace the devotion that belongs to God. The verse follows Paul's commands concerning holiness and precedes his warning against deception through vain words. The central issue is not whether society approves of particular conduct, but whether that conduct agrees with the righteousness of God.

The passage also requires careful distinctions between salvation and sanctification, a genuine Christian's failures and an unregenerate profession, and the assurance of redemption and the warnings addressed to the unrighteous. The saved possess an inheritance through Jesus Christ, while those who remain outside Him have no such inheritance. Scripture neither teaches that moral reform purchases salvation nor permits a religious profession to excuse a life of defended rebellion. The gospel saves sinners from condemnation; it does not redefine unrighteousness as holiness.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. The Immediate Warning Against Immorality

Ephesians 5:3 — “But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints;”

Ephesians 5:4 — “Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks.”

Ephesians 5:5 — “no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance”

Ephesians 5:6 — “Let no man deceive you with vain words:”

2. Sexual Immorality And Uncleanness Condemned

Hebrews 13:4 — “Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.”

1 Corinthians 6:18 — “Flee fornication.”

1 Thessalonians 4:3 — “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication:”

1 Thessalonians 4:7 — “For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.”

3. Covetousness And Idolatry

Colossians 3:5 — “and covetousness, which is idolatry:”

Luke 12:15 — “Take heed, and beware of covetousness:”

Hebrews 13:5 — “Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have:”

1 Timothy 6:10 — “For the love of money is the root of all evil:”

4. The Unrighteous And The Kingdom

1 Corinthians 6:9 — “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived:”

Galatians 5:21 — “they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”

Colossians 1:13 — “Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:”

Ephesians 1:11 — “In whom also we have obtained an inheritance”

5. The Transforming Work Of Salvation

1 Corinthians 6:11 — “And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified”

2 Corinthians 5:17 — “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature:”

Titus 3:5 — “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us”

Ephesians 2:10 — “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works”

6. Grace, Sealing, And Christian Accountability

Ephesians 2:8 — “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:”

Ephesians 1:13 — “after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,”

Ephesians 4:30 — “whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.”

1 Corinthians 3:15 — “he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.”

7. A Religious Profession Must Be Examined

2 Corinthians 13:5 — “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves.”

2 Timothy 2:19 — “The Lord knoweth them that are his.”

Titus 1:16 — “They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him,”

Ephesians 5:6 — “for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.”

5. Reflection

Ephesians 5:5 confronts a dangerous habit among religious people: treating the warnings of Scripture as though they were written for everybody except themselves. Paul does not present fornication, uncleanness, and covetousness as harmless weaknesses that become respectable whenever someone claims to be a Christian. He connects them with the solemn matter of inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. That warning ought to command serious attention. The Christian must not confuse the world's approval with divine righteousness or assume that familiar sins have become acceptable because society has grown comfortable discussing them. When the Holy Ghost says the unrighteous have no inheritance in God's kingdom, the proper response is to believe Him, not to organize a committee to make the warning less offensive. God's word remains the standard regardless of how frequently the surrounding culture changes its opinions.

The inclusion of covetousness deserves particular examination because greed frequently escapes the criticism directed toward outward immorality. A man may condemn sexual wickedness while allowing money, possessions, influence, or public recognition to become the governing ambition of his life. He may even use religious activities to justify an appetite for personal gain that Scripture identifies as idolatry. Colossians 3:5 makes that connection unmistakable. Yet covetousness must not be confused with legitimate employment, responsible financial planning, or the enjoyment of possessions honestly obtained. The problem arises when desire becomes a master rather than a servant. The old man does not care whether his idol is standing upon a pagan altar or sitting inside a bank account. He only cares that the idol receives the devotion that ought to belong to God.

This warning also requires the distinction between the Church's salvation by grace and the moral responsibilities established for God's redeemed people. Ephesians 2:8–9 declares that salvation is not of works, while Ephesians 1:13 establishes the Spirit's sealing after belief in Jesus Christ. No sinner purchases entrance into God's kingdom through moral improvement. Nevertheless, a genuine profession of faith must not become an excuse for continuing deliberately in conduct Scripture condemns. First Corinthians 6:11 reminds believers that some had formerly practiced serious wickedness before being washed, sanctified, and justified. The gospel changes a person's standing before God and establishes a new life that should increasingly govern his conduct. Grace does not turn immoral behavior into righteousness, and the command to live righteously does not turn Christian obedience into the purchase price of eternal life.

The question of inheritance must likewise be handled without weakening either the warning or the promises of Christ. Ephesians 5:5 identifies the unrighteous as having no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. It does not follow that every saved believer who sins immediately loses salvation, for the same epistle declares that believers are sealed unto the day of redemption. Nor should the warning be reduced automatically to nothing more than a loss of rewards. First Corinthians 3 distinguishes the examination of Christian works from the security of the saved person, while First Corinthians 6 identifies those formerly characterized by unrighteousness as now washed and justified. The distinctions matter. The Bible does not contradict itself, but it certainly contradicts the religious imagination that wants eternal security without genuine faith or Christian holiness without responsibility.

This passage should also correct the Church's handling of both sin and accusation. Serious immoral conduct must not be knowingly normalized merely because the offender possesses influence, popularity, or financial importance. At the same time, believers must not destroy reputations through rumors, assumptions, or unverified allegations. Biblical

holiness requires truthfulness as surely as it requires moral purity. Someone who has committed wrongdoing should be encouraged toward repentance and appropriate correction, while those genuinely harmed deserve responsible protection and care. A congregation that hides wickedness abandons its responsibility, but one that condemns innocent people through careless judgment commits another form of unrighteousness. God has never instructed His saints to defend holiness by abandoning honesty. The truth needs no assistance from a lie.

Finally, Ephesians 5:5 should cause every believer to examine the difference between a religious profession and genuine faith in Jesus Christ. The question is not whether a person has achieved sinless perfection, for fallen flesh remains capable of temptation and disobedience. The question is whether he has truly trusted the Saviour and whether he is willing to submit his conduct to the Scriptures rather than continually defend what God condemns. The person struggling with sin should turn toward Christ rather than conclude that redemption is impossible. The person confidently practicing wickedness while dismissing every biblical warning should examine the foundation of that confidence. Do not attempt to purchase salvation through morality, and do not use the language of salvation to protect immorality. Christ saves sinners by grace through faith, and those who belong to Him should live as saints rather than as servants of the sins from which His grace has delivered them.

Ephesians 5:6 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 5:6

"Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience."

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"Let no man deceive you with vain words"

Paul begins this verse with a warning that ought to make every Bible-believing Christian examine the difference between what God has actually said and what religious men would prefer Him to have said: "Let no man deceive you with vain words." Notice that the apostle does not limit the warning to an obvious unbeliever attempting to corrupt the Church from the outside. He says "no man." That includes the eloquent teacher, the persuasive

philosopher, the popular religious personality, and the fellow who can quote enough Scripture to make his errors sound respectable. The immediate context concerns fornication, uncleanness, covetousness, and the conduct unbecoming to God's saints. Ephesians 5:5 has just declared that the whoremonger, unclean person, and covetous idolater have no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Now Paul warns believers against deception concerning those very matters. The danger is not merely that someone might misunderstand a difficult theological subject. The danger is that persuasive words might convince Christians to disregard God's plain warnings. The devil does not always need to persuade a man that the Bible is false. Sometimes he only needs to convince him that the Bible does not really mean what it plainly says.

The expression “vain words” identifies speech that is empty of the truth necessary to support its claims. Such words may sound impressive, compassionate, sophisticated, or intellectually superior while possessing no authority to overturn Scripture. Colossians 2:8 warns, “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.” The problem is not the ordinary use of reason, careful examination, or legitimate discussion. It is reasoning that places human invention above divine revelation. One man declares that sin is merely an outdated social category. Another insists that love automatically sanctifies whatever two people desire. Still another claims that because salvation is by grace, deliberate disobedience cannot possibly matter to God. These arguments differ in presentation, but they share a common defect: they attempt to make human preference the judge of divine righteousness. A beautifully polished argument is still empty when its principal achievement is explaining away the commandments of Almighty God. Religious vocabulary cannot transform contradiction into truth.

The command also demands discernment rather than suspicion toward every unfamiliar teacher or every question sincerely raised about Scripture. A Christian must not assume that disagreement automatically proves malicious deception. Acts 17:11 commends those who received the word with readiness of mind and searched the Scriptures daily to determine whether the things preached were so. That is the proper method. Examine the teaching, establish its meaning, consider the context, and compare Scripture with Scripture. The believer who knows how to rightly divide the word of truth should not become dependent upon the charisma or reputation of a particular speaker. Nor should he allow a religious personality to replace the written authority of God. First Corinthians 6:9 gives a warning closely related to this passage: “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived.” The repetition is significant because false assurance concerning unrighteousness is a serious danger. When somebody offers an interpretation that makes every biblical warning disappear while leaving the flesh

completely comfortable, that interpretation deserves considerably more examination than applause.

“for because of these things”

The next expression establishes the reason deception must be resisted: “for because of these things.” Paul does not leave the reader guessing about the sins under consideration. Ephesians 5:3 identifies fornication, all uncleanness, and covetousness. Verse 4 condemns filthiness, foolish talking, and inappropriate jesting while directing believers toward thanksgiving. Verse 5 identifies the whoremonger, unclean person, and covetous idolater as excluded from the inheritance of God's kingdom. Consequently, “these things” refers to the unrighteous conduct Paul has just described. The apostle is not establishing a vague warning that every personal inconvenience or earthly calamity must be interpreted as divine judgment upon some particular individual. He is identifying moral wickedness that contradicts God's holiness. Colossians 3:5–6 presents the same connection, commanding believers to mortify sinful conduct and declaring, “For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience.” Scripture is remarkably consistent when the passages are allowed to speak for themselves. The trouble begins when religious men remove God's condemnation from the sins He has named and then congratulate themselves for discovering a more compassionate gospel.

The words also expose the connection between deception and moral responsibility. People are sometimes deceived because they lack accurate information, but deception can also succeed because the falsehood offers permission to pursue something the flesh already desires. Second Timothy 4:3 warns of those who will not endure sound doctrine but will gather teachers according to their own lusts. That is a dangerous arrangement. The audience wants approval, the teacher supplies it, and both become exceedingly pleased with an interpretation that requires neither repentance nor obedience. Yet Galatians 6:7 declares, “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” The Christian must not confuse God's patience with approval or His gracious salvation with moral indifference. Neither should he assume that every unpleasant consequence constitutes a specific act of divine wrath. The passage gives a clear warning concerning named sins and their relationship to God's judgment. A preacher who changes the warning to please his audience has not removed the danger. He has merely persuaded the audience to stop looking at the warning sign.

“cometh the wrath of God”

The third expression introduces the solemn consequence that empty religious arguments cannot remove: “cometh the wrath of God.” Notice that the wrath is identified as belonging

to God, not to an offended preacher, an irritated congregation, or a religious institution determined to punish everyone who disagrees with its traditions. Divine wrath is the righteous response of a holy God toward sin and rebellion. Romans 1:18 declares, “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.” This is not the uncontrolled temper of fallen humanity. God's judgment is neither capricious nor founded upon wounded pride. His holiness is perfect, His knowledge is complete, and His judgments are righteous. The religious world sometimes presents divine love as though it has permanently canceled divine justice, but Scripture teaches no such contradiction. The God who loved sinners enough to send His Son is the same God whose righteousness requires sin to be judged. A god who never judges wickedness may be convenient for the sinner, but he bears little resemblance to the Almighty God revealed in the King James Bible.

The word “cometh” establishes the certainty of divine judgment rather than a date that human speculation may assign to every individual consequence. Romans 2:5 speaks of “the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.” Second Thessalonians 1:8 describes the Lord's vengeance upon those who know not God and obey not the gospel of Jesus Christ. Scripture therefore includes a future reckoning that sinful men cannot escape through persuasive arguments. God's present patience must not be mistaken for the permanent cancellation of judgment. A person may commit wickedness and enjoy outward prosperity for many years without that prosperity establishing divine approval. Ecclesiastes 8:11 warns that because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, men's hearts become fully set in them to do evil. That is a dangerous conclusion. The absence of immediate punishment does not prove that heaven has adopted the sinner's interpretation of morality. A postponed judgment is not an acquittal.

This warning must also be distinguished from God's treatment of those already justified through Jesus Christ. Romans 5:9 declares, “Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.” First Thessalonians 5:9 establishes that God has not appointed believers to wrath but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ. These promises must not be erased by treating every failure of a redeemed person as a fresh exposure to eternal condemnation. The believer's salvation rests upon Christ's finished work, while his conduct remains subject to divine correction and the future judgment seat of Christ. Hebrews 12:6 teaches that the Lord chastens those whom He loves. Chastening is not the same thing as the condemnation awaiting the unredeemed. Nevertheless, eternal security does not make wicked conduct acceptable. The blood of Christ delivers the believer from divine wrath; it does not transform the sins that brought wrath upon the world into appropriate behavior for God's children. Grace establishes security and demands gratitude, not rebellion.

“upon the children of disobedience”

The final expression identifies those upon whom divine wrath comes: “upon the children of disobedience.” This designation must be understood from Paul's own teaching rather than assigned a meaning convenient to a particular theological argument. Ephesians 2:2 describes the former walk of the Ephesian believers, when they lived according to the course of this world and the spirit now working in the children of disobedience. Verse 3 continues, “and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.” Notice the past tense concerning those who have subsequently received God's saving grace. They once belonged to the condemned condition of fallen humanity, but Ephesians 2:4–5 explains that God, rich in mercy, quickened them together with Christ. The designation “children of disobedience” therefore describes the unredeemed condition rather than serving as another title automatically assigned to every saved believer who commits a sin. The Christian once walked among the children of disobedience, but salvation did not leave him in the same spiritual standing and merely provide a more impressive religious vocabulary.

This distinction does not reduce the seriousness of Paul's warning. The unregenerate person remains under condemnation apart from Jesus Christ, and persistent wickedness contradicts the profession of a person claiming to have been delivered from that condition. John 3:36 declares, “he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.” Salvation comes through faith in the Son, not through human moral improvement. Yet those who have believed are commanded to put off the old man, renew their minds, and walk as children of light. Ephesians 5:8 explains, “For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light.” The contrast between what believers were and what they now are establishes the force of the command. Ephesians 5:7 consequently warns them not to become partakers with those whose wickedness invites judgment. The Lord did not deliver His people from darkness so they could spend their Christian lives defending the very conduct that characterized their former condition. Their position has changed, and their walk ought to demonstrate it.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 5:6 identifies the danger of deception through empty arguments that contradict God's revealed moral standards. The immediate concern is the wickedness condemned in Ephesians 5:3–5, particularly fornication, uncleanness, and covetous idolatry. Paul warns believers not to accept persuasive claims that minimize those sins or deny the righteous judgment of God. Divine wrath is not human vindictiveness; it is God's holy response to unrighteousness. The central danger is allowing human reasoning, religious popularity, or personal desire to overturn what Scripture plainly teaches concerning sin and judgment.

The verse also establishes a distinction between the children of disobedience and those who have been saved through Jesus Christ. Ephesians 2 identifies the former condition of believers as children of wrath, while salvation by grace brings new spiritual life. The redeemed are delivered from condemnation through Christ's blood, sealed by the Holy Spirit, and commanded to live according to their new position. Their security must never become an excuse for approving the wickedness that brings judgment upon the unredeemed. The central lesson is that God's children must reject vain words, believe His warnings, and refuse to make peace with the sins from which Christ has delivered them.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. The Danger Of Deception And Vain Words

Ephesians 5:6 — “Let no man deceive you with vain words:”

Colossians 2:8 — “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit”

2 Timothy 4:3 — “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine;”

1 Corinthians 15:33 — “Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.”

2. The Sins That Bring God's Judgment

Ephesians 5:3 — “But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness”

Ephesians 5:5 — “no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater”

Colossians 3:5 — “and covetousness, which is idolatry:”

1 Thessalonians 4:7 — “For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.”

3. God's Wrath Is Righteous And Certain

Romans 1:18 — “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men”

Romans 2:5 — “treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath”

Colossians 3:6 — “For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience:”

2 Thessalonians 1:8 — “In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God”

4. The Children Of Disobedience Distinguished

Ephesians 2:2 — “the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:”

Ephesians 2:3 — “and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.”

John 3:36 — “the wrath of God abideth on him.”

Ephesians 5:8 — “For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord:”

5. Christ Delivers Believers From Wrath

Ephesians 2:8 — “For by grace are ye saved through faith;”

Romans 5:9 — “we shall be saved from wrath through him.”

1 Thessalonians 5:9 — “For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,”

Ephesians 1:13 — “after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,”

6. God's Children Must Reject Wickedness

Ephesians 5:7 — “Be not ye therefore partakers with them.”

Ephesians 5:8 — “walk as children of light:”

Romans 12:2 — “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind”

1 Peter 1:15 — “so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;”

7. Security, Chastening, And Self-Examination

Ephesians 4:30 — “whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.”

Romans 6:2 — “God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?”

Hebrews 12:6 — “For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.”

2 Corinthians 13:5 — “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves.”

5. Reflection

Ephesians 5:6 confronts a danger that has followed religious people through every generation: the temptation to believe a pleasing explanation rather than an uncomfortable truth. Paul warns believers not to be deceived with vain words because the sins he has identified bring the righteous wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. The warning is not difficult to understand, but the flesh has a remarkable ability to make plain commandments appear complicated whenever obedience becomes inconvenient. A man

may spend years searching for an interpretation that permits something Scripture condemns, and then call the result spiritual enlightenment. Yet changing the explanation does not change the commandment. The Christian who continually searches for a teacher willing to excuse his favorite sin has not demonstrated a hunger for truth. He has demonstrated a hunger for permission.

The expression concerning vain words also requires discernment when listening to religious teachers. A popular personality may possess extraordinary communication skills while presenting arguments that cannot survive careful comparison with Scripture. Another may borrow the language of grace, compassion, and liberty while quietly removing the biblical demands of holiness and repentance. Colossians 2:8 warns against philosophy and vain deceit according to human tradition rather than Christ. This does not mean every difficult question should be silenced or every unfamiliar interpretation condemned without examination. It means the believer must establish what the Scriptures actually teach before accepting a persuasive explanation. An argument does not become biblical because it sounds compassionate, and a falsehood does not become righteous because somebody delivers it with a pleasant smile. God's word must remain the authority.

The wrath of God must also be understood without confusing divine righteousness with human vindictiveness. Scripture presents God's judgment as the response of a holy Judge who knows the truth perfectly. He does not require human speculation to discover whether wickedness deserves condemnation. Romans 2:5 warns concerning the coming day of wrath and the revelation of God's righteous judgment. Nevertheless, believers should not interpret every illness, hardship, or personal tragedy as evidence that someone has become the direct object of divine punishment for a particular sin. The Lord's judgments are righteous, while human knowledge is limited. The Christian should therefore take the warning seriously without pretending to possess God's complete understanding of another person's circumstances. God's wrath is not an excuse for religious men to become vindictive; it is a warning that wickedness will never escape the righteousness of its Creator.

The designation “children of disobedience” provides another essential doctrinal distinction. Ephesians 2 explains that believers formerly walked according to the course of this world and were by nature children of wrath. Through Jesus Christ, however, God has quickened those who believe and established them in a new spiritual position. Romans 5:9 promises that those justified by Christ's blood shall be saved from wrath through Him. Consequently, the warning in Ephesians 5:6 should not be used to teach that a genuinely redeemed Christian loses eternal life whenever he commits a sin. Neither should eternal security be used to excuse deliberate rebellion. The saved remain responsible for their

conduct and may experience the Father's correction. The believer has been delivered from condemnation, not promoted into a position where his disobedience suddenly becomes pleasing to God.

The relationship between grace and holiness must therefore remain firmly established. Salvation is received through faith in Jesus Christ, not through the successful performance of moral reform. A sinner who abandons several sinful habits without receiving Christ has not purchased eternal life. Conversely, a person who genuinely belongs to Christ should not spend his days defending the very wickedness Scripture commands him to reject. Ephesians 5:7 warns believers not to become partakers with the children of disobedience, and verse 8 commands them to walk as children of light. That separation concerns participation in sinful conduct rather than the abandonment of every ordinary relationship with unbelievers. Christians must proclaim the gospel to a lost world without adopting the world's unrighteousness. You cannot reach sinners with the gospel by pretending the sins from which they need deliverance have become acceptable to God.

Finally, Ephesians 5:6 should produce neither hopeless fear nor careless indifference in the Christian who reads it. The believer has every reason to rejoice in the finished work of Jesus Christ and every reason to take God's warnings seriously. The same Lord who secured redemption has commanded His people to walk in holiness, truth, and love. When confronted by teachings that contradict Scripture, believers must examine those teachings rather than surrender to their persuasive presentation. When confronted by personal sin, they should acknowledge it rather than manufacture religious excuses. When considering the coming wrath of God, they should remember the urgency of proclaiming salvation through Jesus Christ. Let no man deceive you with vain words. God's holiness has not changed, His judgment has not been canceled, and His grace has not become permission for rebellion. Believe His word, rest in His Son, and walk as a child of light.

Ephesians 5:7 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 5:7

“Be not ye therefore partakers with them.”

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

“Be not ye therefore partakers”

Paul follows his solemn warning concerning the wrath of God with a command that destroys the popular notion that Christian liberty includes the freedom to participate in whatever the surrounding world happens to celebrate: “Be not ye therefore partakers.” Notice the force of “therefore.” It connects the instruction directly to Ephesians 5:3–6, where fornication, uncleanness, covetousness, filthy communication, and the deceptive arguments that excuse such conduct have been condemned. Verse 6 declares, “Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.” Now Paul tells believers not to become partakers with those whose unrighteous conduct brings divine judgment. The command is not difficult to understand. God's people must not knowingly join themselves to the sinful practices that God has condemned. A Christian cannot reasonably proclaim that fornication is wicked on Sunday and then spend the remainder of the week celebrating the same wickedness as an expression of personal freedom. The Lord has never commanded His children to prove their love for sinners by becoming enthusiastic participants in their sins.

The word “partakers” is important because Paul is dealing with participation rather than the mere existence of unbelievers in the Christian's surroundings. A person may encounter wickedness without committing it, hear false doctrine without accepting it, or work alongside unbelievers without becoming responsible for their private sins. Participation involves sharing in something, joining oneself to a practice, or lending support to conduct that ought to be rejected. First Timothy 5:22 commands, “neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure.” Romans 1:32 also identifies the seriousness of taking pleasure in those who practice wickedness. Consequently, the believer must consider not merely what he personally does but also what he knowingly encourages, approves, or helps advance. A man may avoid committing a particular offense while assisting someone else in accomplishing it. Another may condemn wickedness in public while privately financing, promoting, or defending it because the arrangement benefits him. There is a considerable difference between refusing to condemn a person without evidence and knowingly helping that person commit the very sin your Bible commands you to reject.

The command also demands a distinction between the believer's standing in Jesus Christ and his practical responsibility to walk according to that standing. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes salvation by grace through faith, apart from works. Ephesians 1:13 declares that believers are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise after believing the gospel, while Ephesians 4:30 establishes that sealing unto the day of redemption. Paul is not announcing that every saved person who participates in wrongdoing immediately loses salvation and returns to his former unredeemed condition. He is commanding those already redeemed not to imitate the conduct belonging to the children of disobedience. Romans 6:12 similarly instructs believers not to allow sin to reign in their mortal bodies. Such

commands demonstrate that saved people remain capable of sinful decisions, but they are responsible to refuse them. Eternal security does not mean every decision made by the redeemed has received divine approval. The blood of Christ secures the believer's salvation; it does not turn the old man's rebellion into acceptable Christian behavior.

“with them”

The final expression identifies those with whom believers must not become partakers: “with them.” The reference is established by the preceding verse, which identifies “the children of disobedience.” Ephesians 2:2 describes the former condition of the Ephesian believers, when they walked according to the course of this world and the spirit working in those children of disobedience. Verse 3 explains that they were formerly “by nature the children of wrath, even as others.” Yet Ephesians 2:4–5 declares that God, rich in mercy, quickened them together with Christ. The believers receiving Ephesians 5:7 therefore once belonged to the very condition from which they are now commanded to separate their conduct. That is an important distinction. Christians should never approach lost people with the arrogant assumption that they were born spiritually superior to everybody else. They were sinners who needed the grace of God. The Christian who looks down upon the lost as though he never required redemption has forgotten the pit from which the Saviour delivered him. But remembering that pit is no reason to climb back into it.

The expression “with them” must not be twisted into the idea that Christians are forbidden to speak with unbelievers, conduct ordinary business with them, or proclaim the gospel to them. First Corinthians 5:9–10 is especially important because Paul distinguishes separation from certain immoral associations within Christian fellowship from the impossible task of avoiding every sinner in the world. He explains that such complete withdrawal would require believers to go out of the world. The Lord Jesus Christ likewise dealt with publicans and sinners during His earthly ministry, not to endorse their wickedness but to call sinners to repentance. That ministry occurred within the historical setting of His presentation to Israel, but it demonstrates that compassionate dealings with sinners need not constitute participation in their sins. A Christian may love an unbelieving relative without approving the relative's immorality. He may work honestly alongside unbelieving colleagues without joining their dishonest practices. Separation from wickedness does not require pretending that lost people are contagious objects to be avoided at every opportunity. The gospel was given to reach sinners, not to excuse their sins or abandon them without a witness.

Finally, the command prepares the way for the contrast Paul immediately establishes in Ephesians 5:8: “For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light.” Notice the change from what the believers were to what they are in Christ.

The difference is not merely that they have adopted a respectable religious lifestyle. They have received a new spiritual position through the saving work of Jesus Christ. Their conduct must therefore agree with that new identity. Ephesians 5:11 continues, “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.” The believer must not confuse fellowship with darkness and faithful witness to those who remain in darkness. Nor should he confuse biblical separation with personal cruelty, unnecessary isolation, or the invention of man-made restrictions beyond Scripture. The issue is agreement with wickedness, not the mere presence of unbelievers. You cannot faithfully reprove the works of darkness while deliberately helping those works flourish. The Christian has been called to shine as a child of light, not become an assistant manager in the business of darkness.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 5:7 establishes the Christian's responsibility to refuse participation in the wickedness condemned in the preceding verses. The expression “therefore” connects the command with Paul's warning against fornication, uncleanness, covetous idolatry, deceptive teaching, and the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Believers must not knowingly practice, approve, promote, or assist conduct that Scripture identifies as sinful. The instruction concerns practical holiness and must not be confused with an attempt to earn salvation through moral separation. The redeemed are commanded to live differently because their spiritual position has changed through Jesus Christ.

The verse also requires a distinction between sinful participation and ordinary contact with unbelievers. Christians are not commanded to withdraw from every relationship, employment situation, or opportunity to proclaim the gospel. They must remain faithful witnesses while refusing to compromise biblical righteousness. The believer's security rests upon Christ, but his conduct remains subject to the Lord's commandments. The central lesson is that God's children must not become partners in the sins of those from whose former condition His grace has delivered them.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. The Immediate Warning Against Participation

Ephesians 5:5 — “no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance”

Ephesians 5:6 — “Let no man deceive you with vain words:”

Ephesians 5:7 — “Be not ye therefore partakers with them.”

Ephesians 5:11 — “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.”

2. Sharing In The Sins Of Others

1 Timothy 5:22 — “neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure.”

Romans 1:32 — “not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.”

2 John 1:11 — “For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.”

1 Corinthians 10:21 — “Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils:”

3. Believers Were Formerly Children Of Disobedience

Ephesians 2:2 — “Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world”

Ephesians 2:3 — “and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.”

Ephesians 2:5 — “Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ”

Colossians 1:13 — “Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:”

4. Separation Does Not Require Abandoning The Lost

1 Corinthians 5:9 — “I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators:”

1 Corinthians 5:10 — “for then must ye needs go out of the world.”

Matthew 9:13 — “for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”

1 Corinthians 9:22 — “I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.”

5. The Children Of Light Must Reject Darkness

Ephesians 5:8 — “For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light:”

Ephesians 5:11 — “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.”

Romans 13:12 — “let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.”

1 Thessalonians 5:5 — “Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day:”

6. Deceptive Influences Must Be Examined

Colossians 2:8 — “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit”

1 Corinthians 15:33 — “Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.”

2 Timothy 4:3 — “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine;”

1 Thessalonians 5:21 — “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.”

7. Salvation By Grace Requires A Different Walk

Ephesians 2:8 — “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:”

Ephesians 1:13 — “after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,”

Galatians 5:16 — “Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.”

Romans 12:2 — “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind”

5. Reflection

Ephesians 5:7 confronts a contradiction that frequently appears whenever Christians begin treating the surrounding world's approval as more important than the commandments of Almighty God. Paul has identified fornication, uncleanness, covetousness, and the empty arguments used to defend such conduct. He then commands believers not to become partakers with those practicing the wickedness he has condemned. The issue is not whether Christians should demonstrate compassion toward lost people. The issue is whether they should join in the sins from which they are commanded to separate themselves. A believer may possess sincere concern for another person without approving everything that person does. The Christian who believes he must participate in wickedness to demonstrate love has confused biblical charity with moral surrender. God's love never requires His children to abandon His holiness.

The word “partakers” also exposes the difference between personal abstinence and knowingly assisting another person's wrongdoing. A believer may refuse to commit a particular sin while making money from its promotion or defending those who practice it for personal advantage. Another may condemn dishonesty while lending his reputation to a fraudulent enterprise. Scripture requires more than avoiding the most visible forms of personal misconduct. First Timothy 5:22 warns against becoming a partaker of other men's sins, while Romans 1:32 condemns taking pleasure in those who practice wickedness. Nevertheless, Christians should distinguish established facts from rumors and direct responsibility from imagined guilt through association. You are not responsible for every sin

committed by someone you know, but you are responsible when you knowingly choose to assist, approve, or participate in it.

This command must never be turned into the notion that Christian separation requires complete isolation from unbelievers. The Lord Jesus Christ dealt with sinners during His earthly ministry, and the apostle Paul carried the gospel into a world filled with idolatry and immorality. First Corinthians 5 explains that believers cannot avoid every immoral person without departing from the world altogether. Christians must therefore distinguish ordinary contact from sinful partnership. A believer may work beside an unbeliever, maintain family relationships, or demonstrate kindness toward someone whose conduct violates Scripture. Such relationships can provide opportunities for truthful witness and genuine compassion. The Church has not been commissioned to hide from sinners, and it has certainly not been commissioned to become sinners in order to reach them. Faithful witness requires both truth and love.

The command also exposes the misuse of Christian liberty. Salvation is by grace through faith, and the believer is sealed with the Holy Spirit unto the day of redemption. Those truths are glorious, but neither establishes a right to practice wickedness. Ephesians 5:8 explains that believers were formerly darkness but are now light in the Lord. Their changed spiritual position establishes responsibility for a changed manner of life. The Christian must not confuse freedom from condemnation with freedom to participate in the conduct bringing judgment upon the children of disobedience. Nor should he invent man-made rules and treat every harmless difference in custom as an act of rebellion. Biblical separation is not a contest to determine who can manufacture the longest list of prohibitions. It is obedience to the righteousness God has actually revealed.

There is also a danger in allowing social influence to replace biblical judgment. A Christian may gradually begin accepting conduct he once recognized as sinful simply because people he admires have begun defending it. The pressure may come from friendships, professional relationships, religious personalities, or the desire to avoid criticism. Yet the popularity of a practice cannot establish its righteousness. First Corinthians 15:33 warns that evil communications corrupt good manners, and Colossians 2:8 warns against vain deceit. The believer must therefore examine teaching and conduct according to Scripture rather than the confidence of those promoting them. This does not require treating everyone who disagrees as an enemy. The man who needs the world's permission before obeying God has already given the world an authority it never possessed.

Finally, Ephesians 5:7 should encourage believers to live consistently with the salvation they have received through Jesus Christ. The command is not an invitation to self-righteous pride or contempt toward the lost. Christians were once children of disobedience

themselves, and only God's grace has delivered them from that condition. They should therefore proclaim the gospel with humility while refusing the wickedness that contradicts their new life. Where sinful participation has occurred, it should be acknowledged and abandoned. Where compromise has become habitual, the mind must be renewed through Scripture and the believer must walk in the Spirit. Do not mistake friendship for fellowship in sin, compassion for approval, or Christian liberty for permission to rebel. You belong to Jesus Christ. Walk as a child of light, and obey the command: “Be not ye therefore partakers with them.”

Ephesians 5:8 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 5:8

“For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light:”

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

“For ye were sometimes darkness”

Paul begins this verse by reminding believers of something religious pride would much rather forget: “For ye were sometimes darkness.” Notice the exact wording. He does not merely say that the Ephesians once walked in darkness, although that certainly was true. He declares that they were darkness. The statement concerns their former spiritual condition before salvation through Jesus Christ. Ephesians 2:1 identifies them as formerly dead in trespasses and sins, while Ephesians 2:2 describes their previous walk according to the course of this world. Ephesians 4:18 further explains the condition of unregenerate Gentiles as “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:” This was not simply a shortage of education, insufficient religious training, or an unfortunate collection of bad habits. It was spiritual alienation from God. A lost man may possess an impressive intellect, considerable moral discipline, and a respectable reputation while remaining spiritually dead. The darkness Paul describes is not cured by handing the sinner a diploma, teaching him better manners, or introducing him to a more sophisticated religious organization. He needs the life that only Jesus Christ can give.

The word “sometimes” must also be understood according to its biblical usage. Here it means formerly or once, not that the Ephesians were occasionally in darkness and occasionally in light before salvation. Paul is establishing a contrast between what they formerly were and what they have now become in the Lord. Ephesians 2:3 declares concerning their former condition, “and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.” That statement leaves no room for the religious imagination that assumes some people were born spiritually superior to the rest of humanity. Every saved person has a past from which God's grace has delivered him. One may have been openly immoral while another maintained an outward appearance of religious respectability. One may have lived among heathen idols while another trusted ceremonies, traditions, or personal righteousness. Yet all needed redemption through the blood of Jesus Christ. Romans 3:23 declares, “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;” The Christian should therefore remember his former condition without allowing it to become his present identity. You were not saved because you happened to be a brighter shade of darkness than your neighbour. You were saved because the Lord Jesus Christ accomplished what darkness could never accomplish for itself.

“but now are ye light in the Lord”

The next expression announces one of the most glorious changes described in Paul's epistles: “but now are ye light in the Lord.” Two words establish the contrast: “but now.” The believers were formerly darkness, but their spiritual position has changed. The difference was not produced by the passing of time, a successful program of self-improvement, or the decision to become more respectable than their unbelieving neighbours. The source of the transformation is identified in the expression “in the Lord.” John 8:12 records Jesus Christ declaring, “I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” The believer's light is therefore derived from the Lord rather than originating in fallen human nature. Second Corinthians 4:6 explains that God, who commanded light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of His glory in the face of Jesus Christ. The contrast is spiritual and redemptive. The Christian did not become light by polishing the darkness until it developed a shine. He became light in the Lord because God accomplished a work of salvation that the sinner could never manufacture.

This distinction is essential for rightly dividing the word of truth. Ephesians 2:8–9 declares salvation by grace through faith, not of works, lest any man should boast. Ephesians 1:13 establishes that believers are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise after believing the gospel. Colossians 1:13 declares that God “hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:” These passages identify a

completed change of spiritual standing. The believer is no longer in the same condemned condition that characterized his former life. Nevertheless, the statement “ye are light in the Lord” does not mean the Christian's mortal flesh has become incapable of sin. Ephesians 4:22–24 has already distinguished the old man from the new man, while Galatians 5:17 establishes the continuing conflict between flesh and Spirit. Position must not be confused with performance. A saved man may behave inconsistently with his spiritual identity without thereby proving that Christ has failed to redeem him. Yet the security of that identity establishes a serious responsibility. The believer possesses light in the Lord, but he has no business deliberately conducting himself according to the darkness from which God's grace delivered him.

“walk as children of light”

The final expression turns doctrine into practical responsibility: “walk as children of light.” Paul does not command the Ephesians to walk in light so that they might eventually purchase a position as God's children. He commands them to walk according to the identity they already possess. Notice the order throughout the verse. First, they were darkness. Second, they are light in the Lord. Third, they must walk as children of light. Salvation precedes Christian conduct, and Christian conduct should reflect salvation. Ephesians 4:1 commands believers to walk worthy of their calling, while Romans 13:12 declares, “let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.” Walking concerns the continuing manner of life expressed through decisions, speech, relationships, responsibilities, and habits. A believer cannot reasonably claim to be walking as a child of light while deliberately practicing the dishonesty, moral corruption, covetousness, and malicious conduct that Paul has spent the surrounding verses condemning. A man who claims to possess the light while carefully arranging his affairs around the works of darkness has confused his spiritual position with permission to contradict it.

The command also prepares the way for Ephesians 5:9–11. Verse 9 identifies the fruit of the Spirit in goodness, righteousness, and truth, while verse 11 commands believers to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness but rather to reprove them. These passages explain what walking as children of light involves. It is not merely avoiding certain people or constructing an impressive collection of external religious restrictions. It is producing conduct consistent with God's revealed righteousness. Nor does biblical separation mean abandoning all contact with unbelievers. First Corinthians 5:10 establishes that avoiding every immoral person in the world would require believers to leave the world altogether. Christians must remain available to proclaim the gospel while refusing participation in wickedness. The light should expose darkness without becoming darkness itself.

Philippians 2:15 calls believers to be blameless and harmless in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, “among whom ye shine as lights in the world;” There is the proper testimony. God did not bring His children into the light so they could hide from every sinner, nor did He save them so they could imitate every sin. He called them to walk according to the Lord who delivered them.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 5:8 establishes three connected truths concerning the believer's spiritual identity: his former condition of darkness, his present position as light in the Lord, and his responsibility to walk accordingly. The contrast between “were” and “are” demonstrates that salvation produces a genuine change of standing before God rather than merely an improvement in outward behavior. The source of this transformation is Jesus Christ, not religious achievement, moral discipline, or human enlightenment. Yet the spiritual position received through grace carries practical responsibilities concerning holiness, truthfulness, and separation from wickedness. The Christian is not commanded to produce his own spiritual light. He is commanded to live consistently with the light he possesses in the Lord.

The verse also distinguishes salvation from sanctification without separating them into unrelated doctrines. Eternal life is received through faith in Jesus Christ, while walking as a child of light concerns obedience after salvation. The believer may still confront temptation and experience the struggle between flesh and Spirit, but the old man's corruption must not become the accepted pattern of his life. Christian separation concerns refusing the works of darkness rather than abandoning opportunities to reach the lost with the gospel. The central lesson is that those whom God has delivered from darkness must no longer conduct themselves as though their former spiritual condition were still their rightful home.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. The Former Condition Of Spiritual Darkness

Ephesians 2:1 — “And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;”
Ephesians 2:2 — “Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world,”
Ephesians 4:18 — “Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God”
Colossians 1:21 — “And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works,”

2. Jesus Christ Is The Source Of Light

John 8:12 — “I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.”

2 Corinthians 4:6 — “For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts,”
1 John 1:5 — “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.”
1 Peter 2:9 — “who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:”

3. Salvation Changes The Believer's Position

Colossians 1:13 — “Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:”
Ephesians 2:8 — “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:”
Ephesians 1:13 — “after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,”
2 Corinthians 5:17 — “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature:”

4. Believers Are Children Of Light

Ephesians 5:8 — “but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light:”
1 Thessalonians 5:5 — “Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.”
Galatians 3:26 — “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.”
John 1:12 — “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God,”

5. The Christian Must Walk Worthy

Ephesians 4:1 — “that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,”
Romans 13:12 — “let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.”
Galatians 5:16 — “Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.”
Colossians 1:10 — “That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work,”

6. Light Produces Righteous Conduct

Ephesians 5:9 — “For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;”
Ephesians 5:11 — “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.”
Romans 12:9 — “Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.”
Ephesians 4:25 — “Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour:”

7. God's Children Must Shine Before Others

Philippians 2:15 — “among whom ye shine as lights in the world;”
Matthew 5:16 — “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”
1 Peter 2:12 — “Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles:”
1 Corinthians 9:22 — “I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.”

5. Reflection

Ephesians 5:8 begins with a truth that ought to eliminate spiritual pride from every Christian who understands it: “For ye were sometimes darkness.” Paul does not invite believers to congratulate themselves for having been naturally superior to the unbelieving world. He reminds them of their former condition. Before salvation, they were spiritually dead in trespasses and sins, regardless of their education, social standing, or religious accomplishments. The respectable sinner needs the same Saviour as the openly immoral sinner. Romans 3:23 declares that all have sinned and come short of God's glory. The man who looks upon the lost with contempt, as though he was born possessing the light they lack, has forgotten what grace actually rescued him from.

The expression “but now are ye light in the Lord” establishes the change accomplished through salvation. The believer does not become light by joining a religious institution, improving his manners, or performing enough good works to overcome his former condition. Salvation is God's gracious work through Jesus Christ, received by faith. Ephesians 2:8–9 settles that distinction beyond reasonable argument. Yet some religious systems continually attempt to make moral improvement the foundation of acceptance before God. They present Christianity as an extended effort to become worthy of salvation rather than proclaiming the finished work of the Saviour. The gospel is not a program for teaching darkness how to behave like light. It is the message of Jesus Christ, through whom God gives life to those who believe.

The command to walk as children of light also exposes the opposite error of using eternal security to excuse deliberate disobedience. Ephesians 1:13 establishes the believer's sealing with the Holy Spirit, while Ephesians 4:30 declares that sealing continues unto the day of redemption. These promises do not make every action of a saved person righteous. The Christian still inhabits mortal flesh and must resist its sinful demands. Galatians 5:16 commands walking in the Spirit, demonstrating the need for practical submission after salvation. A believer may fail without thereby invalidating Christ's finished work, but failure should lead to correction rather than justification of sin. Eternal security establishes whose child you are; it does not give the old man authority to decide how that child should behave.

Walking as children of light must also be distinguished from abandoning every relationship with unbelievers. Paul commands separation from the works of darkness, not the refusal to speak with anyone who needs the gospel. Christians must work, live, and minister in a world that frequently rejects biblical righteousness. They should demonstrate compassion toward sinners without joining their sinful practices. First Corinthians 5:10 recognizes that avoiding every immoral person would require believers to depart from the world altogether. The distinction is between faithful contact and sinful participation. A Christian who imitates the world's wickedness to gain its approval has compromised his testimony, while one who refuses every opportunity to reach sinners has misunderstood the purpose of his witness.

The light received through Christ should become visible through ordinary conduct. Ephesians 5:9 identifies goodness, righteousness, and truth as the fruit of the Spirit, while the surrounding passage addresses dishonesty, covetousness, moral impurity, and corrupt communication. These matters belong to daily life rather than merely to formal religious activities. A Christian should speak truth when deception would be profitable, demonstrate kindness when irritation arises, and reject immoral conduct even when society applauds it. His profession should agree with his behavior. Yet good conduct must remain the fruit of salvation rather than a replacement for the gospel. A man may carry a Bible large enough to attract attention across the street, but if his daily conduct contradicts its commandments, the size of the book will not repair the testimony.

Finally, Ephesians 5:8 should encourage believers to examine whether their present conduct agrees with their present position in Jesus Christ. The Christian who has stumbled should acknowledge the wrong, receive biblical correction, and return to faithful obedience rather than concluding that spiritual growth is impossible. The person who has been deliberately accommodating darkness must stop defending what Scripture condemns. The Lord has provided His word, His Spirit, and the promises necessary for the believer's confidence. The command does not require sinless perfection through human strength; it requires a walk governed by the new life received through Christ. You were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Do not live as though Calvary accomplished nothing. Do not return to the old man's ways and call it liberty. Walk as children of light, and let your conduct reflect the Saviour who delivered you.

Ephesians 5:9 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 5:9

"(For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;)"

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"For the fruit of the Spirit"

Paul places a remarkable statement between two commands concerning the Christian's walk. Ephesians 5:8 declares, "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light:" Verse 10 continues, "Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord." Between those instructions stands verse 9, enclosed in parentheses in the King James Bible: "For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;" The parentheses do not make the statement unimportant. They explain what the Christian's walk in the light should produce. Notice that Paul does not say the believer must manufacture spiritual fruit through religious enthusiasm, outward imitation, or a sufficient quantity of personal determination. He calls it "the fruit of the Spirit." The source matters. An apple tree produces apples because of the life operating within it, not because somebody has tied artificial apples to its branches. A Christian may adopt religious expressions, copy an admired preacher's mannerisms, and learn to behave respectably before an audience without demonstrating the genuine fruit described in Scripture. The Holy Spirit produces spiritual fruit; the flesh produces religious imitations. The two may resemble each other from a distance, but one possesses life while the other depends upon appearances.

The word "fruit" must also be understood in connection with Galatians 5:22–23, where Paul declares, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." Notice that the apostle speaks of the fruit of the Spirit rather than presenting spiritual maturity as a collection of independent accomplishments that the flesh can select according to personal preference. In Ephesians, he identifies goodness, righteousness, and truth as qualities associated with that fruit. These passages complement one another without requiring us to pretend that their lists are identical. Galatians contrasts the fruit of the Spirit with the works of the flesh, while Ephesians places the Spirit's fruit within the contrast between darkness and light. The teaching remains consistent: spiritual life must produce conduct appropriate to its divine source. A Christian who boasts about possessing the fruit of the Spirit while cultivating dishonesty, malice, and unrighteousness has mistaken his profession for the evidence. A tree does not prove its fruitfulness by hanging a sign around its trunk announcing that it intends to produce a magnificent harvest.

The expression also preserves the distinction between regeneration and sanctification. Ephesians 1:13 declares that those who believed the gospel were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, while Ephesians 4:30 establishes that sealing unto the day of redemption. The Christian does not receive eternal life by successfully producing spiritual fruit. Salvation is by grace through faith, not of works, according to Ephesians 2:8–9. Nevertheless, the saved person is commanded to walk in the Spirit and demonstrate the righteousness appropriate to his new position. Galatians 5:16 declares, “Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.” The fruit of the Spirit is therefore not the purchase price of salvation but the appropriate expression of a life already redeemed. The believer must not confuse spiritual growth with the eradication of his fallen flesh, for the flesh remains contrary to the Spirit. You cannot save yourself by producing spiritual fruit, and you cannot produce spiritual fruit by trusting the flesh that made salvation necessary in the first place. The Christian's standing rests upon Christ, while his fruitful walk depends upon the Spirit.

“is in all goodness”

The first quality Paul identifies is “goodness.” Notice the word “all.” The Spirit's fruit is not restricted to carefully selected demonstrations of goodness performed when someone important is watching. It should characterize the believer's conduct throughout the responsibilities of ordinary life. Romans 12:9 commands, “Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.” That is a useful description of genuine moral goodness because it includes both rejection of evil and attachment to what is right. A man may appear generous while knowingly conducting dishonest business, or speak kindly in public while behaving cruelly toward his family. Such contradictions should never be excused merely because he possesses a reputation for occasional charitable acts. The Holy Spirit does not produce goodness as a decorative addition to a life otherwise governed by wickedness. He directs the believer toward conduct consistent with God's revealed character. The fellow who gives an impressive donation on Sunday and steals from his customers on Monday has not balanced the moral accounts. God has never authorized dishonesty to finance an appearance of goodness.

Biblical goodness must also be distinguished from the claim that fallen human nature possesses sufficient righteousness to commend itself before God. Romans 3:12 declares concerning humanity's sinful condition, “there is none that doeth good, no, not one.” Yet Galatians 5:22 identifies goodness as fruit of the Spirit. The distinction concerns its source. The unregenerate person may perform outwardly beneficial actions, demonstrate natural affection, or behave responsibly in human society, but those accomplishments cannot produce justification before God. Titus 3:5 declares, “Not by works of righteousness which

we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us." The believer's goodness must therefore be understood as conduct arising from the new life received through Christ rather than an attempt to establish personal merit apart from Him. Ephesians 2:10 identifies believers as God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works. Good works are not the roots from which salvation grows; they are the fruit that ought to appear because God's saving grace has already established new life.

The practical expression of goodness reaches beyond religious gatherings into work, family, fellowship, and service. Galatians 6:10 declares, "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." The believer should demonstrate honesty when deception would be profitable, generosity when another person possesses a genuine need, and kindness when the flesh would prefer retaliation. Such goodness does not require approving false doctrine, ignoring wickedness, or surrendering necessary boundaries. Genuine goodness is governed by truth and righteousness, not by the desire to appear agreeable to everybody. A faithful correction can be good when it protects others from error, just as a generous gift can be wickedly motivated when given merely to purchase admiration. The Spirit's fruit concerns both outward conduct and the motives directing it. Goodness is not measured by how successfully a Christian persuades everybody that he is a pleasant fellow. It is measured by whether his conduct agrees with the righteousness of the God he serves.

"and righteousness"

The second quality is "righteousness," and here the Holy Ghost brings us to a distinction that must never be surrendered to the inventions of religious legalism. There is a righteousness received through faith in Jesus Christ, and there is righteous conduct expected of the person who has received that salvation. Romans 3:22 identifies "the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe." Second Corinthians 5:21 explains that believers are made the righteousness of God in Christ. That standing rests upon the finished work of the Saviour, not the Christian's daily ability to behave perfectly. Yet the very people who possess that standing are commanded to yield their members as instruments of righteousness unto God, according to Romans 6:13. The righteousness identified as fruit in Ephesians 5:9 concerns the practical expression of a life governed by the Spirit. The Christian does not practice righteousness to make Calvary effective. He practices righteousness because Calvary has already accomplished his redemption, and the new man should no longer conduct himself according to the corruption of the old.

Righteousness also requires more than outward religious appearances. Matthew 23:28 records Christ's rebuke of those who appeared righteous unto men while inwardly being

full of hypocrisy and iniquity. A person may possess conservative religious customs, impressive doctrinal vocabulary, and a reputation for strict separation while secretly practicing injustice, dishonesty, or cruelty. The Holy Spirit does not produce such hypocrisy. Philippians 1:11 speaks of believers “Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.” Notice again the source and purpose. Righteous conduct is by Jesus Christ and should bring glory to God, not become a monument to human superiority. The believer must deal honestly, judge fairly, reject corrupt practices, and obey Scripture even when obedience brings no public recognition. A man who demands righteousness from everybody else while excusing his own unrighteousness has not discovered a superior form of holiness. He has simply dressed the old man in religious clothing and taught him to point at other people.

“and truth”

The final quality is “truth,” and its placement completes a remarkable description of the Spirit's fruit. The Holy Spirit produces goodness that is righteous and righteousness that agrees with truth. John 16:13 identifies Him as “the Spirit of truth,” while John 17:17 records the Lord Jesus Christ praying, “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.” The connection between spiritual fruit and God's word must not be overlooked. A Christian cannot deliberately abandon the truth of Scripture while claiming that the Holy Spirit is directing him into superior spiritual understanding. Ephesians 4:25 has already commanded believers to put away lying and speak truth with their neighbours. Truth therefore concerns both sound doctrine and honest conduct. A man may possess accurate doctrinal statements while personally practicing deceit, or behave courteously while spreading a false gospel. Neither contradiction should be praised as spiritual fruit. The Holy Ghost does not produce a fruit called truth and then authorize the Christian to lie whenever honesty threatens his reputation.

Truth also provides the standard by which claims of spiritual fruit must be examined. Ephesians 5:10 immediately commands, “Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.” The Christian must not evaluate every religious experience by emotional intensity, outward success, or the impressive personality of the person describing it. Scripture supplies the authority. First Thessalonians 5:21 declares, “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.” A pleasant manner does not make false doctrine true, and forceful preaching does not excuse dishonest arguments. The believer should be willing to examine his teaching and his conduct against the written word, acknowledging error when correction is necessary. Walking in the light involves more than identifying darkness in somebody else's life. It requires personal submission to the truth that exposes our own failures. Goodness without righteousness becomes sentimental indulgence, righteousness without truth becomes

religious pretense, and truth divorced from godly conduct becomes a doctrine the mouth professes while the life contradicts it. The Spirit's fruit holds these qualities together.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 5:9 identifies goodness, righteousness, and truth as the fruit produced through the Holy Spirit. The verse explains the command to walk as children of light and prepares believers to prove what is acceptable unto the Lord. These qualities do not originate in fallen human nature or result merely from copying outward religious behavior. They arise from the Spirit's work in those who belong to Jesus Christ. Goodness concerns conduct that serves righteous purposes, righteousness concerns practical obedience consistent with God's revealed standards, and truth requires both doctrinal faithfulness and personal honesty. The Spirit produces more than a convincing religious appearance; He produces conduct that agrees with the new spiritual life received through Christ.

The passage also preserves the distinction between justification and sanctification. The believer receives God's righteousness through faith, while righteous conduct should subsequently characterize his walk. Spiritual fruit does not purchase salvation, guarantee freedom from every temptation, or make the flesh sinless. It demonstrates the practical government of the Spirit as the Christian follows the Lord. These qualities must also be tested by Scripture rather than judged according to personality, emotional excitement, or religious popularity. The central lesson is that children of light should demonstrate the Spirit's fruit through goodness, righteousness, and truth, not merely claim to possess spiritual life while continuing to live according to the darkness.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. The Walk Of The Children Of Light

Ephesians 5:8 — “but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light:”

1 Thessalonians 5:5 — “Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day:”

John 8:12 — “I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness”

Colossians 1:13 — “Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness”

2. Spiritual Fruit Comes From The Lord

Galatians 5:22 — “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,”

Galatians 5:16 — “Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.”

John 15:5 — “He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit:”

Philippians 1:11 — “Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ”

3. Goodness Must Characterize Believers

Romans 12:9 — “Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.”

Galatians 6:10 — “let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.”

Ephesians 2:10 — “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works”

Titus 3:8 — “that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works.”

4. Righteous Standing And Righteous Conduct

Romans 3:22 — “Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ”

2 Corinthians 5:21 — “that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

Romans 6:13 — “yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead”

1 John 3:7 — “he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.”

5. Truth Governs Doctrine And Conduct

John 17:17 — “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.”

John 16:13 — “Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth:”

Ephesians 4:25 — “Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour:”

1 John 1:6 — “If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie”

6. Religious Appearance Cannot Replace Spiritual Fruit

Matthew 23:28 — “ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.”

2 Timothy 3:5 — “Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof:”

Titus 1:16 — “They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him,”

Romans 10:3 — “going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.”

7. Spiritual Fruit Must Please The Lord

Ephesians 5:10 — “Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.”

1 Thessalonians 5:21 — “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.”

2 Corinthians 5:9 — “Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.”

1 Corinthians 10:31 — “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.”

5. Reflection

Ephesians 5:9 exposes one of the great weaknesses of modern religious Christianity: the assumption that spiritual fruit can be manufactured through outward imitation. A man may learn the vocabulary of holiness, adopt the mannerisms of an admired teacher, and become remarkably skilled at appearing spiritual before other people. Yet the apostle identifies the source of genuine fruit as the Holy Spirit, not human performance. Galatians 5 contrasts the works of the flesh with the fruit of the Spirit because these proceed from different sources. The believer must therefore walk in the Spirit rather than attempt to perfect his fallen nature through religious discipline alone. You can tie artificial fruit to every branch of a dead tree, but you have not given that tree life. Religious appearances cannot accomplish what only the Holy Ghost can produce.

The first quality, goodness, requires Christians to examine whether their ordinary conduct actually benefits others according to God's righteousness. A man may possess correct doctrine and still behave dishonestly in business, harshly toward his family, or selfishly toward those genuinely needing assistance. Such contradictions must not be excused because he occasionally performs an impressive religious service. Galatians 6:10 commands believers to do good as opportunities arise, especially toward the household of faith. Genuine goodness includes compassion, honesty, generosity, and the courage to refuse wickedness. It does not mean approving every request or pretending that serious wrongdoing requires no correction. Goodness is not the ability to convince an audience that you are a wonderful Christian. It is the practical expression of righteousness when nobody is distributing applause.

The second quality, righteousness, demands an equally important doctrinal distinction. No sinner receives justification by successfully producing righteous behavior, because salvation rests upon Jesus Christ and His finished sacrifice. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes grace through faith, while Second Corinthians 5:21 identifies the righteousness believers possess in Christ. Nevertheless, those already justified are commanded to live according to their new position. A saved man should not knowingly practice the dishonesty, immorality, and malicious conduct that Scripture condemns. His standing is secure

through Christ, but his daily decisions remain subject to correction. The blood of Jesus Christ is not waiting for human righteousness to finish redemption, and the Christian's security does not transform deliberate unrighteousness into acceptable conduct. The Spirit's fruit agrees with the righteousness of the Saviour.

The third quality, truth, exposes the danger of separating doctrinal accuracy from personal integrity. A Christian may possess an impressive knowledge of Scripture while exaggerating facts, repeating unverified accusations, or misleading others to protect his reputation. Yet John 17:17 declares that God's word is truth, and Ephesians 4:25 commands believers to put away lying. Sound doctrine should make a man more committed to honesty, not more skillful at defending deception. The believer should also examine every teaching against Scripture rather than accepting it because a popular personality delivers it confidently. The Holy Ghost has never authorized a lie to defend His truth. A preacher who needs dishonest arguments to preserve his doctrine should examine both the arguments and the conduct of the man presenting them. Truth must govern the message and the messenger.

These three qualities belong together because goodness without righteousness can become sentimental compromise, while claims of righteousness without truth may conceal hypocrisy. A person may describe himself as loving while encouraging conduct that Scripture condemns. Another may proclaim strict holiness while treating innocent people cruelly or accusing them without evidence. Neither behavior demonstrates the balanced fruit described in Ephesians 5:9. The Christian must refuse the temptation to select whichever biblical qualities flatter his personality while neglecting those that challenge him. The Spirit's work should affect the believer's whole manner of life. God has not commanded His children to become wonderfully pleasant while disregarding righteousness, nor wonderfully severe while disregarding truth. The fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth. All three must be present in the believer's practical walk.

Finally, Ephesians 5:9 directs every Christian toward the command that immediately follows it: “Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.” The question is not merely whether other people consider our conduct admirable or whether a religious institution approves our methods. The question is whether our lives agree with God's revealed word. That examination should reach our speech, relationships, business practices, ministry responsibilities, and private decisions. Where the flesh has been producing hypocrisy, the believer must acknowledge the wrong and return to obedience through the Spirit. Where genuine fruit is developing, gratitude should replace pride because its source is divine. Do not attempt to manufacture the fruit of the Spirit through religious theater, and do not mistake a respectable appearance for a holy walk. Follow the Lord, believe His word, walk

in His light, and let the Spirit produce what the flesh could never supply: goodness, righteousness, and truth.

Ephesians 5:10 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 5:10

"Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord."

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"Proving what is acceptable"

Paul continues his instructions concerning the children of light with a command that ought to put an end to the foolish notion that Christian living consists of following whatever happens to feel spiritual at the moment: "Proving what is acceptable." Notice that the apostle does not command believers to guess, presume, or invent their own standards of righteousness. He commands them to prove. The immediate context establishes the meaning. Ephesians 5:8 declares, "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light:" Verse 9 explains that the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth. Now verse 10 directs believers to examine what is acceptable unto the Lord. The word "proving" involves testing, examining, and establishing what meets the proper standard. First Thessalonians 5:21 supplies a closely related command: "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." There is a tremendous difference between testing something according to Scripture and accepting it merely because an impressive religious personality approves of it. The Christian who possesses a King James Bible but allows the opinions of the world to determine his conduct has purchased a measuring instrument and then decided to take every measurement with his thumb.

The command requires an established standard, and that standard is the revealed word of God. Second Timothy 2:15 commands the workman to study and rightly divide the word of truth. Acts 17:11 commends those who searched the Scriptures daily to determine whether the things preached were so. The principle is unmistakable: spiritual claims are not validated by their popularity, emotional intensity, or the confidence of the person presenting them. A teaching may be attractive and still be false. A practice may be common among professing Christians and still contradict the Lord's commandments. A religious movement may possess impressive buildings, considerable financial resources,

and thousands of enthusiastic supporters without those accomplishments establishing its doctrinal correctness. The believer must examine the actual teaching and the conduct being promoted. Nor should he assume that every religious tradition is necessarily wrong merely because somebody practiced it before he was born. The question is not whether a practice is fashionable or unfashionable, ancient or modern, popular or unpopular. The question is whether it can survive an honest examination in the light of God's word.

Proving what is acceptable also involves the believer's own conduct rather than merely the discovery of errors in other people. A Christian may become remarkably skilled at examining another congregation, criticizing another teacher, and identifying problems in somebody else's ministry while remaining strangely unwilling to examine his own motives. Yet Romans 12:2 commands, “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.” The same verse continues with the purpose “that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” Notice the connection between renewal of mind and proving God's will. A man cannot deliberately cultivate worldly reasoning and expect sound spiritual judgment to emerge automatically whenever he opens his mouth. He must bring his thoughts, decisions, and desires into submission to Scripture. This requires humility because a genuine examination may expose something he would rather defend. Proving what is acceptable is not a license to put everybody else on trial while declaring your own conduct permanently exempt from inspection. The light of God's word must shine upon the man holding the Bible as surely as upon the man he is correcting with it.

“unto the Lord”

The final expression establishes the Person whose approval matters: “unto the Lord.” That changes the entire character of Christian judgment. Paul does not say, Proving what is acceptable unto the world, the congregation, the religious establishment, or the people whose admiration you most desire. He directs believers toward the Lord Jesus Christ. Galatians 1:10 asks, “For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men?” Paul then explains that seeking to please men would contradict his responsibility as the servant of Christ. This does not mean Christians should deliberately become unpleasant, ignore legitimate counsel, or treat every disagreement as evidence of persecution. It means that human approval cannot replace divine authority. A believer may be praised for conduct that Scripture condemns, or criticized for obedience that Scripture requires. He must therefore determine whose judgment governs his decisions. The Christian who must obtain the world's permission before obeying the Lord has already allowed the world to occupy a position of authority it never possessed.

The word “acceptable” also requires a distinction between the believer's standing in Christ and the practical acceptability of his conduct. Ephesians 1:6 declares concerning God's grace, “wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.” That acceptance rests upon the saving work of Jesus Christ, not the Christian's ability to perform flawlessly. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes salvation by grace through faith, apart from works. Yet Second Corinthians 5:9 declares, “Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.” The apostle is discussing the Christian's aim to please the Lord in service, not teaching that the finished sacrifice of Christ must be supplemented by personal merit. The distinction must remain clear. The believer's position is secure through Christ, while his works and daily conduct remain subject to examination. First Corinthians 3:13 explains that every man's work shall be made manifest and tested. Being accepted in the Beloved does not mean every deed performed by the beloved believer is automatically acceptable. The Saviour's righteousness secures the man; the Lord's word judges the man's conduct.

Finally, proving what is acceptable unto the Lord requires obedience rather than merely the accumulation of religious information. Ephesians 5:17 commands, “Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.” Colossians 1:10 likewise instructs believers to walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. Notice that knowledge and conduct belong together. A man may correctly explain the doctrine of spiritual fruit while producing little evidence of goodness, righteousness, and truth in his relationships. Another may possess a remarkable collection of Bible notes while continually conducting his business through dishonesty. Such contradictions must be corrected rather than celebrated as evidence of superior theological understanding. The Lord desires truth in the believer's walk, not merely correctness in his vocabulary. A Christian does not prove what pleases the Lord by delivering an impressive explanation and then doing whatever the flesh demanded before the explanation began. The proof must eventually reach the feet, the hands, the tongue, and the ordinary decisions of life.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 5:10 establishes the Christian's responsibility to examine his conduct according to what is acceptable to the Lord rather than according to the changing opinions of human society. The command follows Paul's description of believers as children of light and his identification of the Spirit's fruit in goodness, righteousness, and truth. The believer must therefore exercise discernment through Scripture, refusing to confuse religious enthusiasm, personal preference, or worldly popularity with divine approval. Proving what is acceptable requires more than recognizing what is wrong with the world; it requires

examining our own thoughts, actions, teaching, and decisions according to the word of God.

The verse also preserves the distinction between salvation and Christian service. Believers are accepted in Christ through God's grace, but their daily conduct must be directed toward pleasing the Lord. Their acceptance in the Beloved is not purchased through good works, while their responsibility to perform acceptable works remains established by Scripture. Spiritual fruit must arise through walking in the Spirit rather than relying upon fleshly performance or outward religious appearances. The central lesson is that a saved person should continually test his conduct by the Scriptures, seek what pleases Jesus Christ, and refuse to let the world's approval replace the Lord's authority.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. The Immediate Context Of Proving What Is Acceptable

Ephesians 5:8 — “but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light:”

Ephesians 5:9 — “(For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;)”

Ephesians 5:10 — “Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.”

Ephesians 5:11 — “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.”

2. All Things Must Be Tested By Scripture

1 Thessalonians 5:21 — “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.”

Acts 17:11 — “and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.”

Romans 12:2 — “that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”

Psalm 119:105 — “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.”

3. God's Word Establishes The Standard Of Truth

2 Timothy 2:15 — “rightly dividing the word of truth.”

John 17:17 — “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.”

2 Timothy 3:16 — “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:”

Hebrews 4:12 — “For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword”

4. The Believer Must Understand The Lord's Will

Ephesians 5:17 — “Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.”

Colossians 1:10 — “That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work”

Philippians 1:10 — “That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ;”

1 Thessalonians 4:3 — “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication:”

5. The Holy Spirit Produces Acceptable Fruit

Galatians 5:16 — “Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.”

Galatians 5:22 — “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,”

Philippians 1:11 — “Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.”

John 15:5 — “for without me ye can do nothing.”

6. Salvation And Acceptable Service Must Be Distinguished

Ephesians 1:6 — “wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.”

Ephesians 2:8 — “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:”

2 Corinthians 5:9 — “Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.”

1 Corinthians 3:13 — “Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it”

7. God's Approval Must Govern The Christian's Walk

Galatians 1:10 — “for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.”

1 Corinthians 10:31 — “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.”

Romans 12:9 — “Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.”

2 Corinthians 5:10 — “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ;”

5. Reflection

Ephesians 5:10 confronts the dangerous assumption that a Christian can determine what pleases God simply by consulting his feelings, religious traditions, or the opinions of people he admires. Paul does not command believers to guess what is acceptable unto the Lord. He commands them to prove it. This requires the word of God to occupy its rightful place as the authority governing Christian judgment. A practice may be popular, emotionally satisfying, and warmly defended by respectable religious personalities while remaining contrary to Scripture. Conversely, an unpopular truth does not become false merely because the surrounding world refuses to accept it. The man who measures righteousness by public approval has exchanged the authority of Almighty God for an opinion poll. The Christian must learn to examine what he believes and how he lives according to the Scriptures.

This command also exposes the difference between spiritual discernment and religious faultfinding. Some believers become remarkably enthusiastic about proving that everyone else is wrong while demonstrating little interest in examining their own conduct. They can identify errors in another congregation, criticize another teacher's interpretation, and deliver lengthy explanations concerning another person's failures. Yet when Scripture exposes dishonesty, pride, bitterness, or hypocrisy in their own lives, the enthusiasm for examination suddenly disappears. Romans 12:2 connects proving God's will with the renewing of the mind, establishing a responsibility that begins within the believer himself. The Christian must therefore be willing to receive correction as well as deliver it. A man who believes the Bible should be equally willing to let the Bible correct him. Otherwise, his supposed discernment may amount to little more than a religious excuse for inspecting everybody else's conscience while neglecting his own.

The expression “what is acceptable” must also be distinguished from the religious attempt to purchase salvation through good behavior. Ephesians 1:6 declares that believers have been made accepted in the Beloved, while Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes salvation by grace through faith. The Christian's standing before God rests upon the finished sacrifice of Jesus Christ rather than the successful completion of a lifetime of acceptable works. Nevertheless, his conduct remains important to the Lord. Second Corinthians 5:9 expresses the apostle's desire to be accepted of Christ in his service, and the following verse identifies the judgment seat where Christian works will be examined. The blood of Jesus Christ secures the believer's redemption, but that glorious security does not automatically make every decision he takes a good decision. Salvation is a gift; faithful service remains a responsibility.

The immediate context also demonstrates that acceptable conduct must arise from walking in the Spirit. Ephesians 5:9 identifies the Spirit's fruit in goodness, righteousness, and truth. These qualities cannot be produced through religious performance alone. A man may learn to speak politely while privately cultivating malice, or imitate the outward behavior of a godly Christian while remaining governed by selfish motives. Such performances may impress an audience, but outward imitation does not replace genuine spiritual fruit. Galatians 5:16 commands believers to walk in the Spirit rather than fulfill the lust of the flesh. This requires submission to the Lord and His revealed word, not merely the adoption of another person's mannerisms. A Christian can learn to sound like a mature believer without becoming mature. The Holy Spirit produces fruit through a life submitted to God, not through an acting performance designed to impress religious spectators.

The command further requires believers to examine the influences they willingly accept. Ephesians 5:11 immediately warns against fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, demonstrating that proving what pleases the Lord involves rejecting what contradicts His righteousness. A Christian should examine his business practices, financial arrangements, personal relationships, entertainment, and public testimony according to Scripture. Nevertheless, this responsibility must not become an excuse for inventing endless man-made regulations or condemning people through guilt by association. The Bible distinguishes ordinary contact with unbelievers from deliberate participation in their sins. It also distinguishes legitimate personal choices from matters God has expressly forbidden. Biblical discernment is not measured by how many additional rules a man can manufacture. It is measured by whether he understands and obeys the commandments God has actually given. The written word remains the standard.

Finally, Ephesians 5:10 should direct every Christian toward the Person whose approval matters most. The believer does not belong to the world, and he should not spend his earthly life allowing worldly opinion to determine his convictions. Neither should he become enslaved to the approval of a religious personality, congregation, or institution. He belongs to Jesus Christ, who purchased him through His blood and sealed him with the Holy Spirit unto the day of redemption. The Lord's approval should therefore govern his motives, speech, decisions, and service. This requires humility when correction is necessary, courage when obedience becomes unpopular, and faithfulness when nobody else notices what is being done. Do not mistake popularity for righteousness, religious excitement for spiritual fruit, or outward performance for genuine obedience. Open the Scriptures, examine the evidence, renew your mind, and walk in the Spirit. You have been made accepted in the Beloved; now make it your business to live acceptably before the Lord. “Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.”

Ephesians 5:11 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 5:11

"And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them."

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"And have no fellowship"

Paul continues his instructions concerning the children of light with a command that leaves very little room for the fashionable religious practice of making peace with whatever the world happens to approve: "And have no fellowship." Notice the connection with Ephesians 5:7, where believers are commanded, "Be not ye therefore partakers with them." Verse 8 establishes the reason: Christians were formerly darkness but are now light in the Lord. Verse 9 identifies the fruit of the Spirit in goodness, righteousness, and truth, while verse 10 commands believers to prove what is acceptable unto the Lord. Now Paul establishes the responsibility that follows such discernment. The Christian must not knowingly join himself to practices that contradict the righteousness of God. The word "fellowship" involves participation, association in a common undertaking, or sharing in something. Paul is not merely discussing physical proximity. He is dealing with cooperation in wickedness. A Christian does not become guilty of another man's sin merely by standing beside him, but he certainly becomes responsible for his own conduct when he begins helping that man accomplish what God has forbidden.

This distinction is essential because some religious people have confused biblical separation with an almost complete withdrawal from unbelieving society. First Corinthians 5:9–10 demonstrates that Paul never intended Christians to avoid every person practicing wickedness in the world, explaining that such avoidance would require believers to go out of the world. The Lord Jesus Christ dealt with publicans and sinners during His earthly ministry without approving their sins. The apostle Paul preached in the midst of idolatrous Athens without joining the Athenians in their idol worship. Ordinary employment, family relationships, business transactions, and opportunities for witnessing do not automatically constitute sinful fellowship. The question is whether the believer's involvement requires participation in wrongdoing. The Bible commands separation from wickedness, not a religious quarantine that makes it impossible for a lost man to encounter somebody who knows the gospel. The Christian must remain available to sinners while refusing the sins from which Christ has delivered him.

Nevertheless, the command must not be weakened until fellowship means practically nothing. A person may refrain from committing a particular offense while knowingly financing, promoting, defending, or facilitating it. Another may publicly condemn dishonest practices while privately profiting from their continuation. First Timothy 5:22 warns, “neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure.” Second Corinthians 6:14 likewise commands, “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.” The surrounding passage contrasts righteousness with unrighteousness and light with darkness. These instructions require Christians to examine the actual nature of their partnerships rather than invent guilt through mere acquaintance. A believer cannot remain faithful by declaring private opposition to conduct he is publicly helping accomplish. There is little spiritual courage in condemning wickedness from the pulpit while collecting a commission from it during the week. Fellowship with darkness cannot be justified by calling the arrangement practical, profitable, or necessary for maintaining influence.

“with the unfruitful works of darkness”

The second expression identifies the particular object of forbidden fellowship: “the unfruitful works of darkness.” Notice that Paul directs attention toward the works. This is not a command to despise every person who remains unsaved. It is a warning against participation in conduct belonging to spiritual darkness. Ephesians 5:3–6 has already identified fornication, uncleanness, covetousness, corrupt communication, and the deceptive arguments used to excuse such sins. Now these practices are described as unfruitful. The contrast with verse 9 is deliberate: “For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth.” Spiritual fruit belongs to the Spirit's government; unfruitful works belong to darkness. The flesh may produce activity, excitement, wealth, reputation, or temporary pleasure, but those things do not establish fruit acceptable to God. Romans 6:21 asks, “What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?” There is the question the sinner seldom considers while the flesh is advertising its merchandise. The works of darkness can keep a man exceedingly busy while producing absolutely nothing worthy of the Lord's approval.

The word “unfruitful” also exposes the difference between temporary results and eternal value. A dishonest business arrangement may produce money. A false teacher may gather an impressive following. An immoral enterprise may achieve widespread popularity. None of those accomplishments proves that God approves of what is being done. Matthew 7:20 declares, “Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.” The immediate passage concerns recognizing false prophets, and its application must remain consistent with that context. Nevertheless, Scripture repeatedly commands believers to examine the character and consequences of what is produced. A Christian must distinguish numerical success from

spiritual fruitfulness. Philippians 1:11 identifies the fruits of righteousness as being “by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.” The standard is not simply whether an activity accomplishes its earthly objectives, but whether it agrees with God's righteousness. The devil does not become an agricultural success because he manages to grow a large field of poisonous weeds. Quantity cannot transform corruption into fruit acceptable to the Lord.

The expression “darkness” returns the reader to the contrast established in verse 8. The Ephesians formerly were darkness, but now they are light in the Lord. Their changed spiritual position creates a responsibility to reject their former conduct. Colossians 1:13 declares that God “hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.” This deliverance is accomplished through salvation, not purchased through successful moral reform. Nevertheless, the redeemed must not deliberately return to the practices that characterized their former life. Romans 13:12 commands believers to cast off the works of darkness and put on the armour of light. The Christian still possesses mortal flesh capable of temptation, but he is not obligated to obey its sinful demands. Christ did not deliver His people from darkness so they could spend their Christian lives negotiating how much darkness they might retain without losing their religious reputation. Their standing in Christ is secure, while their walk must increasingly agree with the light they possess.

“but rather reprove them”

The final expression establishes something more demanding than private separation: “but rather reprove them.” Notice the contrast. Paul does not merely command Christians to avoid the works of darkness while remaining permanently silent concerning their character. He commands reproof. To reprove is to expose wrongdoing, bring error to light, or correct what is contrary to truth. Second Timothy 4:2 commands ministers to “reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.” The apostle therefore expects the word of God to confront what contradicts it. This does not give every believer unlimited permission to become insulting, reckless, or personally vindictive. Reproof must be based upon truth rather than suspicion, and it must serve righteousness rather than the flesh's appetite for confrontation. The Christian who refuses every necessary correction because somebody might become uncomfortable has confused peace with surrender. But the Christian who enjoys humiliating people has confused biblical reproof with personal revenge.

The immediate context explains how this reproof operates. Ephesians 5:13 declares, “But all things that are reproved are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light.” Light exposes what darkness conceals. The Christian's responsibility is therefore to bring the truth of God's word to bear upon error and sinful conduct. This may

involve correcting false doctrine, warning against known immorality, refusing dishonest practices, or confronting wrongdoing through the proper channels. Yet the following verse in the immediate passage, Ephesians 5:12, establishes an important restraint: “For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret.” Paul commands reproof without encouraging unnecessary descriptions of shameful practices. A preacher does not need to provide a detailed exhibition of wickedness to establish that wickedness is sinful. The purpose of biblical light is to expose darkness, not to entertain an audience with a guided tour through every filthy thing discovered inside it. Plain condemnation and sensational description are not the same thing.

The command also requires responsible judgment concerning the manner and audience of correction. Galatians 6:1 instructs spiritual believers to restore someone overtaken in a fault “in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.” First Timothy 5:19 requires proper witnesses before receiving an accusation against an elder, demonstrating that serious allegations must not be treated as proven merely because somebody repeats them confidently. Different circumstances may require private confrontation, public doctrinal correction, church discipline, or lawful intervention where wrongdoing threatens others. Biblical reproof must not become a pretext for gossip, nor may appeals to privacy be used to conceal serious harm. The believer should seek truth, righteousness, appropriate accountability, and the protection of those affected. A Christian who exposes sin through deliberate falsehood has not made the truth stronger. He has simply committed another sin while pretending to correct the first. Faithful reproof requires courage, evidence, wisdom, and submission to the Scriptures.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 5:11 establishes two connected responsibilities for the children of light: refuse fellowship with the works of darkness and actively reprove those works according to Scripture. Separation is not merely a matter of external religious appearance or avoiding every unbeliever. It concerns deliberate participation in conduct that contradicts God's revealed righteousness. The works of darkness are identified as unfruitful because their apparent earthly accomplishments cannot produce the spiritual fruit acceptable to God. These works stand in direct contrast with the fruit of the Spirit described in Ephesians 5:9. Christians are therefore commanded to reject sinful participation while maintaining a faithful witness to those who need the gospel.

The command to reprove also establishes that biblical separation involves more than silently disapproving of wickedness. The believer must be willing to confront genuine error when circumstances require it, using the light of Scripture rather than personal hostility. Yet reproof must remain governed by truthfulness, appropriate judgment, and the restraint

established in Ephesians 5:12 concerning shameful details. Salvation is received through faith in Jesus Christ, while this responsibility belongs to the redeemed person's daily walk. The central lesson is that God's children must neither participate in darkness nor conceal its wickedness through cowardice, but should expose error faithfully while walking in the light themselves.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. The Immediate Contrast Between Light And Darkness

Ephesians 5:7 — “Be not ye therefore partakers with them.”

Ephesians 5:8 — “but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light:”

Ephesians 5:9 — “(For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;)”

Ephesians 5:11 — “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.”

2. Separation From Sinful Fellowship

2 Corinthians 6:14 — “for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?”

1 Timothy 5:22 — “neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure.”

1 Corinthians 10:21 — “Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils:”

Romans 13:12 — “let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.”

3. The Unfruitful Works Of Darkness

Romans 6:21 — “What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?”

Galatians 5:19 — “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,”

Colossians 3:5 — “fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:”

Romans 8:8 — “So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.”

4. The Spirit Produces Righteous Fruit

Galatians 5:22 — “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,”

Philippians 1:11 — “Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ”

Colossians 1:10 — “being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;”

John 15:5 — “He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit:”

5. Biblical Reproof Exposes Wrongdoing

2 Timothy 4:2 — “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.”

Titus 1:13 — “Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith;”

Ephesians 5:13 — “But all things that are reproved are made manifest by the light:”

Proverbs 27:5 — “Open rebuke is better than secret love.”

6. Correction Must Be Truthful And Disciplined

Galatians 6:1 — “restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.”

Ephesians 4:15 — “But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:”

1 Timothy 5:19 — “Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses.”

Ephesians 5:12 — “For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret.”

7. The Redeemed Must Walk As Children Of Light

Colossians 1:13 — “Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:”

Ephesians 2:8 — “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:”

1 Thessalonians 5:5 — “Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day:”

Philippians 2:15 — “among whom ye shine as lights in the world;”

5. Reflection

Ephesians 5:11 exposes the weakness of a Christianity that wants the benefits of redemption without the responsibilities of holiness. Paul does not command believers to

admire the light while arranging their lives around the works of darkness. He commands them to have no fellowship with those works and to reprove them. That instruction follows the declaration that Christians are now light in the Lord, demonstrating that spiritual position must govern practical conduct. The believer cannot reasonably proclaim God's righteousness while knowingly assisting conduct Scripture condemns. A man who spends Sunday denouncing wickedness and Monday helping it prosper has not discovered a superior method of evangelism. He has discovered how to make compromise look profitable. The Christian must examine whether his actual conduct agrees with his profession.

The command against fellowship must also be properly distinguished from the ordinary contact required to reach unbelievers. First Corinthians 5 explains that believers cannot avoid every immoral person in the world without departing from society altogether. The Lord Jesus Christ dealt with sinners during His earthly ministry without approving their wrongdoing. Likewise, Christians may work alongside unbelievers, maintain family relationships, and conduct honest business without becoming responsible for every sin committed by the people around them. The issue arises when the believer knowingly joins, promotes, or assists the wickedness itself. Scripture requires discernment rather than imaginary guilt through association. Biblical separation is not a command to become a stranger to the lost. It is a command to remain faithful to the Lord while refusing to become a partner in their sin. Contact and complicity are different matters.

The expression “unfruitful works of darkness” also requires Christians to examine the standards by which they measure success. The world frequently judges an enterprise according to popularity, profit, influence, or the satisfaction it provides. Yet spiritual fruitfulness must be evaluated according to God's word. A dishonest undertaking may produce considerable wealth without producing righteousness. A religious movement may attract enormous crowds while teaching error. A person may obtain widespread admiration while privately cultivating immorality and deceit. None of those accomplishments establishes the Lord's approval. Ephesians 5:9 identifies the fruit of the Spirit in goodness, righteousness, and truth. The Christian who measures spiritual success merely by outward results has forgotten that poisonous trees can produce abundant crops. Fruitfulness acceptable to God must agree with His righteousness.

The command to reprove is equally important because some believers have confused kindness with silence concerning every serious wrong. Second Timothy 4:2 commands reproof, rebuke, and exhortation with longsuffering and doctrine. A faithful Christian must sometimes identify false teaching, confront dishonest conduct, or warn others concerning genuine danger. Nevertheless, the authority belongs to Scripture rather than the speaker's

anger. Reproof must be truthful, proportionate, and directed toward a righteous purpose. It must not become an excuse for personal humiliation or an opportunity to settle old grievances. The preacher who refuses to correct error because somebody may become uncomfortable has misunderstood his responsibility, but the preacher who enjoys cruelty has confused correction with revenge. Biblical courage must remain governed by biblical character.

The following verse establishes a necessary restraint concerning the exposure of shameful conduct. Ephesians 5:12 warns that certain deeds committed in secret are shameful even to speak about. The Christian therefore does not need to describe every filthy detail of wickedness merely to prove that wickedness exists. There is a difference between exposing a sinful practice and entertaining an audience with sensational descriptions of it. Where serious offenses require investigation or protection, necessary facts should be communicated to appropriate people without turning suffering into public spectacle. The same distinction applies to doctrinal correction, where misrepresenting an opponent's words cannot establish the truth of one's own position. Light exposes darkness by revealing what is true, not by manufacturing accusations or indulging curiosity concerning every shameful detail. The Christian must be willing to confront wrongdoing without becoming another source of corruption.

Finally, Ephesians 5:11 should direct every believer toward both personal examination and faithful service. Salvation is by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, and the redeemed are sealed with the Holy Spirit unto the day of redemption. Those promises do not make deliberate participation in wickedness harmless, nor do they eliminate the responsibility to speak truth when correction is required. The believer must reject sinful partnerships, test his conduct by Scripture, and refuse the flesh's desire for approval at the expense of obedience. He must also remember that the people practicing darkness need the gospel rather than religious contempt. Do not join the works of darkness, and do not become so afraid of confrontation that you refuse to expose them when righteousness requires it. But neither should you make the exposure of sin an excuse for pride, gossip, or cruelty. Walk in the light, speak the truth, reprove what God condemns, and remember that the purpose of shining is not to glorify the lamp but to make the truth visible.

Ephesians 5:12 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 5:12

“For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret.”

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

“For it is a shame”

Paul begins this verse with a statement that ought to silence a considerable amount of the filthy entertainment masquerading as Christian preaching: “For it is a shame.” Notice the opening word “For.” It connects the statement directly to Ephesians 5:11, where believers are commanded, “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.” The apostle has commanded Christians to expose wickedness, but he immediately establishes a restraint concerning the manner in which wickedness should be discussed. Reproving sin does not require turning the pulpit into an exhibition hall for every depraved practice the flesh has invented. There are things that ought to produce moral shame rather than curiosity or amusement. The Christian who walks in the light must recognize that not everything suitable for private investigation is suitable for public description. God commanded His children to reprove the works of darkness, not to make the congregation sit through a detailed guided tour of the sewer.

The word “shame” is important because Scripture recognizes a proper moral response to wickedness. Jeremiah 6:15 asks concerning those who committed abomination, “Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush.” That rebuke was originally directed toward Judah and must be understood within its historical setting, but it demonstrates the seriousness of becoming incapable of recognizing moral disgrace. A society may become so accustomed to corruption that conduct once recognized as shameful is openly celebrated. Believers should not allow constant exposure to wickedness to destroy their own discernment. Romans 6:21 asks, “What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death.” Salvation should change how a person regards his former sins. When a redeemed man begins finding entertainment in the wickedness from which Christ delivered him, something has gone wrong with his understanding of holiness.

Nevertheless, shame must not be confused with the false idea that every uncomfortable subject is forbidden or that a person injured by wickedness should be ashamed to seek help. Paul himself identifies fornication, uncleanness, covetousness, and other sins in the surrounding passage. The Bible records serious acts of human corruption because the truth sometimes requires their exposure. What Scripture condemns is not the honest identification of wrongdoing, but the corrupt conduct itself and the improper handling of shameful matters. Ephesians 4:29 requires speech that is good for edifying and ministers grace to hearers. That standard governs the Christian's treatment of difficult subjects. A

faithful preacher can condemn immorality without offering an unnecessary collection of graphic descriptions. A responsible Christian can report serious wrongdoing without turning another person's suffering into public entertainment. The shame belongs to the wicked deed, not to the innocent person who needs the truth brought into the light.

“even to speak of those things”

The next expression gives the warning its extraordinary force: “even to speak of those things.” The apostle does not merely forbid participation in wickedness; he recognizes that certain forms of discussion can themselves become inappropriate. A man may condemn a particular sin while describing it with such unnecessary detail that his listeners receive more instruction in wickedness than warning against it. Another may claim that he is exposing corruption while satisfying his own appetite for shocking material. The flesh enjoys sensationalism, particularly when it can disguise curiosity beneath religious indignation. Romans 16:19 declares, “I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil.” There is a sound principle for Christian instruction. Believers should understand enough about wickedness to recognize and reject it without becoming fascinated by every method through which it operates. You do not have to study every variety of poison by drinking a sample. Sometimes it is sufficient to know that the bottle contains poison and should not be swallowed.

This instruction is particularly relevant to public preaching and teaching. Second Timothy 4:2 commands ministers to reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. The authority for that work rests upon the Scriptures rather than the preacher's ability to shock an audience. There are occasions when a necessary warning requires plain speech concerning a serious offense, but plainness and needless explicitness are not identical. A minister should consider the audience, the purpose of the instruction, and the amount of information necessary to establish the biblical truth. The presence of children, vulnerable listeners, or individuals affected by wrongdoing may require particular care. The Bible itself demonstrates considerable directness without making every sordid detail the center of attention. A preacher who cannot condemn fornication without delivering an elaborate description of fornication has confused preaching against sin with advertising its particulars. The Holy Ghost needs no assistance from the flesh's imagination.

The command also reaches into ordinary conversation, gossip, and the repeated circulation of scandalous information. Proverbs 11:13 declares, “A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter.” That principle does not mean serious offenses should be concealed from those responsible for investigating them. It means that the Christian should distinguish necessary disclosure from the desire to satisfy curiosity or damage another person's reputation. A believer may hear of a genuine

scandal and immediately begin repeating every unpleasant detail to people who possess neither responsibility nor ability to address the matter. Eventually, the original offense becomes secondary to the entertainment provided by discussing it. Ephesians 5:12 stands against such conduct. The Christian who circulates every filthy detail under the excuse of exposing wickedness may discover that his tongue has become one of wickedness's most dependable distribution services.

“which are done of them in secret”

The final expression identifies the deeds under consideration: “which are done of them in secret.” The word “them” refers back to those associated with the works of darkness, particularly the children of disobedience identified in Ephesians 5:6. Paul is not teaching that every private action is wicked. Prayer, charity, and personal devotion may occur privately and remain entirely righteous. The issue is sinful conduct deliberately carried on beyond ordinary public observation. John 3:20 declares, “For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.” Darkness provides concealment for actions that cannot withstand honest examination. The world may publicly praise virtue while privately pursuing vice, and a religious hypocrite may use the appearance of holiness to conceal conduct directly contrary to his profession. The darkness does not make the deed wicked; the wickedness of the deed makes darkness an attractive place to hide it.

The expression also establishes that secrecy does not remove accountability before God. Psalm 90:8 declares, “Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance.” Ecclesiastes 12:14 adds, “For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.” These passages reveal the folly of treating concealment from human observation as evidence that an offense has escaped divine notice. A man may successfully hide dishonest practices from his employer, immoral conduct from his family, or corrupt motives from the congregation that admires him. Yet Almighty God possesses no shortage of information concerning human conduct. Nor does Scripture promise that every concealed evil will necessarily become public knowledge during the offender's earthly lifetime. God's final judgment is sufficient to establish accountability without inventing promises about particular circumstances. A locked door may conceal wickedness from the neighbors, but it has never prevented Almighty God from knowing what is happening behind it.

Finally, verse 12 must be read together with verse 13, which declares, “But all things that are reproved are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light.” These statements are complementary rather than contradictory. Verse 11 commands reproof; verse 12 restrains inappropriate discussion; verse 13 identifies the revealing work

of light. The Christian must expose wrongdoing where righteousness requires it without unnecessarily reproducing its shameful particulars. When misconduct involves exploitation, abuse, fraud, or danger to others, responsible disclosure may require factual detail to those equipped to investigate, correct, or protect. That is different from making such details the subject of needless public fascination. Spiritual leaders must not employ this passage to silence legitimate complaints or protect influential offenders. The Lord commanded light to expose darkness, not to provide darkness with a religious curtain behind which it could continue operating. The truth must be told where it is needed, while the tongue remains governed by holiness.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 5:12 establishes a necessary distinction between exposing wickedness and unnecessarily describing wickedness. The verse follows Paul's command to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness but rather reprove them. Therefore, the instruction cannot properly be interpreted as a universal prohibition against identifying sin or reporting wrongdoing. It concerns the shameful character of the deeds practiced in darkness and the responsibility of believers to exercise discretion when discussing them. The Christian must not allow legitimate biblical correction to become an excuse for vulgar descriptions, sensationalism, gossip, or the satisfaction of corrupt curiosity.

The verse also emphasizes the secrecy associated with evil conduct and the certainty of God's knowledge concerning what human beings attempt to conceal. Yet secrecy itself is not sinful, and discretion must never be confused with concealing misconduct that requires responsible investigation or protection. The believer must distinguish public teaching from confidential counsel, factual reporting from malicious gossip, and necessary disclosure from unnecessary exposure. The central lesson is that children of light must reprove the works of darkness without becoming fascinated by their shameful details or using biblical restraint as an excuse to conceal genuine wickedness.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. The Immediate Context Of Light And Darkness

Ephesians 5:8 — “but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light:”
Ephesians 5:9 — “(For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;)”
Ephesians 5:11 — “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.”
Ephesians 5:13 — “But all things that are reproved are made manifest by the light:”

2. Sin Produces Shame Before God

Romans 6:21 — “What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?”
Jeremiah 6:15 — “Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed”
1 Peter 4:3 — “when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries:”
Colossians 3:8 — “filthy communication out of your mouth.”

3. Christian Speech Must Remain Pure

Ephesians 4:29 — “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth”
Colossians 4:6 — “Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt”
2 Timothy 2:16 — “But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness.”
Romans 16:19 — “I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil.”

4. The Wicked Seek The Cover Of Darkness

John 3:19 — “and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.”
John 3:20 — “For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light”
Psalm 90:8 — “our secret sins in the light of thy countenance.”
Ecclesiastes 12:14 — “For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing”

5. Light Must Reprove The Works Of Darkness

Ephesians 5:11 — “but rather reprove them.”
Ephesians 5:13 — “for whatsoever doth make manifest is light.”
2 Timothy 4:2 — “reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.”
Proverbs 27:5 — “Open rebuke is better than secret love.”

6. Correction Must Be Responsible And Truthful

Galatians 6:1 — “restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.”
1 Timothy 5:19 — “Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses.”
Proverbs 18:13 — “He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.”
Proverbs 11:13 — “A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter.”

7. The Redeemed Must Guard Their Conduct And Thoughts

Ephesians 2:8 — “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:”
Ephesians 1:13 — “after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,”
Philippians 4:8 — “whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure”
1 Thessalonians 5:22 — “Abstain from all appearance of evil.”

5. Reflection

Ephesians 5:12 confronts a dangerous contradiction among Christians who claim to oppose wickedness while finding extraordinary entertainment in discussing its most shameful details. Paul has already commanded believers to reprove the unfruitful works of darkness, but he immediately reminds them that certain deeds are shameful even to speak about. The lesson is not that wickedness should escape correction. It is that exposing sin and indulging curiosity about sin are different activities. A preacher can identify fornication, fraud, and moral corruption without turning the message into a detailed description of depravity. A sermon that leaves the congregation better acquainted with the methods of wickedness than with the commandments of God has accomplished something considerably different from biblical edification. The Christian should exercise judgment over what is necessary to say.

The responsibility becomes particularly serious in public preaching and teaching. Scripture commands ministers to reprove, rebuke, and exhort with longsuffering and doctrine. Such correction may require direct language because the truth of God must not be concealed behind vague religious expressions. Nevertheless, unnecessary graphic descriptions can distract from the doctrine being taught and encourage the very curiosity that holiness should restrain. Some matters require careful discussion within an appropriate setting rather than a public description before an entire congregation. The preacher should consider his audience and the spiritual purpose of the information being presented. Boldness does not require vulgarity, and plain preaching does not require a man to describe every filthy detail his imagination can produce. God's word provides sufficient authority without sensational assistance.

The same principle applies to private conversation, public accusations, and the circulation of scandalous information. A Christian may hear about another person's wrongdoing and immediately begin repeating the account to people who possess no responsibility for addressing it. Soon the original sin becomes the subject of continuous speculation, embellished details, and malicious commentary. Proverbs warns concerning talebearers because destructive information can divide relationships and damage innocent reputations. Believers must distinguish verified facts from assumptions and necessary

disclosure from the desire to entertain an audience. Where serious wrongdoing requires investigation, proper authorities should receive the information necessary to address it. The duty to expose wickedness does not establish a right to turn another person's sin or suffering into a public spectacle. Truthfulness remains essential.

Nevertheless, Ephesians 5:12 must never become an excuse for protecting corrupt religious leaders or silencing people who have suffered genuine harm. The following verse declares that things reproved are made manifest by the light. Concealing serious wrongdoing because public knowledge might embarrass an institution would therefore contradict the purpose of the passage. A person reporting abuse, exploitation, or fraud should not be accused of violating Scripture merely because the facts are shameful. The disgrace belongs to the wrongdoing, not to the responsible disclosure necessary for correction. Proper investigations may require information that would be inappropriate as casual conversation or public entertainment. A church that refuses to expose genuine corruption because the details are unpleasant has mistaken darkness for discretion. Biblical holiness requires both truthful accountability and restraint.

The reference to deeds committed in secret also reminds believers that no earthly arrangement can conceal sin from Almighty God. A man may maintain an impressive religious reputation while privately practicing conduct that directly contradicts his profession. Another may believe that the absence of immediate consequences establishes that his behavior is acceptable. Yet Ecclesiastes 12:14 declares that God will bring every work into judgment, including secret things. The believer should therefore examine his own conduct before becoming consumed with exposing everyone else's failures. Salvation rests upon the finished work of Jesus Christ, but eternal security does not make secret disobedience righteous. The Christian who spends his life discussing the hidden sins of other people while carefully protecting his own has misunderstood the light he claims to walk in. God's word must govern both.

Finally, Ephesians 5:12 should produce a disciplined approach to truth, holiness, and Christian communication. The believer must refuse participation in the works of darkness while remaining willing to reprove them when righteousness requires it. He must know the difference between honest correction and malicious gossip, between necessary evidence and unnecessary detail, and between discretion and dishonest concealment. He should also remember that the purpose of spiritual light is to make truth visible rather than to glorify the person delivering the correction. The Holy Spirit produces goodness, righteousness, and truth, and those qualities should govern the Christian's speech. Do not make peace with darkness, but do not become fascinated with its corruption. Reprove what God condemns, protect those who need protection, speak what righteousness

requires, and refuse to turn shameful wickedness into entertainment. The light of God's word is sufficient to expose sin without becoming a participant in its filth.

Ephesians 5:13 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 5:13

"But all things that are reproved are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light."

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"But all things that are reproved are made manifest by the light"

Paul continues his instructions concerning the children of light with a statement that exposes one of the greatest enemies of religious hypocrisy: the revealing power of God's light. Notice the opening word "But." It connects this verse directly to Ephesians 5:11–12, where believers are commanded to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness but rather reprove them, while being warned that certain shameful deeds are inappropriate even to describe in unnecessary detail. Now the apostle explains what happens when those works are brought into the light: they are made manifest. The expression does not describe a mysterious religious ceremony or some extraordinary experience reserved for a select group of believers. It concerns the exposure of what darkness conceals. John 3:20 declares, "For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved." There stands the connection between wickedness, concealment, and exposure. The flesh enjoys darkness because darkness allows appearances to be maintained while conduct remains hidden. A man who has built his reputation upon deception will seldom welcome the arrival of truth, because truth has a habit of opening doors that hypocrisy would prefer to keep permanently locked.

The expression "all things that are reproved" establishes the effectiveness of light as the means of exposure. Paul is not claiming that every accusation constitutes reproof or that everything publicly criticized has therefore been proved sinful. The passage concerns works of darkness exposed by genuine light, not allegations manufactured through suspicion. The distinction is essential. A false accusation may become widely circulated without becoming true. A religious leader may be publicly embarrassed without having

committed the offense attributed to him. Conversely, actual wickedness may remain concealed from human observation while remaining fully known to God. The light exposes reality; it does not manufacture reality. Second Timothy 3:16 declares that Scripture is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness. Consequently, biblical reproof must be grounded in truth rather than personal hostility or the appetite for scandal. The Holy Ghost did not command believers to expose wickedness so they could invent wickedness whenever a convenient enemy appeared. Reproof without truth is not spiritual courage; it is another form of corruption demanding correction itself.

The expression “are made manifest” identifies the result of genuine exposure. What was concealed becomes evident, and conduct previously hidden behind appearances may be recognized for what it is. This principle reaches into false doctrine, private hypocrisy, dishonest dealings, and other works Paul has already condemned. A teacher may conceal error beneath impressive religious vocabulary until the Scriptures expose the contradiction. A dishonest man may preserve his reputation through carefully arranged explanations until established facts reveal what actually occurred. A professing Christian may publicly praise righteousness while privately defending conduct that Scripture condemns. Yet the purpose of exposure must not be confused with the pleasure of humiliation. Ephesians 5:12 has already warned against unnecessary discussion of shameful details, while Ephesians 4:15 commands speaking the truth in love. Proper correction seeks righteousness, accountability, and protection where necessary rather than mere spectacle. Light was not given so that Christians could become professional collectors of other people's scandals. It was given so that darkness might be exposed and the truth made known. The difference is considerable, especially when the person holding the lamp enjoys the attention more than the illumination.

“for whatsoever doth make manifest is light”

The second expression explains why the works of darkness become visible when reproved: “for whatsoever doth make manifest is light.” Notice the precise wording. Paul does not merely announce that everything exposed is automatically transformed into something righteous. He identifies the revealing principle as light. In other words, the exposing of darkness requires something capable of making its true character known. A lamp does not create the furniture inside a darkened room when someone turns it on. The furniture was already there. The light reveals what had remained concealed. Likewise, God's word does not manufacture wickedness by exposing it; the word reveals wickedness according to the righteousness God has established. Psalm 119:105 declares, “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.” John 17:17 likewise identifies God's word as truth. These passages establish the proper authority for spiritual examination. The Bible does not need

to invent a sinner's guilt to expose it, and it does not need permission from the sinner before identifying what God has already condemned. The purpose of light is revelation, not negotiation.

The ultimate source of spiritual light is Almighty God, revealed through the Lord Jesus Christ. John 8:12 records the Saviour declaring, “I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” First John 1:5 declares, “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.” The believer therefore does not establish righteousness by appealing to whatever personal judgment happens to suit his circumstances. God's character is the standard, His word reveals His truth, and His Spirit directs redeemed people toward obedience. Second Corinthians 4:6 connects God's command for light to shine out of darkness with His work of illuminating hearts through the knowledge of His glory in the face of Jesus Christ. This is much more substantial than a religious personality announcing that he possesses special insight inaccessible to ordinary believers who read their Bibles. A man who claims to be bringing divine light while continually contradicting God's written revelation has not discovered a superior source of illumination. He has merely substituted his own spotlight for the light of Scripture and hopes nobody notices the difference.

The words “doth make manifest” also establish that divine light must be allowed to examine the believer's own conduct rather than merely the sins of other people. Ephesians 5:8 has already declared that Christians were formerly darkness but are now light in the Lord, commanding them to walk as children of light. Verse 9 identifies the Spirit's fruit in goodness, righteousness, and truth, while verse 10 commands believers to prove what is acceptable unto the Lord. Those instructions govern the man delivering correction as surely as the person receiving it. A preacher may expose false doctrine while requiring correction concerning his own behavior. A believer may accurately identify another person's dishonesty while excusing exaggeration in his own conversations. A congregation may condemn worldly immorality while protecting corruption among influential members. Such inconsistencies must not escape examination because the people involved happen to possess respectable religious titles. The light that exposes the world must also be permitted to shine upon the Church. A man who wants everybody else's conduct examined but refuses to open his own life to Scripture has not demonstrated an unusual love of truth. He has demonstrated an unusual affection for being the only fellow allowed to hold the flashlight.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 5:13 establishes the exposing power of divine light and the necessity of truthful biblical reproof. The verse explains the command of Ephesians 5:11, where believers are

instructed to reject fellowship with the works of darkness and reprove them. Light makes hidden things manifest, revealing their true character rather than creating the conditions it exposes. The Lord Jesus Christ is the source of spiritual light, and His written word provides the authority by which doctrine and conduct must be examined. Consequently, genuine reproof requires truthfulness, evidence where factual accusations are involved, and submission to Scripture rather than personal hostility. The Christian is not authorized to invent wickedness, conceal wickedness, or enjoy wickedness under the pretense of exposing it. His responsibility is to bring the truth of God's word to bear upon what darkness attempts to hide.

The passage also connects exposure with the believer's identity as a child of light. Those redeemed through Jesus Christ have received a new spiritual position and must now walk according to the righteousness of the Lord. This responsibility includes examining personal conduct, correcting false teaching, refusing dishonest practices, and addressing genuine wrongdoing appropriately. Yet exposure must not become a substitute for compassion, nor should biblical discretion become an excuse for protecting serious offenses. The following verses continue the call to spiritual awakening and a careful Christian walk. The central lesson is that the light of Christ reveals what darkness conceals, and believers must faithfully exercise that light through truth, holiness, and righteous correction rather than religious performance or personal revenge.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. The Immediate Context Of Reproof And Light

Ephesians 5:8 — “but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light:”

Ephesians 5:11 — “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.”

Ephesians 5:12 — “For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret.”

Ephesians 5:13 — “But all things that are reproved are made manifest by the light:”

2. Jesus Christ Is The True Light

John 8:12 — “I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness”

John 1:9 — “That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.”

1 John 1:5 — “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.”

2 Corinthians 4:6 — “For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts”

3. God's Word Reveals What Is Hidden

Psalm 119:105 — “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.”

John 17:17 — “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.”

2 Timothy 3:16 — “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction”

Hebrews 4:12 — “and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”

4. Evil Deeds Resist Exposure

John 3:19 — “and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.”

John 3:20 — “For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light”

Psalm 90:8 — “Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance.”

Ecclesiastes 12:14 — “For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing”

5. Biblical Reproof Must Serve Righteousness

2 Timothy 4:2 — “reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.”

Galatians 6:1 — “restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.”

Ephesians 4:15 — “But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:”

Proverbs 27:5 — “Open rebuke is better than secret love.”

6. Exposing Wrongdoing Requires Truthful Judgment

Proverbs 18:13 — “He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.”

1 Timothy 5:19 — “Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses.”

1 Thessalonians 5:21 — “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.”

Ephesians 4:25 — “Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour:”

7. Salvation And Walking In The Light

Ephesians 2:8 — “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:”

Ephesians 1:13 — “after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,”

Ephesians 5:9 — “(For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;)”

1 John 1:7 — “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another”

5. Reflection

Ephesians 5:13 establishes a truth that religious hypocrisy has never appreciated: light exposes what darkness attempts to conceal. Paul does not command Christians to invent accusations, manufacture scandals, or spend their lives searching for somebody to embarrass. He commands them to reprove the works of darkness through the light of God's truth. A preacher may possess an impressive reputation, an influential ministry, or the admiration of thousands, but none of those things makes his teaching or conduct immune from biblical examination. Likewise, a congregation may possess splendid buildings and respectable traditions while harboring problems that require correction. The light of Scripture does not become less authoritative because the person standing in its path happens to possess a religious title. God's word remains the standard.

The command concerning reproof must also be distinguished from the flesh's appetite for personal revenge. A Christian may dislike another teacher and begin searching for information that will damage his reputation. He may circulate suspicions as though they were established facts or deliberately distort another person's statements to strengthen his accusations. Such conduct is not biblical reproof, regardless of how many Scripture references accompany it. Proverbs 18:13 warns against answering a matter before hearing it, while Ephesians 4:25 commands believers to speak truth. The Christian must establish what is true before presenting his conclusions. A false accusation does not become righteous because it was made against a man who teaches false doctrine. Truth cannot be defended through deliberate falsehood.

The following verse also demonstrates why exposure requires moral restraint. Ephesians 5:12 warns that certain deeds committed in secret are shameful even to discuss. The Christian therefore has no authority to turn every discovered offense into public entertainment. Necessary information may require disclosure to responsible people, but

unnecessary details can become another form of corruption. A minister should be capable of condemning sexual immorality without providing a congregation with an elaborate description of immoral acts. Likewise, someone investigating serious wrongdoing must distinguish facts necessary for accountability from details circulated merely to satisfy curiosity. The purpose of light is not to provide entertainment through the exposure of filth. It is to make the truth known so that righteousness may be served. Biblical courage and biblical discretion belong together.

Nevertheless, this instruction must never become a religious excuse for concealing genuine abuse, fraud, exploitation, or serious misconduct. Some people are remarkably enthusiastic about the shamefulness of discussing sin whenever the discussion threatens their own reputation. They may demand silence from injured people while protecting influential offenders from legitimate accountability. But Ephesians 5:11 commands reproof, and verse 13 establishes that light makes hidden things manifest. The proper response requires truthful investigation, responsible disclosure, and appropriate protection where danger exists. Scripture does not command the innocent to carry the disgrace belonging to the guilty. A church that hides wickedness to protect its reputation has not preserved holiness. It has merely furnished darkness with a respectable religious address. Truth must not be sacrificed to institutional convenience.

This passage also requires every believer to examine his own conduct before becoming consumed with the failures of others. Ephesians 5:8 declares that Christians were formerly darkness but are now light in the Lord. That change rests upon salvation through Jesus Christ rather than human moral accomplishment. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes justification by grace through faith, while Ephesians 4:30 declares the believer sealed unto redemption. Nevertheless, spiritual security does not make dishonesty, hypocrisy, or deliberate rebellion acceptable. The Christian must submit his own words, motives, relationships, and decisions to Scripture. The man who keeps the spotlight permanently fixed upon other people's sins while refusing to examine his own has misunderstood the purpose of walking in the light. God's truth must govern the examiner as well as the examined.

Finally, Ephesians 5:13 should encourage believers to embrace the revealing power of Scripture rather than fear its correction. The Lord does not expose sin because He lacks knowledge of what men have done. He reveals truth so that wickedness may be recognized, righteousness may be pursued, and believers may walk according to the new life received through Christ. Genuine spiritual maturity does not require pretending that every mistake has disappeared or that every Christian has achieved sinless perfection. It requires honesty, humility, repentance where necessary, and obedience to the word of

God. Do not hide the darkness, and do not manufacture it. Do not excuse corruption, and do not enjoy exposing it for personal satisfaction. Bring everything under the authority of Scripture, speak the truth responsibly, and let the light of Jesus Christ reveal what the flesh would rather conceal.

Ephesians 5:14 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 5:14

"Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"Wherefore he saith"

Paul begins this verse with an expression that connects the command directly to everything he has established concerning darkness, light, spiritual fruit, and the believer's responsibility to reprove wickedness: "Wherefore he saith." Notice that word "Wherefore." It does not introduce an unrelated religious observation. Ephesians 5:8 has declared, "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light." Verse 9 identifies the fruit of the Spirit in goodness, righteousness, and truth. Verse 10 commands believers to prove what is acceptable unto the Lord, while verses 11–13 explain the revealing power of light in exposing the unfruitful works of darkness. Now comes the inevitable application. If Christians have been delivered from darkness, possess light in the Lord, and are commanded to walk accordingly, they have no business spending their Christian lives spiritually asleep. The apostle has not been describing a collection of interesting doctrines for men to admire while remaining unchanged. He has been establishing responsibilities that require action. A man may know the difference between darkness and light, explain it to a congregation, and write an impressive commentary about it, but none of those accomplishments amounts to much practical obedience if he insists upon sleeping through the very life God has called him to live.

The words "he saith" introduce an authoritative summons rather than Paul's personal speculation about spiritual improvement. The wording bears a striking relationship to Isaiah 60:1, where the prophet declares, "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee." Isaiah 26:19 likewise contains language concerning

awakening and rising from the dead. These Old Testament passages belong to God's prophetic dealings with Israel, including promises that must not be carelessly transferred wholesale to the Church. Ephesians 5:14 is not a word-for-word quotation of either passage, and the interpreter should not manufacture an exact citation where the wording does not establish one. Nevertheless, the biblical imagery of awakening, arising, and receiving light provides an unmistakable connection. Paul employs that language within his instructions to those already identified as light in the Lord. The command must therefore be interpreted according to its immediate context rather than forced into an unrelated prophetic timetable. Rightly dividing the word of truth does not mean ignoring the relationship between passages. It means recognizing those relationships without stealing promises from their proper setting or making the Church replace Israel whenever a convenient expression appears.

“Awake thou that sleepest”

The next expression is a command that ought to shake every careless believer out of his comfortable religious routine: “Awake thou that sleepest.” Notice that the person addressed is sleeping, not necessarily physically dead. Paul is employing the familiar imagery of sleep to describe spiritual negligence, indifference, or inactivity where watchfulness is required. Romans 13:11 supplies an unmistakable companion instruction: “And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.” That command is addressed to believers, not merely to lost sinners needing regeneration. First Thessalonians 5:6 likewise declares, “Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.” The contrast is between spiritual alertness and a careless condition in which the Christian behaves as though his responsibilities can be postponed indefinitely. He may have trusted Jesus Christ years earlier, possess a sound understanding of salvation, and remain secure in the Saviour while accomplishing remarkably little with the opportunities God has placed before him. The trouble with a sleeping Christian is not necessarily that he has lost the life Christ gave him. It is that he is behaving as though the possession of that life has relieved him of the responsibility to use it.

Spiritual sleep can become particularly dangerous because it often appears respectable. A man may attend church regularly, possess accurate doctrinal convictions, and maintain an outwardly honorable reputation while remaining practically indifferent to Scripture, prayer, witnessing, and obedience. He has learned how to perform the ordinary routines of religion without remaining spiritually alert. The old man is perfectly willing to allow Bible knowledge to accumulate provided that knowledge never interferes with his habits. He may know the passages concerning the judgment seat of Christ while wasting years upon worthless

ambitions. He may explain the coming of the Lord while arranging his priorities as though this present world were his permanent home. First Corinthians 15:34 commands, “Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame.” The issue is not simply whether a person possesses information, but whether righteousness governs his conduct. The Christian who knows his Bible well enough to explain the dangers of spiritual slumber but refuses to wake up has become an expert on the very condition he ought to be escaping. A comfortable pew is a poor substitute for a faithful walk.

This command should not be twisted into the teaching that every discouraged, exhausted, or struggling Christian is guilty of spiritual laziness. Human beings require physical sleep, and believers may suffer illness, grief, burdens, or circumstances that legitimately reduce their ability to serve. The Lord is not condemning ordinary bodily limitations through the imagery of spiritual sleep. His word addresses the willful negligence of someone who ought to be spiritually alert. The distinction matters because religious bullies sometimes use commands concerning diligence to condemn those who are already faithfully enduring difficult circumstances. Scripture requires compassion as well as correction. Nevertheless, genuine hardship must not become a convenient explanation for every form of deliberate disobedience. The believer who has neglected the Scriptures, abandoned prayer, cultivated worldly habits, and made peace with known sin should recognize the summons for what it is. God has not commanded the weary saint to manufacture strength he does not possess, but He has certainly commanded the careless saint to stop confusing his attachment to the flesh with a legitimate need for rest. Spiritual awakening begins when the believer receives the correction of God's word rather than producing another excuse for remaining asleep.

“and arise from the dead”

The third expression intensifies the summons: “and arise from the dead.” These words must be handled with doctrinal care because Scripture uses death in more than one context. Ephesians 2:1 describes the believer's former condition before salvation: “And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.” Ephesians 2:5 explains that God quickened believers together with Christ, adding, “by grace ye are saved.” That spiritual quickening is God's saving work, not something a sinner accomplishes through personal determination. Yet Ephesians 5:14 occurs within a passage instructing people already identified as children of light. Consequently, the command to arise should not be interpreted as requiring the saved person to regenerate himself again whenever he becomes spiritually negligent. Nor is Paul describing the literal resurrection of a corpse from the grave at the moment this instruction is obeyed. He is calling the believer away

from the deadening associations and practices of darkness into the active walk appropriate to his new life. A Christian does not need another Calvary every time the flesh gains an advantage. He needs to reckon upon the Calvary already accomplished and stop conducting himself as though the old life still owns him.

There is a powerful connection here with the believer's association with those who remain spiritually dead and with the corrupt nature of the flesh he still inhabits. Ephesians 5:6 identifies the children of disobedience, verse 7 warns believers not to become partakers with them, and verse 11 commands Christians to refuse fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. The imagery of rising from the dead therefore fits the surrounding demand to leave those associations and practices behind. Romans 6:6 declares, “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.” Yet Romans 7:24 records Paul's cry concerning “the body of this death.” The believer's mortal flesh remains subject to corruption while his new spiritual life belongs to Christ. Serving the flesh is therefore a miserable investment in something destined for the grave unless the Lord changes the body at His coming. A Christian who spends his days satisfying the old man is running errands for a condemned administration. The old nature has no eternal inheritance to offer, no righteousness to contribute, and no authority to cancel the life Christ has given. Arising from the dead involves refusing the former conduct and associations that contradict redemption.

The positive command reaches beyond merely abandoning obviously wicked practices. Romans 6:4 declares, “that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” Notice that Paul connects the believer's identification with Christ's resurrection to a practical walk. Colossians 3:1 similarly commands those risen with Christ to seek the things above, where Christ sits at the right hand of God. The Christian therefore has something better to accomplish than spending his remaining earthly days avoiding a few scandalous sins while remaining indifferent toward the Lord's service. He can study Scripture, proclaim the gospel, edify fellow believers, fulfill his household responsibilities, exercise honest stewardship, and use his opportunities for eternal purposes. Not every believer possesses the same gifts, health, resources, or public ministry, but faithfulness is not measured merely by visibility. The Lord did not raise His people into new spiritual life so they could spend their days lying beside the old man's grave admiring the headstone. The command is to arise and walk, because spiritual life has responsibilities that extend beyond the celebration of having received it.

“and Christ shall give thee light”

The final expression establishes the Person upon whom the entire command depends: “and Christ shall give thee light.” Notice that Paul does not promise enlightenment through

human philosophy, religious excitement, or the accumulated wisdom of some extraordinary spiritual personality. The light comes from Jesus Christ. John 8:12 records the Lord declaring, “I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” John 1:4 likewise declares, “In him was life; and the life was the light of men.” The Christian therefore does not manufacture spiritual illumination through the corruption of the flesh. He follows the Lord whose word reveals truth and whose Spirit directs him toward obedience. The promise in Ephesians 5:14 must not be used to suggest that the believer who has been sealed unto the day of redemption is somehow required to obtain eternal life a second time. The immediate concern is the light appropriate to an awakened walk, not a repeated purchase of regeneration. The Lord who saved the believer remains the source of the light by which the believer must walk. Salvation does not make the Christian independent of the Saviour; it establishes a relationship in which dependence upon Him should become increasingly evident.

This promise also demonstrates why spiritual awakening cannot be reduced to outward religious activity. A man may become extremely busy with church programs while remaining poorly instructed in Scripture. Another may spend considerable energy criticizing the sins of the world while neglecting the same Bible's correction of his own conduct. Christ gives light through the truth He has revealed, and the believer must respond to that light rather than substitute personal enthusiasm for obedience. Psalm 119:105 declares, “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.” Ephesians 5:10 commands believers to prove what is acceptable unto the Lord, while verse 15 subsequently directs them to walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise. The progression is deliberate: awaken, arise, receive the Lord's light, and walk with spiritual understanding. A man who turns on a lamp and then deliberately closes his eyes has not demonstrated that the lamp is defective. Likewise, the Christian who possesses God's word but refuses its correction cannot blame the Lord for the darkness he continues choosing. Christ's light is sufficient to reveal the path; the believer remains responsible to walk according to it.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 5:14 establishes a solemn call to spiritual awakening among those who have been instructed to walk as children of light. The language of sleeping, arising from the dead, and receiving light develops the contrast between the believer's former condition and his present responsibility in Jesus Christ. The verse must not be confused with a command for saved people to regenerate themselves repeatedly or with a description of bodily resurrection. Its immediate context concerns refusing the works of darkness, receiving biblical reproof, and walking according to the light already possessed in the Lord.

The Christian who has received eternal life must not allow spiritual negligence, fleshly associations, and worldly priorities to make his daily conduct resemble the darkness from which he has been delivered.

The verse also identifies Jesus Christ as the source of the light necessary for faithful Christian living. The believer cannot produce spiritual illumination through human wisdom, religious performance, or the determination of fallen flesh. His walk must be directed by the Lord through the truth of Scripture and the work of the Holy Spirit. The language recalls Old Testament prophetic imagery without transferring Israel's specific promises indiscriminately to the Church. The resulting instruction is practical and urgent: the redeemed must awaken to their responsibilities, arise from conduct associated with spiritual death, and walk in the light of Christ. The central lesson is that salvation gives the believer new spiritual life, but that life must not be wasted in the sleep of worldly compromise and fleshly indifference.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. The Call To Awaken And Walk In Light

Ephesians 5:8 — “but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light:”

Ephesians 5:11 — “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.”

Ephesians 5:13 — “But all things that are reproved are made manifest by the light:”

Ephesians 5:14 — “Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.”

2. Spiritual Sleep Must Give Way To Watchfulness

Romans 13:11 — “that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.”

1 Thessalonians 5:6 — “Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.”

1 Corinthians 15:34 — “Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God:”

1 Thessalonians 5:5 — “Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day:”

3. Salvation Brings Life To Those Formerly Dead

Ephesians 2:1 — “And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;”

Ephesians 2:5 — “Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)”

Ephesians 2:6 — “And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:”

Colossians 1:13 — “Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:”

4. The Redeemed Must Walk In Newness Of Life

Romans 6:4 — “even so we also should walk in newness of life.”

Romans 6:11 — “Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Colossians 3:1 — “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.”

Galatians 5:16 — “Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.”

5. Jesus Christ Is The Source Of Spiritual Light

John 8:12 — “I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.”

John 1:4 — “In him was life; and the life was the light of men.”

2 Corinthians 4:6 — “For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts”

1 John 1:7 — “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another,”

6. The Biblical Imagery Of Arising And Shining

Isaiah 60:1 — “Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee.”

Isaiah 26:19 — “Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust:”

Romans 13:12 — “The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness”

1 Peter 2:9 — “who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:”

7. Eternal Security And Daily Responsibility

Ephesians 1:13 — “after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,”

Ephesians 4:30 — “whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.”

Ephesians 5:15 — “See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,”

Ephesians 5:16 — “Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.”

5. Reflection

Ephesians 5:14 confronts one of the saddest conditions in Christian living: a believer possessing eternal life while wasting the opportunities that life has given him. Paul does not address the children of light as though they have suddenly become incapable of spiritual negligence. He commands them to awaken because saved people can become careless, distracted, and occupied with things that produce little eternal value. A man may understand the gospel, defend eternal security, and possess years of Bible knowledge while continually postponing obedience. Romans 13:11 declares that it is high time to awake out of sleep. The Christian who has been waiting twenty years for a convenient season to become faithful ought to consider whether the convenient season has already arrived and departed while he was making excuses.

The command must also be distinguished from the religious error of confusing salvation with outward activity. A sinner cannot regenerate himself through increased church attendance, moral improvement, or enthusiastic Christian service. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes salvation by grace through faith, apart from works. Yet religious people frequently attempt to replace the new birth with a program for producing respectable behavior. That is not the gospel. Jesus Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again according to the Scriptures. The believer's spiritual life begins through faith in Him. A lost man does not become saved by awakening to the usefulness of religion, and a saved man does not preserve salvation by remaining sufficiently busy. Spiritual life comes from Christ; faithful service should follow it.

The expression “arise from the dead” further exposes the folly of returning to conduct associated with the believer's former condition. Ephesians 5 has already identified the works of darkness and commanded Christians not to participate in them. Yet the flesh continues advertising its old pleasures as though salvation had accomplished nothing. The believer may be tempted toward dishonest gain, worldly approval, corrupt entertainment, or relationships that encourage deliberate disobedience. Romans 6:11 commands him to reckon himself dead unto sin but alive unto God. A Christian who continually serves the flesh is laboring for a master whose promises end at the grave. The Lord has provided something infinitely better than another lifetime spent satisfying an old nature destined for corruption.

This warning also reaches congregations that have become comfortable with religious routine while neglecting their responsibility toward the lost. A church may possess sound doctrine, established traditions, and an impressive schedule while demonstrating little concern for proclaiming the gospel beyond its familiar circle. The solution is not abandoning biblical convictions to attract an audience. It is awakening to the responsibilities those convictions establish. Romans 10:14 asks how people shall hear without a preacher, while First Corinthians 15:3–4 supplies the gospel concerning Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. The Church has not been commissioned to entertain the world into admiration, nor to hide the gospel from the world behind the doors of its own respectability. The light should shine through faithful proclamation.

The promise “Christ shall give thee light” should encourage believers who recognize their need for correction. The Lord has not left His people dependent upon religious impressions, personal speculation, or the authority of impressive personalities. He has supplied His written word and the indwelling Holy Spirit. A believer who realizes he has neglected Scripture should return to it with a willingness to obey. Someone who recognizes deliberate sin should acknowledge and reject it rather than defending the old man's conduct. Someone who has become spiritually distracted should reconsider his priorities according to the Lord's commandments. The answer to spiritual sleep is not another performance designed to make the sleeper appear awake. It is submission to the truth that calls him out of slumber. Genuine awakening must reach daily conduct.

Finally, Ephesians 5:14 directs attention toward the urgency of the believer's remaining earthly opportunities. Verse 15 commands walking circumspectly, and verse 16 commands redeeming the time because the days are evil. Those instructions remind us that wasted opportunities cannot always be recovered. The Christian does not know how much earthly service remains before the Lord calls him home or comes for His Church. He should therefore use what has been entrusted to him without confusing visible accomplishments with faithfulness. Some will serve publicly, others quietly, but all must answer to the Lord. Wake up, arise, and walk in the light Christ supplies. Do not spend your redeemed life serving the corruption from which His grace delivered you. “Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.”

Ephesians 5:15 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 5:15

“See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,”

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

“See then that ye walk circumspectly”

Paul begins this verse with a command that ought to make every careless Christian examine where he is putting his feet: “See then that ye walk circumspectly.” Notice the opening expression, “See then.” The apostle is drawing a conclusion from everything he has just established concerning light, darkness, spiritual fruit, biblical reproof, and the believer's responsibility to awaken from spiritual sleep. Ephesians 5:8 declares that Christians were formerly darkness but are now light in the Lord. Verse 9 identifies the fruit of the Spirit in goodness, righteousness, and truth. Verse 10 commands believers to prove what is acceptable unto the Lord, while verses 11–13 explain the necessity of refusing the works of darkness and exposing them through the light. Then verse 14 sounds the alarm: “Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.” Now comes the practical consequence. The awakened Christian must watch where he walks. It is not enough to recognize the light, admire the light, and deliver impressive lectures concerning the difference between light and darkness. He must conduct himself accordingly. A man who has been awakened from spiritual sleep only to stumble immediately into the same ditch has not yet learned the importance of watching his steps. Paul is commanding attention, examination, and deliberate obedience rather than another round of religious excitement that produces no corresponding change in conduct.

The word “circumspectly” carries the idea of careful observation, caution, and thoughtful attention to one's course. Picture a man walking along a narrow mountain path with a dangerous drop beside him. He does not close his eyes, begin congratulating himself upon possessing excellent balance, and assume that the path will rearrange itself to accommodate his careless feet. He watches where he is going. He considers the ground, recognizes possible dangers, and makes the decisions necessary to continue safely. That is the picture of the Christian walk. Proverbs 4:26 declares, “Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established.” The following verse commands, “Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil.” These words originally belong to the wisdom instruction of Proverbs, but the principle agrees with Paul's instruction to the Church. The believer must pay attention to his conduct, relationships, influences, decisions, and the temptations that arise along the way. Christian liberty is not permission to walk blindfolded along the edge of a cliff while boasting that eternal security will prevent every earthly consequence of foolishness. The Lord has secured the believer's salvation through Jesus Christ, but He has never promised that every reckless decision will produce a painless outcome.

The command also reaches into spiritual discernment, because careless walking frequently begins with careless thinking. A Christian may know the gospel, understand eternal security, and possess a respectable collection of doctrinal convictions while remaining remarkably gullible about the practical decisions governing his life. He may accept a teaching because a popular preacher delivered it confidently, enter a dishonest arrangement because it promises financial advantage, or cultivate a questionable relationship because he assumes his good intentions will prevent every possible compromise. Proverbs 14:15 declares, “The simple believeth every word: but the prudent man looketh well to his going.” That is precisely the kind of discernment required here. The Christian should not become suspicious of everybody or spend his life imagining dangers that have no factual foundation. Nevertheless, he must examine what he is being taught, consider what an arrangement actually requires, and test his conduct according to Scripture. Ephesians 5:10 has already commanded him to prove what is acceptable unto the Lord. A Christian who refuses to think before acting should not be surprised when he discovers that enthusiasm was a poor substitute for wisdom. The Holy Ghost never commanded believers to abandon their judgment at the church door and retrieve it after the closing prayer.

“not as fools, but as wise”

The second expression establishes the contrast governing the entire verse: “not as fools, but as wise.” Paul does not merely instruct believers to become more cautious about obvious dangers. He identifies two fundamentally different manners of walking. The fool disregards instruction, follows corrupt desires, trusts appearances, and frequently discovers consequences after he has already committed himself to a course of action. The wise man receives correction, examines evidence, recognizes his limitations, and submits his decisions to the truth God has revealed. Proverbs 12:15 declares, “The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise.” Notice the distinction. The fool's problem is not necessarily a complete inability to think. He may possess considerable intelligence, professional knowledge, and an impressive ability to argue. His foolishness appears in the authority he gives his own judgment over correction. A man can be brilliant in his occupation and foolish concerning his marriage, his finances, his spiritual life, or the handling of personal temptation. The Bible does not measure wisdom by the number of certificates hanging on a wall. A fellow may possess enough academic honors to decorate the entire hallway and still lack the sense to obey a commandment written plainly in front of him.

The contrast between foolishness and wisdom must also be understood according to the New Testament distinction between knowledge and obedience. First Corinthians 14:20

commands, “Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men.” Spiritual maturity requires informed judgment rather than childish dependence upon every personality who claims to speak for God. James 1:22 declares, “But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.” Those passages expose the danger of becoming an expert listener without becoming a faithful practitioner. A Christian may know precisely how to explain the doctrinal difference between standing and state while continually allowing his practical state to contradict the righteousness appropriate to his standing. Another may correctly identify the errors of false teachers while remaining unwilling to receive correction concerning his own conduct. Such knowledge should never be despised, for sound doctrine is essential. But knowledge that refuses obedience has not produced the wisdom Paul commands. The wise Christian does not merely know where the Bible condemns foolishness. He becomes increasingly willing to stop practicing it. The difference between a student of wisdom and a servant of wisdom becomes evident when the truth demands something inconvenient.

Finally, the expression “but as wise” prepares the way for the following two verses. Ephesians 5:16 declares, “Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.” Verse 17 continues, “Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.” Wisdom therefore involves the use of time, recognition of the evil character of the present age, and a deliberate effort to understand the Lord's will. Galatians 1:4 identifies this present world as evil, while Colossians 4:5 commands, “Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time.” The Christian cannot afford to treat his earthly opportunities as though they were endless. He possesses responsibilities toward the Lord, his family, the Church, and the people who need the gospel. Wisdom does not mean abandoning ordinary employment, refusing legitimate recreation, or pretending that physical rest is a sin. It means ordering those responsibilities according to the truth rather than allowing the flesh to waste opportunities through negligence. A fool can spend an entire lifetime being busy without accomplishing anything of lasting importance. The wise believer learns that motion is not the same as progress, and a crowded schedule is not necessarily a faithful walk.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 5:15 establishes the necessity of careful Christian conduct governed by biblical wisdom rather than fleshly carelessness. The command follows Paul's teaching concerning the believer's transformation from darkness to light, the fruit of the Spirit, and the responsibility to expose the works of darkness. Walking circumspectly requires attention to personal decisions, spiritual influences, relationships, conduct, and the opportunities God has provided. It is not a command to live in constant fear or manufacture endless

restrictions beyond Scripture. It requires the believer to examine his course according to the word of God and refuse the foolishness that places personal desires above divine instruction. The Christian who has been awakened to spiritual responsibility must learn to walk with his eyes open, his mind governed by Scripture, and his conduct directed toward the Lord's approval.

The contrast between fools and wise believers also preserves the distinction between salvation and sanctification. Eternal life is received through faith in Jesus Christ, while careful walking concerns the responsibility of those already redeemed. Biblical wisdom involves receiving correction, examining doctrine, understanding God's revealed will, and using earthly opportunities faithfully. Spiritual maturity is not demonstrated merely through intelligence, religious knowledge, or outward activity, but through decisions that agree with God's truth. The following verses connect this wisdom with redeeming the time and understanding the will of the Lord. The central lesson is that God's children must refuse careless living and walk thoughtfully, obediently, and wisely in an evil world where wasted opportunities and foolish decisions carry genuine consequences.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. The Immediate Command To Walk Wisely

Ephesians 5:14 — “Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.”

Ephesians 5:15 — “See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,”

Ephesians 5:16 — “Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.”

Ephesians 5:17 — “Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.”

2. The Wise Man Watches His Steps

Proverbs 4:26 — “Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established.”

Proverbs 4:27 — “Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil.”

Proverbs 14:15 — “The simple believeth every word: but the prudent man looketh well to his going.”

Proverbs 22:3 — “A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished.”

3. Foolishness Rejects Instruction And Correction

Proverbs 12:15 — “The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise.”

Proverbs 18:2 — “A fool hath no delight in understanding, but that his heart may discover itself.”

Proverbs 1:7 — “but fools despise wisdom and instruction.”

1 Corinthians 14:20 — “Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men.”

4. Scripture Supplies The Light For Our Walk

Psalm 119:105 — “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.”

2 Timothy 2:15 — “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

2 Timothy 3:16 — “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:”

1 Thessalonians 5:21 — “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.”

5. The Christian Must Understand God's Will

Romans 12:2 — “but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”

Colossians 1:10 — “That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work”

1 Thessalonians 4:3 — “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication:”

James 1:22 — “But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.”

6. Wisdom Recognizes The Value Of Time

Colossians 4:5 — “Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time.”

Romans 13:11 — “that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.”

Galatians 1:4 — “that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father:”

Psalm 90:12 — “So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.”

7. Salvation And The Christian Walk Remain Distinct

Ephesians 2:8 — “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:”

Ephesians 2:10 — “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works”

Ephesians 4:30 — “whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.”

2 Corinthians 5:10 — “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ;”

5. Reflection

Ephesians 5:15 confronts a danger that can quietly consume an entire Christian life: the habit of living carelessly while assuming that possessing correct doctrine automatically produces correct decisions. Paul does not command believers merely to know that they are children of light. He commands them to watch how they walk. A man may understand the gospel of grace, defend eternal security, and explain the distinctions between Israel and the Church while repeatedly making foolish decisions in matters Scripture has already addressed. His knowledge should govern his conduct rather than become a collection of religious accomplishments displayed before others. The Christian who knows the road but refuses to watch his steps should not blame the road when he falls into the ditch. Wisdom requires obedience, not merely information.

The expression “walk circumspectly” also demands serious attention to the influences believers willingly permit into their lives. Some friendships encourage righteousness, while others continually invite compromise. Certain business arrangements reward dishonesty, and particular forms of entertainment cultivate desires the Scriptures command Christians to reject. Yet the believer must distinguish genuine spiritual danger from imaginary contamination through ordinary contact with unbelievers. Biblical separation concerns participation in wickedness, not the abandonment of everyone who needs the gospel. Ephesians 5:11 has already commanded separation from the unfruitful works of darkness. The wise Christian neither walks blindfolded into temptation nor hides from every lost sinner as though holiness required abandoning the world to its darkness. He examines his conduct according to truth.

Paul's contrast between fools and wise believers also exposes the foolishness of refusing correction. A person may become so confident in his own understanding that every disagreement appears to him as evidence of another person's ignorance. He may seek counsel only from people likely to confirm what he has already decided. Proverbs 12:15

warns that the fool considers his own way right while the wise man listens to counsel. This does not mean every adviser deserves unquestioning obedience or that popular opinion determines God's will. It means the Christian should remain teachable and willing to examine evidence. A man who cannot admit a mistake has not demonstrated superior wisdom; he has simply made ignorance more expensive by refusing to correct it. Scripture must govern the teacher as well as the student.

The command must also remain distinguished from salvation through personal works. No sinner becomes justified by arranging his schedule carefully, practicing financial discipline, or making consistently wise decisions. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes redemption by grace through faith, apart from human merit. Nevertheless, the person who has received salvation remains accountable for the manner in which he lives. Ephesians 4:30 establishes the Spirit's sealing unto redemption, while Second Corinthians 5:10 identifies the future judgment seat of Christ. These doctrines do not contradict one another. The blood of Jesus Christ secures salvation, but that security does not make every decision of the redeemed a wise decision. Eternal security should produce gratitude and faithful service rather than carelessness.

The following verse makes the practical urgency unmistakable: “Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.” A Christian may waste years pursuing trivial disputes, worldly recognition, unnecessary conflicts, or ambitions that contribute little toward his responsibilities before God. Yet wisdom does not require abandoning family, employment, legitimate recreation, or proper rest. The believer must fulfill these responsibilities faithfully while refusing to let passing distractions govern his entire life. Colossians 4:5 connects walking in wisdom with redeeming the time, demonstrating the value of ordinary opportunities. Those opportunities may involve teaching a child, encouraging a discouraged believer, helping someone in need, or explaining the gospel to an unbeliever. A crowded calendar does not necessarily indicate a fruitful life, and constant motion is not the same thing as walking in the will of God.

Finally, Ephesians 5:15 should lead every believer toward the question that governs the surrounding passage: What does the Lord require of my walk? The answer begins with the Scriptures, not private speculation, emotional impressions, or the approval of influential people. The Christian must study the word, receive correction, resist the flesh, and follow the Holy Spirit's direction through revealed truth. Where decisions have been foolish, they should be acknowledged and corrected rather than defended through pride. Where opportunities remain, they should be used faithfully rather than continually postponed. Wake up, watch your steps, and walk with wisdom. Do not spend your redeemed life stumbling through decisions that Scripture has already illuminated. The Lord has provided

the light, the word has revealed the path, and the command is plain: “See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise.”

Ephesians 5:16 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 5:16

“Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.”

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

“Redeeming the time”

Paul has arrived at a command that ought to disturb every Christian who has become comfortable wasting the life God has entrusted to him: “Redeeming the time.” Notice the expression carefully. The apostle does not say to admire the time, complain about the time, speculate endlessly about the time, or spend the time discussing how terrible everybody else's use of time has become. He commands believers to redeem it. The language carries the idea of buying up an opportunity, securing something valuable rather than permitting it to slip away unused. Ephesians 5:15 has already commanded Christians to walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise. Verse 16 explains one important characteristic of that wisdom. A wise believer recognizes that earthly opportunities are limited, that circumstances change, and that yesterday's neglected responsibility may not be available tomorrow. Colossians 4:5 provides a direct companion instruction: “Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time.” There the connection to witnessing is unmistakable. An opportunity to speak to a lost man about Jesus Christ may disappear when circumstances separate the two people. Time is a peculiar possession: every man spends it, no man can store it, and the fool commonly discovers its value after he has already squandered the portion entrusted to him.

The word “redeeming” must not be confused with the redemption accomplished through the blood of Jesus Christ. Ephesians 1:7 declares, “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;” That redemption concerns salvation through the finished work of the Saviour. Ephesians 5:16 concerns the believer's stewardship of earthly opportunities. The distinction is not a minor theological ornament. A lost sinner cannot purchase eternal life through careful scheduling, industrious habits, church attendance, or a lifetime of admirable achievements. Ephesians

2:8–9 establishes salvation by grace through faith, “Not of works, lest any man should boast.” But once saved, the Christian has responsibilities concerning the life he has received. Ephesians 2:10 declares, “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” Those good works are the intended fruit of salvation, not its purchase price. The blood of Christ redeems the sinner; the redeemed sinner is commanded to redeem his time. Confuse those two truths, and before long somebody will be selling salvation by the hour while congratulating himself for discovering biblical stewardship.

This command also reaches far beyond the assumption that every waking hour must be filled with public religious activity. Some Christians imagine that redeeming the time requires constant motion, an overflowing calendar, and the ability to announce how exhausted they have become serving the Lord. But Scripture does not identify busyness as the measure of wisdom. Ecclesiastes 3:1 declares, “To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:” That statement belongs to the wisdom literature of the Old Testament and should be read in its setting, but it rightly reminds us that different responsibilities have their appointed occasions. Providing for one's household, raising children, maintaining honest employment, helping fellow believers, studying Scripture, resting appropriately, and proclaiming the gospel can all belong to faithful stewardship. A father who neglects his family while chasing recognition for his public ministry has not necessarily redeemed his time. Neither has a Christian who destroys his health through unnecessary exertion simply because he mistakes exhaustion for holiness. The Lord never commanded His people to worship the clock. He commanded them to use their opportunities wisely. A packed schedule can conceal a wasted life just as effectively as an empty one.

“because the days are evil”

The second expression supplies the reason for the command: “because the days are evil.” There is no ambiguity about Paul's description. He does not announce that the present world is gradually becoming a paradise through human education, political improvement, or the accumulated achievements of civilization. He identifies the moral character of the age in which believers must conduct their lives. Galatians 1:4 declares concerning Jesus Christ, “Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father:” Notice that the deliverance is associated with Christ's sacrificial work, not with some earthly program by which fallen humanity gradually saves itself. First John 5:19 declares, “And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.” These passages do not deny that unbelievers may demonstrate natural affection, honesty, generosity, or admirable civic conduct. They establish that the

present world system remains corrupted by sin and opposed to the righteousness of God. The world may polish its furniture, improve its machinery, and decorate its institutions, but none of those accomplishments changes the moral condition of a civilization that rejects its Creator. A renovated house is still condemned if the foundation remains rotten.

The expression “the days are evil” should not be interpreted to mean that every calendar day possesses some independent moral wickedness or that every circumstance confronting a Christian is necessarily sinful. Paul is describing the corrupt environment and dangerous conditions in which opportunities must be used. The believer lives among temptations, competing loyalties, false teaching, human weakness, and the distractions of a world that rarely encourages obedience to Scripture. Ephesians 2:2 describes the former walk of the unsaved according to the course of this world, under the influence of the prince of the power of the air. That former manner of life stands in contrast with the believer's new position in Christ. The warning therefore calls for vigilance, not superstition. It does not authorize Christians to label every technological development, ordinary recreation, or unfamiliar social custom as wicked merely because it belongs to the present age. Nor does it justify endless speculation about the exact date of the Lord's return. A man can spend twenty years predicting how much worse the world will become while neglecting the responsibilities God placed in front of him that very morning. He has not redeemed the time; he has merely found a religious way to waste it.

The evil character of the days also explains why neglected opportunities matter. The Christian does not live in a morally neutral environment where righteousness automatically advances without resistance. False doctrine must be answered with sound doctrine. Temptation must be resisted rather than entertained. The gospel must be proclaimed because lost sinners do not save themselves through the passage of time. Families require instruction, congregations require edification, and personal conduct requires continuing examination under the authority of Scripture. Galatians 6:10 declares, “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.” Notice the word “opportunity.” The passage does not command believers to accomplish what their circumstances make impossible. It requires faithfulness with opportunities genuinely available to them. A Christian may have little money, limited strength, or no public position and still use his opportunities wisely. Another may possess abundant resources and considerable influence while wasting both upon personal glory. The evil of the age does not excuse Christian inactivity; it makes faithful service all the more necessary. Darkness is not an argument for putting out the lamp. It is the very reason the lamp must shine.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 5:16 establishes the responsibility of redeemed people to make wise use of their limited earthly opportunities in a world corrupted by sin. The command follows Paul's instruction to walk circumspectly and prepares the way for his warning against being unwise in verse 17. Redeeming the time means recognizing opportunities for obedience, service, spiritual growth, and gospel witness rather than allowing them to disappear through negligence. It does not mean attempting to purchase salvation through religious activity, nor does it require endless labor without legitimate rest. The Christian has already received redemption through the blood of Jesus Christ and is now responsible for the stewardship of his earthly life. The believer cannot recover yesterday's hours, but he can refuse to surrender today's opportunities to the same foolishness that wasted yesterday.

The statement “because the days are evil” identifies the moral circumstances that make such stewardship urgent. The present world remains corrupted by sin, and believers must not imagine that worldly approval, increasing prosperity, or human advancement will automatically produce righteousness. Yet recognizing the world's evil should produce faithful action rather than fear, isolation, or endless speculation. Christians are commanded to do good, proclaim the gospel, understand the Lord's will, and walk wisely while opportunities remain. Their responsibilities differ according to ability and circumstances, but their common obligation is faithfulness to Christ. The central lesson is that an evil world provides no excuse for a wasted Christian life. It provides the very setting in which wise, faithful obedience becomes necessary.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. The Immediate Command To Redeem The Time

Ephesians 5:15 — “See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,”

Ephesians 5:16 — “Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.”

Ephesians 5:17 — “Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.”

Colossians 4:5 — “Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time.”

2. Earthly Life Is Brief And Uncertain

Psalm 90:12 — “So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.”

James 4:14 — “For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.”

Psalm 39:4 — “LORD, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is;”

Job 14:1 — “Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble.”

3. Opportunities Must Be Used For Righteousness

Galatians 6:10 — “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men”

Romans 12:11 — “Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;”

1 Peter 4:2 — “That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.”

Philippians 1:21 — “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”

4. The Present World Remains Evil

Galatians 1:4 — “that he might deliver us from this present evil world”

1 John 5:19 — “and the whole world lieth in wickedness.”

Ephesians 2:2 — “Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world”

2 Timothy 3:1 — “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.”

5. Wisdom Rejects Spiritual Negligence

1 John 2:15 — “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.”

2 Timothy 2:4 — “No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life;”

Proverbs 24:33 — “Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep:”

1 Thessalonians 5:6 — “Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.”

6. Christian Service Will Be Examined

1 Corinthians 4:2 — “Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.”

1 Corinthians 15:58 — “be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord”

1 Corinthians 3:13 — “Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it”

2 Corinthians 5:10 — “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ;”

7. Salvation Is Free But Service Matters

Ephesians 2:8 — “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:”

Ephesians 2:10 — “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works”

Ephesians 1:13 — “after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,”

Titus 3:5 — “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us”

5. Reflection

Ephesians 5:16 confronts a kind of foolishness that often escapes the attention of otherwise serious Christians: the quiet waste of opportunities that will never return. A believer may spend considerable energy condemning the wickedness of the age while accomplishing remarkably little with the responsibilities God has placed before him. He may explain prophecy, defend sound doctrine, and recognize the dangers of the present world while continually postponing ordinary obedience. Yet Paul commands believers to redeem the time, not merely describe the difficulties surrounding it. A man who spends his entire life explaining why the days are evil while refusing to use those days for righteousness has understood half the verse and neglected the other half. Wisdom recognizes that the time entrusted to us is both valuable and limited.

This command also exposes the deception of confusing busyness with faithfulness. Some Christians maintain schedules so crowded that they have little opportunity to examine whether their activities are actually useful. Others become consumed with entertainment, controversy, speculation, or the endless pursuit of personal recognition. Neither extreme demonstrates biblical stewardship. Honest employment, proper rest, family responsibilities, prayer, Bible study, and Christian service all deserve their appropriate places. The Christian must distinguish necessary duties from avoidable distractions and arrange his priorities according to Scripture. A full calendar is not necessarily a fruitful life, and an empty calendar is not necessarily a peaceful one. The question is whether the hours being spent are serving responsibilities the Lord has entrusted to us.

The declaration that the days are evil must also correct the popular religious fantasy that human progress will eventually remove mankind's need for redemption. Scripture identifies this present world as evil and teaches that deliverance comes through Jesus Christ. Improvements in medicine, transportation, education, and communication do not remove the corruption of the human heart. Yet this recognition must not produce despair or hostility toward everyone outside the Church. Believers are commanded to proclaim the gospel, love their neighbours, and do good as opportunities arise. The darkness of the world does not make Christian witness unnecessary; it makes the witness of biblical truth

essential. A Christian who recognizes the evil of his surroundings should become more faithful, not more useless.

The distinction between salvation and service remains essential to understanding the command. No amount of time spent working for God can purchase eternal life, because salvation rests upon the finished work of Jesus Christ. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes redemption by grace through faith, while Ephesians 2:10 identifies good works as the intended walk of those already saved. The believer does not redeem his soul by redeeming his time. Nevertheless, eternal security does not eliminate accountability for wasted opportunities or disobedient conduct. Second Corinthians 5:10 establishes the future judgment seat of Christ, where believers must answer concerning their works. Grace removes salvation from the marketplace of human merit, but it never turns the Christian life into a vacation from obedience.

Practical application begins with the responsibilities already available rather than some imagined future opportunity for extraordinary service. A parent may redeem the time by faithfully instructing a child in Scripture. A husband or wife may use an opportunity to strengthen the household rather than pursuing another unnecessary argument. A believer may encourage a struggling Christian, correct a dishonest practice, assist someone in need, or speak the gospel to an unbeliever. Such actions may receive little public recognition, but faithfulness does not depend upon possessing a platform. Nor should believers compare their opportunities with those of people possessing greater strength, resources, or influence. The Lord has not commanded every Christian to accomplish the same quantity of visible work. He has commanded each believer to be faithful with what has actually been entrusted to him.

Finally, Ephesians 5:16 should produce urgency without panic and diligence without the bondage of self-righteousness. Yesterday cannot be reclaimed by worrying about it, and tomorrow cannot be guaranteed through careful planning. The believer can acknowledge past negligence, receive biblical correction, and make better use of present opportunities. He should examine his priorities, reject unnecessary distractions, understand the Lord's revealed will, and walk in the Spirit. The evil character of the days should strengthen his determination to serve Christ rather than encourage endless complaint. Do not spend your redeemed life merely watching the clock run down. Do not permit the flesh to consume opportunities that could have been used for righteousness. Walk wisely, serve faithfully, and remember the command: “Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.”

Ephesians 5:17 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 5:17

"Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is."

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"Wherefore be ye not unwise"

Paul begins this verse with a command that ought to put an end to a great deal of religious foolishness masquerading as spiritual guidance: "Wherefore be ye not unwise." Notice the word "Wherefore." The apostle is drawing a conclusion from the instructions immediately preceding this verse. Ephesians 5:14 commands the sleeping Christian to awaken and arise from the dead. Verse 15 commands believers to walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise. Verse 16 adds, "Redeeming the time, because the days are evil." Now Paul explains why this careful walk is necessary. The Christian cannot afford to stumble through life making decisions according to personal feelings, religious enthusiasm, worldly advice, and the latest spiritual impression while neglecting what Almighty God has already revealed in Scripture. The command assumes that foolishness is a genuine danger even among redeemed people. A man may possess eternal life, understand the gospel, and enjoy the sealing of the Holy Spirit while remaining remarkably unwise in practical matters. Salvation changes a man's spiritual position, but it does not automatically make every opinion he holds, every decision he makes, or every impression he experiences an expression of divine wisdom.

The word "unwise" must not be confused with a lack of formal education or intellectual ability. Some of the wisest Christians have possessed little worldly education, while some highly educated religious men have demonstrated extraordinary foolishness concerning the plain commandments of God. Proverbs 12:15 declares, "The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise." The problem is not merely ignorance; it is the refusal to submit personal judgment to truth. A man may understand financial calculations while repeatedly engaging in dishonest transactions. Another may explain the doctrines of marriage while neglecting his own household. A Bible teacher may accurately distinguish justification from sanctification while refusing correction concerning his personal conduct. These contradictions demonstrate that possessing information is not identical to applying wisdom. First Corinthians 14:20 commands, "Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men." The Christian should develop mature biblical judgment rather than remain dependent upon every impressive personality who claims special spiritual insight. An expensive education

cannot compensate for the deliberate rejection of a plain commandment. A fool with a diploma remains a fool, although he may possess a more elaborate vocabulary for defending his foolishness.

The immediate connection with redeeming the time makes the warning particularly urgent. Ephesians 5:16 identifies the days as evil, while Galatians 1:4 describes this present evil world from which Christ gave Himself to deliver us. Believers therefore live among competing influences, worldly ambitions, false teaching, temptation, and opportunities that may disappear without warning. An unwise Christian may spend years waiting for some extraordinary revelation while neglecting ordinary responsibilities already established by Scripture. Another may become obsessed with speculation concerning future events while refusing present obedience. A third may mistake constant religious activity for spiritual maturity without examining whether his conduct pleases the Lord. Colossians 4:5 commands, “Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time.” The Christian is responsible for making thoughtful use of opportunities rather than surrendering them through carelessness. A man who wastes twenty years searching for a mysterious divine assignment while refusing the commandments written plainly in his Bible has not discovered a superior method of finding God's will. He has discovered how to turn disobedience into a prolonged religious investigation.

“but understanding what the will of the Lord is”

The second expression supplies the positive command that replaces foolishness: “but understanding what the will of the Lord is.” Notice that Paul does not command believers merely to become excited about discovering God's will. He commands them to understand it. That distinction exposes the confusion surrounding much modern religious teaching. Many Christians imagine that the will of God is principally a hidden collection of personal decisions concerning whom they should marry, where they should live, what employment they should accept, or which ministry position they should pursue. Those decisions can certainly involve serious spiritual responsibility, and believers should seek wisdom through prayer, Scripture, and godly counsel. But the apostle does not begin by offering a secret method for discovering the name of a future spouse or the address of a future employer. He directs believers toward understanding what the Lord requires. First Thessalonians 4:3 declares plainly, “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication:” There is a statement that does not require interpretation through dreams, unusual circumstances, or an impressive spiritual personality. Some Christians want God to reveal the next twenty years of their lives while they continue negotiating with a commandment He revealed two thousand years ago. The difficulty is not always

discovering God's will. Sometimes it is becoming willing to obey what He has already made perfectly clear.

Scripture identifies several responsibilities as the will of God rather than leaving believers to construct their own standards. First Thessalonians 5:18 declares, “In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.” First Peter 2:15 states, “For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men:” Romans 12:2 instructs believers to avoid conformity to this world and be transformed by the renewing of their minds, “that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” These passages concern thanksgiving, sanctification, righteous conduct, and spiritual transformation. They establish the moral character of the Christian walk rather than promising special knowledge of every future circumstance. A believer may not know which employment opportunity will prove most advantageous, but he can know that dishonesty is unacceptable. He may not know every difficulty awaiting his family, but he can know that faithfulness, love, and gratitude remain appropriate. The Lord has not hidden His moral will behind a locked door requiring a special religious expert to discover the combination. He has placed His commandments in the Scriptures and instructed His children to obey them.

The expression “the will of the Lord” also distinguishes divine authority from personal preference. A Christian may sincerely desire a particular outcome, pray earnestly concerning it, and believe that it would provide a worthwhile opportunity for service. Those desires should be examined according to Scripture, but they must not automatically be promoted into infallible revelations. James 4:15 declares, “For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.” The passage recognizes human limitations concerning future plans. Proverbs 3:5–6 commands trusting the Lord rather than leaning upon one's own understanding and acknowledging Him in all one's ways. Such dependence does not eliminate the necessity of careful judgment; it places judgment under God's authority. The believer should seek wisdom, consider circumstances, fulfill known responsibilities, and remain willing to accept correction. Furthermore, Ephesians 5:18 immediately commands believers to be filled with the Spirit, connecting the understanding of God's will with practical spiritual government rather than religious speculation. The Christian who insists that every personal preference represents a direct command from heaven has confused the will of God with the wishes of the flesh. The two may occasionally agree, but the agreement must be established by truth rather than assumed through enthusiasm.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 5:17 establishes the responsibility of believers to understand and obey the revealed will of the Lord rather than live according to spiritual ignorance, fleshly impressions, or personal speculation. The command follows Paul's instruction to walk circumspectly and redeem the time because the days are evil. Spiritual wisdom is therefore practical, requiring knowledge of Scripture and submission to its authority. The apostle does not present God's will as an impossible mystery available only to Christians claiming extraordinary revelations. Scripture plainly identifies sanctification, thanksgiving, righteous conduct, and spiritual transformation as matters belonging to God's will. The believer who refuses these clearly revealed responsibilities while continually searching for some mysterious personal assignment has reversed the priorities established by the word of God.

The passage also preserves the distinction between God's revealed moral will and His providential direction concerning particular circumstances. Christians should pray about employment, marriage, ministry, finances, and other important decisions, but they must not confuse sincere desires or unusual impressions with authoritative biblical revelation. Scripture supplies the principles necessary for wise judgment even when it does not specify every individual decision. Salvation remains the free gift of God through faith in Jesus Christ, while understanding and obeying the Lord's will concerns the practical walk of those already redeemed. The central lesson is that understanding God's will begins with believing what He has written, obeying what He has commanded, and refusing to substitute religious speculation for revealed truth.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. The Immediate Context Of Spiritual Wisdom

Ephesians 5:14 — “Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.”

Ephesians 5:15 — “See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,”

Ephesians 5:16 — “Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.”

Ephesians 5:17 — “Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.”

2. Biblical Wisdom Rejects Foolishness

Proverbs 12:15 — “The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise.”

Proverbs 14:15 — “The simple believeth every word: but the prudent man looketh well to his going.”

Proverbs 4:7 — “Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding.”

1 Corinthians 14:20 — “Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men.”

3. God's Revealed Will For Believers

1 Thessalonians 4:3 — “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication:”

1 Thessalonians 5:18 — “In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.”

1 Peter 2:15 — “For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men:”

Romans 12:2 — “that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”

4. Seeking Wisdom Without Presuming Upon God

James 1:5 — “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God”

James 4:15 — “If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.”

Proverbs 3:5 — “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.”

Psalm 119:105 — “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.”

5. Understanding God's Will Through Spiritual Growth

Ephesians 5:18 — “And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;”

Galatians 5:16 — “Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.”

Colossians 1:9 — “that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;”

John 17:17 — “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.”

6. Salvation And Practical Obedience Distinguished

Ephesians 2:8 — “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:”

Ephesians 1:13 — “after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,”

Ephesians 2:10 — “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works”

2 Corinthians 5:10 — “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ;”

7. God's Will In An Evil World

Colossians 4:5 — “Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time.”

Galatians 1:4 — “that he might deliver us from this present evil world”

Ephesians 5:10 — “Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.”

Romans 13:11 — “that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.”

5. Reflection

Ephesians 5:17 confronts a peculiar contradiction among Christians who continually announce their desire to discover God's will while neglecting the commandments God has already revealed. They may spend hours asking whether the Lord wants them to accept another job, move to another city, or undertake some ambitious ministry project, yet give remarkably little attention to sanctification, thanksgiving, honesty, and ordinary Christian obedience. Those personal decisions deserve prayerful consideration, but they must not replace the revealed responsibilities of Scripture. First Thessalonians 4:3 identifies sanctification as the will of God, and First Thessalonians 5:18 commands thanksgiving in every circumstance. A Christian who refuses to obey the clear commandments of Scripture should not congratulate himself for seeking mysterious instructions concerning tomorrow. The first responsibility is to understand and obey what God has written.

The command also exposes the religious error of treating private impressions as though they possess the authority of biblical revelation. A man may sincerely believe he ought to pursue a particular opportunity, but sincerity does not establish that Almighty God has personally commanded the decision. Another may announce that the Holy Ghost has directed him to undertake an arrangement that contradicts Scripture. At that point, the claim must yield to the written word rather than receive an exemption because the speaker sounds unusually confident. The Spirit of God does not authorize dishonesty, immorality, or false doctrine. First Thessalonians 5:21 declares, “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.” The phrase “God told me” is not a substitute for biblical evidence, and a man who

continually uses divine authority to defend personal preferences has made himself remarkably difficult to correct.

Nevertheless, the believer must not imagine that understanding God's will requires abandoning ordinary judgment or refusing to make decisions unless a miraculous sign appears. Scripture establishes principles concerning honesty, diligence, marriage, financial responsibility, Christian fellowship, and the proper treatment of others. Within those boundaries, a Christian should seek wisdom, consider available information, pray, receive appropriate counsel, and make responsible decisions. James 4:15 reminds believers to acknowledge the Lord's will concerning future plans because circumstances remain beyond their complete control. That dependence does not require pretending to know what God has not disclosed. The Christian who waits for heaven to announce every ordinary decision may spend his entire life standing at the crossroads while the opportunities before him disappear. Biblical wisdom requires action guided by truth.

This verse must also be distinguished from the false teaching that perfect obedience is necessary to purchase or preserve eternal life. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes salvation by grace through faith, apart from human works, while Ephesians 1:13 identifies the believer's sealing with the Holy Spirit. Paul is therefore instructing redeemed people concerning their daily walk rather than presenting another method of regeneration. Nevertheless, eternal security does not relieve the Christian of responsibility before the Lord. Ephesians 5 repeatedly commands believers to reject sin, walk in the light, exercise discernment, and understand God's will. Second Corinthians 5:10 establishes accountability at the judgment seat of Christ. Grace secures the believer through Jesus Christ, but it does not transform every foolish decision into a wise one. Salvation and faithful service must remain doctrinally distinct.

The practical application reaches every ordinary responsibility of Christian life. A husband does not need an extraordinary revelation to discover that Scripture commands him to love his wife. A parent does not require a prophetic dream to understand the importance of raising children according to biblical instruction. A worker does not need a supernatural sign to establish that dishonesty is unacceptable, and a Christian does not need private revelation to know that lost sinners require the gospel. Such responsibilities already appear in the written word. The particular circumstances surrounding their fulfillment may require additional judgment, but the moral obligations themselves are established. The Christian who keeps searching for an impressive assignment while neglecting ordinary obedience has confused spiritual significance with public recognition. God's will reaches the household and workplace as surely as the pulpit.

Finally, Ephesians 5:17 should encourage believers to approach the Scriptures with confidence, humility, and a willingness to obey. The Lord has not commanded His children to understand His will while withholding every means of spiritual instruction. He has provided His written word, given believers the Holy Spirit, and commanded them to study and walk wisely. Where the Scriptures speak plainly, obedience should follow without endless negotiation. Where personal circumstances require judgment, prayer and careful consideration should replace presumption and unnecessary fear. Where uncertainty remains, the Christian should acknowledge his limitations rather than invent divine instructions. Stop searching for a secret commandment while ignoring the written commandments already before you. Study the Book, obey the truth, walk in the Spirit, and use the opportunities God has provided. The instruction is neither mysterious nor complicated: "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is."

Ephesians 5:18 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 5:18

"And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;"

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"And be not drunk with wine"

Paul has arrived at a command that exposes the difference between a life governed by the flesh and a life governed by the Holy Spirit: "And be not drunk with wine." Notice the opening word "And." The apostle is continuing his instructions concerning the Christian walk, not introducing an unrelated discussion about beverages. Ephesians 5:15 commands believers to walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise. Verse 16 commands them to redeem the time because the days are evil. Verse 17 instructs them to understand the will of the Lord. Now Paul identifies one particular form of fleshly control that directly contradicts spiritual wisdom. Drunkenness clouds judgment, weakens restraint, and places a person under an influence that encourages foolish conduct. The Christian who has been commanded to walk carefully has no business deliberately surrendering the judgment necessary to watch where he is going. A man cannot reasonably boast of spiritual discernment while willingly surrendering his senses to intoxication.

The warning is consistent with the testimony of Scripture. Proverbs 20:1 declares, “Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.” Proverbs 23:31 warns, “Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright.” The following verse declares, “At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.” The danger is not merely that drunkenness makes somebody appear foolish in public. Intoxication can damage judgment, destroy relationships, encourage immorality, and contribute to actions that bring lasting consequences. Romans 13:13 commands believers to walk honestly rather than engage in rioting and drunkenness. The bottle may promise relaxation, courage, pleasure, or escape, but it has never possessed the power to turn rebellion into righteousness. The Christian should take the biblical warnings seriously rather than treating intoxication as harmless amusement.

The command also establishes a necessary distinction between Christian liberty and fleshly indulgence. Scripture does not teach that every reference to wine concerns precisely the same circumstance or that every occurrence of drinking constitutes drunkenness. Nevertheless, Ephesians 5:18 explicitly condemns intoxication, and the broader biblical warnings establish strong reasons for caution and abstinence. First Corinthians 6:12 declares, “All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.” That final expression is especially appropriate here. The Christian must not allow an appetite to become his master. Romans 14:21 also recognizes the importance of refusing conduct that causes a brother to stumble. A believer who must continually invent explanations for why his drinking should not concern anybody may already be allowing the bottle far too much influence over his reasoning. Biblical wisdom asks not merely what a man might defend, but what most faithfully serves holiness.

“wherein is excess”

The next expression identifies the destructive condition associated with the warning: “wherein is excess.” Paul does not merely criticize drunkenness because it lacks fashionable manners or violates accepted social customs. He identifies a moral disorder that contradicts the disciplined walk required of a redeemed person. Excess involves the abandonment of proper restraint, and drunkenness provides an unmistakable example of that danger. The man who surrenders himself to intoxication places his judgment, speech, and conduct at unnecessary risk. Proverbs 23:29 asks who has woe, sorrow, contentions, babbling, wounds without cause, and redness of eyes. The next verse answers by describing those who tarry long at the wine. There is the flesh advertising pleasure while

Scripture displays the consequences. The advertisement promises a pleasant evening; the Bible warns that the purchaser may receive a considerably larger bill than he anticipated.

The expression must be understood without forcing it to say something beyond its context. Paul's immediate prohibition concerns drunkenness with wine, in which he identifies excess. The verse should not be misquoted as though it explicitly declares that every medicinal or ordinary use of wine is identical to drunkenness. Yet neither should that distinction become an excuse for ignoring the seriousness of intoxication. The Christian must examine the actual danger rather than seek the narrowest possible interpretation that preserves his preferred habit. Galatians 5:19–21 includes drunkenness and revellings among the works of the flesh. First Peter 5:8 commands believers to be sober and vigilant. The spirit of those instructions is not difficult to understand. The Lord has not commanded His children to preserve spiritual alertness merely so they can discover how much intoxication may be enjoyed before responsibility becomes inconvenient. Christian freedom must remain governed by holiness.

The principle of excess also reaches beyond the particular substance named in the verse. Other habits can become instruments of fleshly domination when a believer loses proper restraint. Entertainment, gambling, uncontrolled spending, gluttony, and the endless pursuit of pleasure may all consume attention that should remain governed by wisdom. Those applications must not erase the specific warning against drunkenness, nor should every legitimate enjoyment be condemned as sinful. The issue is whether an appetite has become a master rather than remaining subject to righteous judgment. First Corinthians 9:27 records Paul's determination to keep his body under and bring it into subjection. The Christian's physical appetites are not entitled to govern his spiritual responsibilities. The flesh is a miserable servant to obey and an even worse master to employ. Give it control of the household, and before long it will be selling the furniture to finance another appetite.

“but be filled with the Spirit”

The final expression supplies the great positive command of the verse: “but be filled with the Spirit.” Notice the contrast. Paul does not merely command Christians to reject drunkenness and leave them with a collection of prohibitions. He directs them toward the government of the Holy Spirit. This is not a command to receive salvation a second time or obtain the Spirit through some extraordinary religious ceremony. Ephesians 1:13 declares that believers were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise after believing the gospel, while Ephesians 4:30 establishes that sealing “unto the day of redemption.” Romans 8:9 declares, “Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” The indwelling Spirit belongs to the believer's relationship with Jesus Christ. Being filled with the Spirit concerns the Christian's continuing responsibility to live under His direction rather than the

domination of the flesh. The Holy Ghost is not an occasional visitor who must be summoned through emotional excitement whenever a Christian desires to become spiritual. He indwells the redeemed, and they are commanded to walk accordingly.

The difference between indwelling and filling is essential to understanding this passage. First Corinthians 12:13 teaches that believers are baptized by one Spirit into one body. That identification with Christ must not be confused with the continuing practical command to be filled with the Spirit. A believer may belong securely to Jesus Christ while grieving the Holy Spirit through bitterness, dishonesty, anger, or other disobedience. Ephesians 4:30–32 demonstrates that connection within the same epistle. Galatians 5:16 declares, “This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.” The Spirit-filled walk therefore requires yielding to God rather than granting the flesh unrestricted authority. It is not measured by unusual sensations, public performances, or claims of supernatural superiority. A man who claims extraordinary fullness of the Holy Ghost while continually refusing the commandments of the Holy Ghost has provided an excellent reason to examine his claim. The Spirit of truth does not lead believers into a practical arrangement where obedience to truth becomes optional.

The verses immediately following Ephesians 5:18 provide important evidence concerning the character of Spirit-filled living. Verse 19 describes psalms, hymns, spiritual songs, and melody directed toward the Lord. Verse 20 commands thanksgiving to God through Jesus Christ, while verse 21 addresses submission in the fear of God. Colossians 3:16 presents a remarkable parallel through the command, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom,” followed by instruction concerning psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. The connection between God's word and the Spirit-filled life should not be overlooked. The Spirit who inspired Scripture does not lead the believer away from its authority. Acts 4:31 also records believers filled with the Holy Ghost speaking the word of God with boldness. The Spirit-filled life is not established by who shouts the loudest, falls the hardest, or announces the most extraordinary experience. It is recognized through obedience, truth, thanksgiving, godly conduct, and faithful testimony to Jesus Christ. The Lord has supplied a biblical standard considerably more dependable than religious theater.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 5:18 establishes the contrast between fleshly intoxication and the Spirit-governed Christian life. Drunkenness contradicts the wisdom, sobriety, and careful walking commanded throughout the surrounding passage. The apostle identifies excess in connection with intoxication and directs believers away from surrendering their judgment to a substance that can encourage sinful conduct. The warning requires serious attention without confusing legitimate biblical distinctions or inventing additional words for the

verse. The positive command is equally important: believers are to be filled with the Spirit rather than governed by the flesh. The Christian has not been redeemed to exchange spiritual judgment for intoxication, nor to replace one fleshly dependency with another. He has been called to walk under the authority of the Holy Spirit.

The verse also preserves the distinction between the indwelling and sealing of the Holy Spirit at salvation and the believer's continuing responsibility to be filled with the Spirit. Salvation comes through faith in Jesus Christ, while spiritual filling concerns the practical walk of those already redeemed. The following verses identify characteristics associated with this life, including godly singing, thanksgiving, and submission in the fear of God. These are not theatrical demonstrations designed to impress a congregation, but manifestations of Christian conduct shaped by truth. The Spirit-filled life does not eliminate the believer's responsibility to obey Scripture or overcome every weakness instantaneously. The central lesson is that the Holy Ghost must govern the redeemed person's conduct rather than the flesh, the bottle, or the desire for sensational religious experiences.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. The Immediate Context Of Spiritual Wisdom

Ephesians 5:15 — “See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,”

Ephesians 5:16 — “Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.”

Ephesians 5:17 — “Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.”

Ephesians 5:18 — “And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;”

2. Scripture Warns Against Drunkenness

Proverbs 20:1 — “Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.”

Proverbs 23:31 — “Look not thou upon the wine when it is red”

Proverbs 23:32 — “At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.”

Romans 13:13 — “not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness”

3. Sobriety And Self-Control Belong To Wisdom

1 Thessalonians 5:6 — “Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.”

1 Peter 5:8 — “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about”

Titus 2:12 — “we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;”

1 Corinthians 6:12 — “but I will not be brought under the power of any.”

4. The Holy Spirit Indwells And Seals Believers

Ephesians 1:13 — “after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,”

Ephesians 4:30 — “whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.”

Romans 8:9 — “Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.”

1 Corinthians 12:13 — “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body”

5. The Spirit-Filled Walk Produces Godly Conduct

Galatians 5:16 — “Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.”

Galatians 5:22 — “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,”

Colossians 3:16 — “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom”

Acts 4:31 — “and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.”

6. The Results Of Being Filled With The Spirit

Ephesians 5:19 — “singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;”

Ephesians 5:20 — “Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;”

Ephesians 5:21 — “Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.”

Colossians 3:17 — “do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.”

7. The Flesh Must Not Govern The Redeemed

Galatians 5:21 — “drunkenness, revellings, and such like:”

1 Corinthians 6:20 — “For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.”

Ephesians 4:29 — “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth”

1 Thessalonians 5:21 — “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.”

5. Reflection

Ephesians 5:18 exposes a contradiction that no Christian should attempt to defend: the deliberate surrender of personal judgment to intoxication while professing a desire to walk in the wisdom of God. Paul has just commanded believers to walk circumspectly, redeem the time, and understand the will of the Lord. Now he identifies drunkenness as conduct contrary to that instruction. A man cannot reasonably claim to be guarding his steps while deliberately interfering with his ability to recognize where those steps are taking him. Scripture warns that strong drink deceives, destroys restraint, and encourages foolish conduct. The flesh may advertise intoxication as freedom, but a habit that gains control over a man has furnished him with another form of bondage. Christian wisdom requires more than fashionable excuses for dangerous appetites.

The command also requires believers to distinguish sound doctrine from personal attempts to weaken biblical warnings. Ephesians 5:18 explicitly prohibits drunkenness, while Proverbs supplies substantial warnings concerning wine and strong drink. The Christian should not invent additional wording for the passage, but neither should he use careful interpretation as an excuse to pursue intoxication. First Corinthians 6:12 declares that the believer should not be brought under the power of anything. That principle reaches beyond the argument over how much drinking might be defended. It concerns whether an appetite has begun exercising authority over conduct. The Christian who spends more energy defending an intoxicating habit than examining its consequences may have allowed the flesh to become his favorite Bible commentator. Wisdom considers holiness, sobriety, personal responsibility, and the effect of conduct upon others.

The second half of the verse supplies something far better than another religious prohibition: “but be filled with the Spirit.” This command is addressed to believers who already possess the Holy Spirit through faith in Jesus Christ. Ephesians 1:13 establishes the believer's sealing after hearing and believing the gospel, while Ephesians 4:30 declares that sealing continues unto the day of redemption. Being filled with the Spirit is therefore not a second purchase of salvation or a repeated reception of eternal life. It concerns the practical government of the Christian's conduct. Galatians 5:16 commands believers to walk in the Spirit rather than fulfill the lust of the flesh. The Spirit-filled life begins with

dependence upon the Lord, not confidence in the old nature's ability to manufacture holiness. Salvation and practical sanctification must remain distinct.

This truth also exposes counterfeit ideas concerning spiritual filling. Some imagine that the Holy Ghost must produce extraordinary emotional displays whenever He governs a believer. Others treat unusual sensations, impressive claims, or religious excitement as automatic evidence of superior spirituality. But the following verses describe singing to the Lord, thanksgiving, and submission in the fear of God. Colossians 3:16 connects similar conduct with allowing the word of Christ to dwell richly in believers. The Holy Spirit does not contradict the Scriptures He inspired or relieve Christians of ordinary obedience. A man who claims to be filled with the Spirit while remaining dishonest, vindictive, or deliberately rebellious has supplied more evidence of his need for correction than of his spiritual superiority. Genuine spirituality must withstand biblical examination.

The practical application reaches into the household, workplace, congregation, and private life. A Spirit-filled husband should demonstrate love toward his wife, not merely enthusiasm during worship. A parent should exercise biblical responsibility toward children rather than expecting a religious experience to compensate for neglect. A worker should practice honesty, diligence, and fairness because the Lord's authority extends beyond the church building. A believer struggling with an addictive habit should seek wise assistance and necessary care rather than conceal the problem behind religious appearances. The Holy Ghost does not command people to pretend they have conquered struggles that remain serious. He calls them to truth, obedience, and dependence upon the grace of God. Spiritual maturity concerns faithful growth rather than a performance designed to impress spectators.

Finally, Ephesians 5:18 presents a choice concerning the governing influence of the Christian life. The believer must not surrender his judgment to drunkenness or permit the appetites of the flesh to rule his decisions. Neither must he confuse being filled with the Spirit with obtaining another salvation experience or producing dramatic religious excitement. He should study the Scriptures, walk in the Spirit, reject known sin, cultivate thanksgiving, and fulfill the responsibilities entrusted to him. Where he has failed, he should acknowledge the failure and pursue correction rather than defend disobedience. The Lord did not redeem His people so that a bottle, an appetite, or a theatrical religious performance could govern their lives. The command remains plain and sufficient: “And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.”

Ephesians 5:19 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 5:19

“Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;”

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

“Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs”

Paul has arrived at a passage that ought to settle one of the most neglected questions concerning Christian music: What is singing supposed to accomplish in the life of a Spirit-filled believer? Notice that Ephesians 5:19 follows immediately after the command in verse 18, “And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;” The apostle has contrasted fleshly intoxication with the government of the Holy Spirit, and now he identifies conduct associated with that spiritual filling. The first expression is “Speaking to yourselves.” This is not merely a command for a Christian to entertain himself with pleasant religious melodies. It describes communication among believers through music that carries spiritual truth. The congregation participates in instructing, encouraging, and strengthening one another through words directed toward the things of God. Colossians 3:16 supplies the clearest companion passage, commanding believers to let the word of Christ dwell richly in them while teaching and admonishing one another through psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. The Church was never commanded to assemble merely to admire musical talent. Christian singing is supposed to communicate truth, strengthen faith, and direct attention toward the Lord Jesus Christ. A congregation can possess an excellent choir and still be spiritually malnourished if the music communicates more sentiment than Scripture.

The apostle identifies three expressions: “psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.” These should be considered carefully without pretending that Paul supplied three rigid musical categories defined by modern terminology. Psalms naturally direct attention toward the inspired songs preserved in Scripture, especially the book of Psalms, where believers encounter praise, thanksgiving, lamentation, trust, divine judgment, and the majesty of Almighty God. Hymns emphasize songs of praise, including the praise of God for His character and mighty works. Matthew 26:30 records the Lord Jesus Christ and His disciples singing a hymn before departing to the mount of Olives. Spiritual songs provide a broader description of songs characterized by spiritual truth and purpose. Such songs need not all appear in one particular hymnal or possess the same musical arrangement. Yet the word “spiritual” establishes a standard that cannot be ignored. A song does not become

spiritually profitable simply because the singer mentions heaven, uses the name of Jesus, or inserts an occasional Bible verse between expressions of worldly sentiment. A songbook may contain hundreds of pages, but the number of songs does not establish their spiritual quality. The Holy Ghost is considerably more interested in truth than in whether somebody managed to find a tune catchy enough to remain in the congregation's head until Tuesday.

The three expressions also demonstrate that Christian music should possess both doctrinal substance and spiritual usefulness. Some songs directly present the words of Scripture. Others teach biblical doctrines, celebrate redemption, encourage faithfulness, or express gratitude for the mercy of God. There is room for different musical forms, cultural backgrounds, and personal preferences, provided the content and manner remain consistent with biblical principles. A familiar hymn is not automatically doctrinally sound because it has survived for generations, and a newly written song is not automatically corrupt because it has not yet acquired an antique reputation. Both must be examined. First Corinthians 14:15 declares, “I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.” Spiritual understanding belongs alongside sincere expression. The Christian should therefore examine what a song actually teaches about salvation, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the believer's responsibilities. A beautiful melody cannot rescue a false doctrine, any more than polished brass can turn counterfeit money into genuine currency. Music may carry the message magnificently, but the message must still agree with the Book.

“singing and making melody”

The next expression establishes that Christian music involves more than speaking religious words in an ordinary manner: “singing and making melody.” God has given human beings the capacity to express truth through music, and Scripture repeatedly demonstrates that singing possesses an important place in worship. Psalm 95:1 declares, “O come, let us sing unto the LORD: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation.” Psalm 100:2 commands, “Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing.” Those passages belong to Israel's worship, but they establish that singing itself is no worldly invention that the Church must reluctantly tolerate. Acts 16:25 records Paul and Silas praying and singing praises unto God while imprisoned at Philippi. Their circumstances were hardly arranged for an entertaining performance, yet their praise continued. The Christian who can sing only when everything is comfortable has not yet discovered the spiritual usefulness of a song that remains true when circumstances become unpleasant. Music should express the truth of God rather than depend entirely upon favorable conditions.

The words “making melody” also demonstrate that musical expression belongs within the apostle's instruction. There is no justification for pretending that musical quality is irrelevant or that carelessly performed singing becomes more spiritual simply because nobody bothered to prepare. First Chronicles 25 describes organized musicians in Israel's temple service, while Psalm 33:3 commands, “Sing unto him a new song; play skilfully with a loud noise.” Those Old Testament instructions concern their own historical circumstances and should not be transferred indiscriminately into requirements for a New Testament congregation. Nevertheless, they establish that skillful musical expression is not inherently contrary to godliness. Ephesians 5:19 does not prescribe particular instruments, tempos, or arrangements, nor does it explicitly forbid accompaniment. Such questions require biblical judgment rather than the invention of commandments absent from the passage. A musician does not become carnal merely because he knows how to play his instrument, and an incompetent performance does not become holy simply because somebody mistakes poor preparation for spiritual simplicity. Skill should serve worship rather than become an excuse for personal exhibition.

At the same time, melody must never be permitted to overpower the spiritual purpose of the words. Music possesses the ability to stir emotions, strengthen memories, and influence the atmosphere of a gathering, but emotional effectiveness does not establish spiritual correctness. A congregation may become deeply moved by a melody while paying almost no attention to the doctrine being sung. Another may become so impressed by professional performances that ordinary believers are reduced to spectators at what was supposed to be congregational worship. First Corinthians 14:26 establishes the principle, “Let all things be done unto edifying.” Music should therefore be selected and presented in a manner that serves the spiritual benefit of the assembly. Excellence is commendable when it remains subordinate to truth and humility. The purpose of a Christian song is not to make the singer appear magnificent while the Saviour becomes an occasional reference in the lyrics. If the audience remembers the performer but cannot remember what was taught about Christ, the performance deserves examination.

“in your heart to the Lord”

The final expression identifies both the inward character and the ultimate direction of Christian singing: “in your heart to the Lord.” Notice that Paul does not merely require sound from the lips. The music must arise from a heart engaged with the truth being expressed. That distinction exposes the danger of outward worship disconnected from inward sincerity. Matthew 15:8 records the Lord declaring, “This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.” The immediate passage concerns religious hypocrisy, but its warning applies directly to the

danger of using sacred words without genuine regard for God. A congregation may sing about surrender while its members deliberately defend known disobedience. A singer may perform a moving declaration of devotion while privately treating worship as an opportunity for admiration. The Lord can hear the words coming from the mouth, but He also knows the condition of the heart producing them. A beautiful voice is a valuable gift, but it is a poor disguise for deliberate hypocrisy.

The phrase “in your heart” does not cancel the earlier command to speak and sing audibly. Paul is not instructing Christians to abandon outward music and replace congregational singing with silent private thoughts. The two aspects belong together. The words are communicated among believers, while the inward affection and purpose remain directed toward God. A person with little musical training may offer sincere praise, while a gifted performer may sing without genuine devotion. Yet neither sincerity nor technical excellence eliminates the need for biblical truth. John 4:24 declares, “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” That statement arose during Christ's conversation with the Samaritan woman, but the necessity of genuine worship remains evident. The heart must not become an excuse for doctrinal ignorance any more than correct doctrine should become an excuse for cold religious formalism. The Lord did not command His people to choose between a truthful song and a sincere heart. He expects the truth to be sung with genuine devotion rather than merely pronounced by people who have memorized the words.

Finally, the words “to the Lord” establish the principal audience of Christian worship. The congregation receives encouragement, but Jesus Christ remains the One toward whom the singing is directed. That distinction should govern the motives of the singer, the decisions of the musician, and the attitude of the assembled believers. A hymn may be doctrinally accurate and musically excellent while becoming corrupted through the performer's desire for personal glory. Conversely, a quiet song offered sincerely to the Lord may possess spiritual worth without attracting any earthly recognition. Colossians 3:17 declares, “And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.” Ephesians 5:20 immediately connects the present instruction with thanksgiving in the name of Jesus Christ. The Christian singer is not auditioning for heaven's entertainment committee. He is offering praise to the Lord who redeemed him. When Christ becomes secondary to applause, Christian music has begun drifting away from the very Person it claims to honor.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 5:19 identifies biblically sound singing as an expression of the Spirit-filled Christian life. The apostle connects music with the mutual edification of believers, the

communication of spiritual truth, and sincere devotion to the Lord. Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs provide varied forms through which God's people may praise Him, remember His works, encourage one another, and express biblical instruction. The passage does not establish musical talent, emotional intensity, or public recognition as measures of spiritual maturity. Nor does it authorize Christians to treat musical preferences as commandments that Scripture itself has not given. The governing concern is whether the singing communicates truth, strengthens believers, and directs genuine praise toward Jesus Christ.

The verse also distinguishes outward musical performance from worship arising from the heart. Singing must possess spiritual substance rather than rely merely upon attractive melodies or powerful emotional effects. The relationship with Colossians 3:16 demonstrates the importance of God's word dwelling richly in believers, while the surrounding verses of Ephesians connect Spirit-filled conduct with thanksgiving and godly relationships. Salvation is received through faith in Christ, not through musical participation, and the ability to sing well does not establish spiritual superiority. The central lesson is that Christian music should carry the truth of Scripture, edify the saints, and glorify the Lord rather than turn worship into another opportunity for the flesh to receive admiration.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. The Immediate Context Of Spirit-Filled Singing

Ephesians 5:18 — “but be filled with the Spirit;”

Ephesians 5:19 — “Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs”

Ephesians 5:20 — “Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;”

Ephesians 5:21 — “Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.”

2. Music Communicates Biblical Truth

Colossians 3:16 — “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom;”

1 Corinthians 14:15 — “I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.”

1 Corinthians 14:26 — “Let all things be done unto edifying.”

Psalm 119:54 — “Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage.”

3. Scripture Encourages Singing To God

Psalm 95:1 — “O come, let us sing unto the LORD: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation.”

Psalm 100:2 — “Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing.”

Psalm 149:1 — “Sing unto the LORD a new song, and his praise in the congregation of saints.”

James 5:13 — “Is any merry? let him sing psalms.”

4. Hymns And Praise In Biblical Practice

Matthew 26:30 — “And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.”

Acts 16:25 — “And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.”

1 Chronicles 16:9 — “Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him, talk ye of all his wondrous works.”

Psalm 147:1 — “Praise ye the LORD: for it is good to sing praises unto our God; for it is pleasant; and praise is comely.”

5. Musical Expression And Skillful Praise

Psalm 33:3 — “Sing unto him a new song; play skilfully with a loud noise.”

Psalm 150:3 — “Praise him with the sound of the trumpet: praise him with the psaltery and harp.”

Psalm 150:5 — “Praise him upon the loud cymbals: praise him upon the high sounding cymbals.”

1 Samuel 16:23 — “David took an harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed”

6. Worship Must Come From The Heart

Matthew 15:8 — “and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.”

John 4:24 — “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”

1 Samuel 16:7 — “for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.”

Psalm 51:17 — “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.”

7. Praise Must Glorify The Lord

Colossians 3:17 — “do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.”

Hebrews 13:15 — “let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually”

1 Corinthians 10:31 — “whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.”

1 Thessalonians 5:18 — “In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.”

5. Reflection

Ephesians 5:19 confronts a problem that has quietly transformed music in some congregations from an instrument of spiritual instruction into a form of religious entertainment. Paul does not command believers to assemble merely to admire the musical abilities of a select group of performers. He commands them to speak to one another through psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Colossians 3:16 explains that this activity includes teaching and admonishing one another through music. Christian singing therefore possesses a responsibility that entertainment does not necessarily recognize. A congregation may produce magnificent music while teaching almost nothing about the Lord Jesus Christ. The quality of the performance cannot substitute for the spiritual substance of the message.

The three expressions Paul employs also require discernment without permitting personal musical preferences to become universal commandments. Psalms direct believers toward the inspired songs of Scripture, while hymns and spiritual songs provide further opportunities for biblical praise and instruction. Their value must be examined according to the truth they communicate and the purposes they serve. An old hymn can contain theological weakness, just as a newly written song can communicate sound doctrine. Neither age nor novelty establishes spiritual quality. Christians should examine what they sing rather than merely defend whatever music they have become accustomed to hearing. The Lord did not authorize every musical preference to become a new article of faith. Scripture must remain the standard.

This does not mean musical arrangements, presentation, and atmosphere are spiritually irrelevant. The manner in which music is performed can either support its message or distract from it. A congregation may become more interested in dramatic effects, personal recognition, or emotional excitement than in biblical instruction. Yet the opposite extreme

is equally foolish when Christians imagine that poor singing, unnecessary dullness, or deliberate neglect of musical preparation somehow establishes superior holiness. Scripture recognizes skillful praise and sincere rejoicing. The issue is whether those abilities serve truth rather than compete with it. A gifted musician should use his ability for God's glory, not demand that God share His glory with the musician. The distinction is simple but essential.

The expression “in your heart” exposes another danger: outward worship without inward devotion. A Christian may sing every word accurately while deliberately refusing the obedience those words describe. Another may possess a beautiful voice and considerable musical training while treating the congregation as an audience assembled primarily for personal admiration. Matthew 15:8 warns concerning those whose lips honor God while their hearts remain far from Him. Yet sincerity must not become an excuse for doctrinal error or careless preparation. Worship requires truth as well as genuine devotion. A man cannot purify false doctrine merely by singing it sincerely, and he cannot substitute correct lyrics for a heart unwilling to obey God. Both require examination.

This passage must also remain distinct from the doctrine of salvation. No sinner receives eternal life through singing hymns, participating in congregational worship, or demonstrating impressive musical ability. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes salvation by grace through faith, apart from human works. Ephesians 1:13 identifies the believer's sealing with the Holy Spirit after believing the gospel. The command concerning singing appears in the instructions governing those already redeemed. Music is therefore an expression of Christian worship and mutual edification rather than a means of purchasing redemption. A believer who struggles to sing because of age, illness, or physical limitation should not be regarded as spiritually inferior. The Lord measures faithfulness by more than vocal ability, and heaven's approval cannot be purchased through musical talent.

Finally, Ephesians 5:19 directs the attention of every Christian toward the Person who deserves the praise: “the Lord.” Christian music should encourage believers, communicate sound doctrine, cultivate thanksgiving, and strengthen their attention to Jesus Christ. It should not become another battlefield for personal vanity, unnecessary disputes, or the pursuit of worldly admiration. The congregation should sing with understanding, the musician should serve with humility, and the teacher should examine the doctrine being communicated. Where the words are biblical, the heart sincere, and the purpose directed toward Christ, music becomes a valuable expression of the Spirit-filled walk. Sing the truth, believe the truth, and live according to the truth. The Lord did not redeem His people to become spectators at a religious performance, but worshippers whose hearts and voices agree in giving glory to Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 5:20 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 5:20

"Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;"

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"Giving thanks always"

Paul continues his description of the Spirit-filled Christian life with a command that ought to expose the miserable habit of complaining among people who claim to know the grace of Almighty God: "Giving thanks always." Notice that this statement follows directly after Ephesians 5:18, where believers are commanded to be filled with the Spirit, and verse 19, where they are instructed to speak to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Thanksgiving is therefore not an isolated religious courtesy added to an otherwise completed list of Christian responsibilities. It belongs to the conduct produced when the Holy Spirit governs the believer's walk. The Christian who possesses eternal life, forgiveness of sins, the indwelling Spirit, and the promises of God has substantial reasons for gratitude even when earthly circumstances are unpleasant. A man who has been delivered from the penalty of sin and promised an inheritance in Christ ought to find something better to do with his tongue than continually announce that life has not provided him with everything he wanted. Gratitude does not mean pretending that hardship is pleasant; it means recognizing the goodness of God while enduring it.

The word "always" establishes the continuing character of the instruction. Paul does not command thanksgiving only when the bills are paid, the family is healthy, the congregation is flourishing, and every personal ambition is proceeding according to schedule. First Thessalonians 5:18 declares, "In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." Notice that thanksgiving is identified as the will of God for believers. Philippians 4:6 likewise instructs Christians to bring their requests before God with thanksgiving rather than surrender themselves to anxious care. Those passages do not require the Christian to experience constant emotional happiness or deny the reality of suffering. Paul himself endured imprisonment, persecution, physical weakness, and considerable opposition. Nevertheless, he understood that the faithfulness of God does not disappear whenever circumstances become difficult. If thanksgiving depends entirely upon favorable circumstances, the Christian has not learned gratitude toward the Lord. He has merely learned how to express satisfaction when the Lord allows things to proceed according to his preferences.

This instruction also exposes the difference between sincere thanksgiving and religious performance. A person may publicly declare tremendous gratitude while privately nursing resentment against God because some desired outcome has not occurred. Another may offer elaborate prayers of thanksgiving before an audience while remaining habitually ungrateful toward those who serve him. Romans 1:21 identifies ingratitude among the corrupt responses of fallen mankind, declaring that men who knew God "glorified him not as God, neither were thankful." The believer should not resemble that condition through a continual refusal to acknowledge divine mercy. Yet thanksgiving must remain genuine rather than becoming another instrument of spiritual boasting. A Christian who has been blessed with prosperity should not assume that everyone enduring hardship possesses inferior faith. Gratitude is not a contest in which the man with the largest house wins first prize for recognizing the goodness of God. The believer who praises the Lord from a hospital bed may demonstrate a depth of thanksgiving that prosperity has never required another man to develop.

"for all things unto God and the Father"

The next expression establishes both the breadth and the direction of Christian gratitude: "for all things unto God and the Father." The words "all things" require careful examination because they are frequently handled with more enthusiasm than biblical discrimination. Paul is commanding believers to maintain thanksgiving toward God across the whole course of life, recognizing His providence, goodness, and sovereignty. Romans 8:28 declares, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." That promise does not declare that every event is itself morally good. It declares that God works all things together for good according to His purpose for those identified in the passage. Joseph understood a similar distinction when he told his brothers in Genesis 50:20 that they intended evil against him, but God meant it unto good. Their wickedness did not become righteousness merely because God overruled it for a greater purpose. Almighty God possesses sufficient wisdom to bring good out of wicked circumstances without requiring His children to pretend that the wickedness itself deserves applause.

This distinction matters when Christians confront suffering, injustice, persecution, or deliberate wrongdoing. James 1:13 declares that God cannot be tempted with evil and does not tempt any man. Isaiah 5:20 pronounces woe upon those who call evil good and good evil. The believer therefore must not interpret Ephesians 5:20 as a command to celebrate sin, excuse an abuser, praise injustice, or announce that every wicked act was righteous because God permitted it to occur. A Christian may thank the Lord for strength during suffering, mercy in deliverance, wisdom gained through correction, and the promise

that evil will not overturn His ultimate purposes. That is altogether different from thanking God for wickedness as wickedness. Nor must a grieving believer be pressured into cheerful declarations that deny genuine pain. There is a difference between trusting God in the furnace and pretending the fire is a delightful place to spend the afternoon. Biblical thanksgiving recognizes the Lord's faithfulness without requiring the conscience to call darkness light.

The words “unto God and the Father” identify the proper object of thanksgiving. The believer's gratitude is directed toward Almighty God, who has revealed Himself as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Ephesians 1:3 declares, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:” Notice the emphasis upon spiritual blessings possessed in Christ. The Christian should certainly acknowledge God's provision of earthly necessities, but his deepest gratitude must not depend upon material abundance. He possesses forgiveness, reconciliation, adoption, and an inheritance that worldly prosperity cannot purchase. James 1:17 declares that every good and perfect gift comes from above, from the Father of lights. Yet such blessings must never be twisted into a prosperity gospel promising wealth to every faithful believer. The Father is not a heavenly merchant operating a reward counter where sufficient religious enthusiasm purchases financial success. He is the God of grace whose richest blessings were secured through Jesus Christ long before the believer could earn a single one of them.

“in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ”

The final expression identifies the foundation upon which Christian thanksgiving approaches the Father: “in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Paul does not direct believers to approach God through the supposed merits of their own righteousness or the authority of a human religious institution. The Christian's access rests upon Jesus Christ. Ephesians 2:18 declares, “For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.” That passage concerns the reconciliation accomplished through Christ for believing Jews and Gentiles, establishing their common access to the Father. First Timothy 2:5 declares, “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;” There is no need to invent additional mediators to stand between the redeemed sinner and the Father. The Christian does not need a spiritual appointment arranged through a long chain of earthly officials before his thanksgiving can reach heaven. Jesus Christ has provided access through His own finished work, and no human religious organization possesses authority to improve upon that mediation.

Giving thanks in Christ's name also involves more than attaching a familiar phrase to the conclusion of a prayer. The name of Jesus Christ identifies the Person, authority, and saving

work through whom the believer approaches God. John 14:6 records the Saviour declaring, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” That is an exclusive claim concerning access to the Father, not a suggestion that every religious system eventually arrives at the same destination through different arrangements. Colossians 3:17 commands believers to do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him. Consequently, thanksgiving offered in Christ's name should agree with His revealed character and commandments. A man cannot reasonably ask God to prosper a dishonest scheme, conclude his prayer with the name of Jesus, and assume that the final words have transformed his wicked ambition into righteousness. The name of Christ is not a magical signature placed beneath whatever the flesh has decided it wants. It identifies the Saviour whose authority must govern the request as well as the thanksgiving.

Finally, the complete expression “our Lord Jesus Christ” deserves attention. Paul identifies Him as Lord, Jesus, and Christ, directing the believer's gratitude toward the One who possesses divine authority, accomplished redemption, and fulfills God's promises concerning the Messiah. The Christian's access to the Father is inseparable from the finished work of the Saviour. Ephesians 1:7 declares, “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;” That redemption is not obtained through ceremonial thanksgiving, religious achievement, or a lifetime of successful moral performance. It is received through faith in Jesus Christ. Thanksgiving follows salvation; it does not purchase salvation. The same grace that secures the believer provides a continuing reason to praise God throughout his earthly life. A man may lose his employment, his possessions, his health, and the admiration of the world without losing the redemption purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ. That is a substantial reason to give thanks, and it remains substantial when every earthly reason for celebration has disappeared.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 5:20 establishes continual thanksgiving as an essential expression of the Spirit-filled Christian life. The command follows Paul's instructions concerning spiritual wisdom, redeeming the time, and being filled with the Spirit. Thanksgiving is therefore not restricted to favorable circumstances or occasional public worship. It belongs to the believer's continuing recognition of God's goodness, providence, and grace. The words “always for all things” call Christians to acknowledge the Lord throughout their circumstances without denying suffering or confusing evil with righteousness. God can overrule wicked circumstances for good without becoming the author of wickedness. The Christian does not need to pretend that every experience is pleasant in order to remain thankful that Almighty God is faithful.

The passage also identifies God the Father as the recipient of thanksgiving and Jesus Christ as the One through whom believers approach Him. Christian gratitude rests upon the saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ rather than personal merit, religious ceremony, or the authority of earthly intermediaries. Salvation is received by grace through faith, while thanksgiving is the proper response of those already redeemed. The believer's access to God is secured through Christ, and his prayers should agree with the authority of the Saviour whose name he invokes. The central lesson is that the Spirit-filled Christian gives thanks to the Father through Jesus Christ, recognizing that the grace securing his salvation remains worthy of praise through every changing circumstance of earthly life.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. Thanksgiving In The Spirit-Filled Life

Ephesians 5:18 — “but be filled with the Spirit;”

Ephesians 5:19 — “singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;”

Ephesians 5:20 — “Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;”

Ephesians 5:21 — “Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.”

2. The Command To Give Thanks Continually

1 Thessalonians 5:18 — “In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.”

Philippians 4:6 — “but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.”

Psalm 34:1 — “I will bless the LORD at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth.”

Colossians 4:2 — “Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving;”

3. The Father Is The Source Of Our Blessings

Ephesians 1:3 — “who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:”

James 1:17 — “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights”

Romans 8:15 — “ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.”

2 Corinthians 9:15 — “Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.”

4. God's Providence In Difficult Circumstances

Romans 8:28 — “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God”

Genesis 50:20 — “But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good”

2 Corinthians 4:17 — “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;”

James 1:2 — “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;”

5. Thanksgiving Must Never Excuse Wickedness

James 1:13 — “for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man:”

Isaiah 5:20 — “Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil;”

Romans 12:9 — “Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.”

1 Thessalonians 5:21 — “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.”

6. Jesus Christ Provides Access To The Father

John 14:6 — “no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”

Ephesians 2:18 — “For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.”

1 Timothy 2:5 — “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;”

Hebrews 4:16 — “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy”

7. Redemption Gives The Believer Reason For Thanksgiving

Ephesians 1:7 — “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins”

Ephesians 2:8 — “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:”

Colossians 3:17 — “do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.”

1 Corinthians 15:57 — “But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

5. Reflection

Ephesians 5:20 confronts a habit that can quietly poison the Christian life: the constant rehearsal of everything that has gone wrong while almost completely ignoring everything Almighty God has done right. A believer may possess forgiveness, eternal life, the indwelling Holy Spirit, and an inheritance in Jesus Christ while spending most of his conversations complaining about circumstances beyond his control. Paul commands thanksgiving because gratitude is part of the life governed by the Spirit. That does not mean legitimate concerns must be ignored or that believers should pretend their difficulties are imaginary. It means the faithfulness of God must remain greater in their thinking than the inconvenience of disappointed expectations. A Christian who has received everlasting life ought not spend his entire earthly life behaving as though heaven has cheated him because yesterday was unpleasant. Gratitude requires remembering grace.

The command also exposes the religious error of confusing thanksgiving with a guarantee of material prosperity. Some teach that sufficient gratitude, positive confession, or financial giving will compel God to provide wealth and favorable circumstances. Scripture establishes no such arrangement in Ephesians 5:20. Paul wrote extensively concerning thanksgiving while personally enduring imprisonment, persecution, and hardship. The Father is worthy of praise because of His character and saving grace, not because every believer receives an impressive house, a flourishing business, or freedom from suffering. Ephesians 1:3 emphasizes spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. The man who preaches that gratitude guarantees prosperity has confused the Father of mercies with a commercial establishment offering rewards for customer satisfaction. Christian thanksgiving is worship, not a purchasing strategy.

The expression “for all things” must likewise be interpreted without teaching that evil becomes righteous whenever God permits it. Joseph's brothers acted wickedly when they sold him, yet God overruled their conduct for the preservation of many lives. Their intentions remained evil even though the Lord accomplished good through the circumstances. Romans 8:28 promises that all things work together for good to those described in the passage, not that every event is itself good. Christians should therefore thank God for His sustaining grace during suffering without celebrating injustice, abuse, or deliberate wrongdoing. A believer may grieve honestly while continuing to trust the Lord. Faith does not require calling poison medicine merely because God possesses the power to preserve a man who has swallowed it. Thanksgiving and moral discernment belong together.

The words “unto God and the Father” also remind believers that gratitude must have the proper object. Christian thanksgiving is not directed toward an undefined spiritual force or the supposed generosity of the universe. It is directed toward Almighty God, revealed as the

Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The believer possesses access to Him through the Saviour rather than through human religious officials who claim exclusive control over divine favor. First Timothy 2:5 identifies Jesus Christ as the one mediator between God and men. That doctrine leaves no room for inventing additional mediators necessary to complete His work. The Christian does not approach the Father through a religious chain of command that begins with an earthly institution. He comes through Jesus Christ, whose blood secured his redemption. The Saviour deserves the glory.

This truth should transform the ordinary responsibilities of Christian life. Thanksgiving is appropriate when a family gathers for prayer, when a believer receives help during difficulty, and when faithful service continues without public recognition. It should also influence how Christians speak about their employment, their household, their church, and the people who assist them. A person may properly address genuine wrongdoing without cultivating a habit of constant bitterness. Another may express disappointment while acknowledging blessings that disappointment has temporarily obscured. Colossians 3:17 commands believers to do all in the name of the Lord Jesus while giving thanks to God the Father by Him. Gratitude is not supposed to appear once a week as a religious ornament and disappear whenever ordinary life becomes inconvenient. The Spirit-filled walk reaches beyond the church building.

Finally, Ephesians 5:20 directs the believer toward the greatest foundation for lasting thanksgiving: the finished work of Jesus Christ. Earthly possessions can disappear, physical strength can decline, friendships can change, and circumstances can become difficult without warning. Yet the Christian's salvation does not rest upon the stability of those things. Ephesians 1:13 establishes the sealing of the believer after faith in the gospel, while Ephesians 4:30 declares that sealing continues unto the day of redemption. The proper response is not careless living but grateful obedience. The redeemed should recognize their blessings, resist bitterness, acknowledge genuine suffering, and continually thank the Father through the Son. Do not measure the goodness of God merely by the comfort of the present hour. Remember Calvary, remember the empty tomb, remember the promises of redemption, and obey the command: “Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The Christian Waiting For A Sign

Key Passage — Ephesians 5:17 (KJV)

“Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.”

Introduction

There is a peculiar religious disease afflicting Christians who possess a perfectly good Bible but insist upon waiting for heaven to send them something more impressive. A man has a King James Bible on his desk, the Holy Spirit dwelling within him, and enough commandments in the New Testament to occupy him for the remainder of his earthly life. Nevertheless, he cannot make a decision until a mysterious feeling passes over him, an unusual coincidence occurs, somebody delivers a supposed prophetic message, or some circumstance appears to provide supernatural confirmation. He wants a sign concerning his employment, a sign concerning his marriage, a sign concerning his ministry, and perhaps a sign concerning which side of the bed he ought to get out of tomorrow morning. He will tell you that he is simply waiting upon the Lord, which sounds wonderfully spiritual until you discover that the Lord has already provided instructions he has been neglecting for years. Meanwhile, the Christian remains motionless at the crossroads, carefully studying every passing cloud while the opportunities before him disappear. Ephesians 5:17 declares, “Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.” Notice that the apostle commands understanding, not superstition. He directs believers toward wisdom, not religious guesswork. A Christian who owns the written word of God but refuses to act until the furniture moves has confused spiritual guidance with a supernatural scavenger hunt.

This confusion becomes especially dangerous when Christians begin treating subjective experiences as though they possess the authority of divine revelation. Somebody dreams about an unfamiliar place and concludes that God has commanded him to move there. Another notices a particular number appearing several times and announces that heaven has established a prophetic timetable. A third encounters an unexpected financial opportunity and immediately declares that the Lord has opened a door, without stopping to examine whether the arrangement is honest, lawful, or consistent with biblical responsibilities. A fourth claims that the Holy Ghost has instructed him to marry a particular person, even though the supposed instruction has never been communicated to the person he intends to marry. Before long, feelings become commandments, coincidences become revelations, and ordinary circumstances are promoted into divine decrees. Question one of these interpretations, and you may be accused of resisting the Spirit of God. Yet First Thessalonians 5:21 commands, “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.” First John 4:1 likewise warns believers not to believe every spirit but to try the spirits whether they are of God. The Holy Ghost never commanded Christians to abandon discernment whenever somebody announces that an unusual experience has occurred. Sincerity is not inspiration, excitement is not authority, and an interesting coincidence is not a new chapter of Scripture.

The answer begins with understanding what God has actually provided for the Church in this present dispensation. Salvation is received through faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ, not through discovering supernatural signs. First Corinthians 15:3–4 declares that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, was buried, and rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. Ephesians 1:13 explains that believers were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise after hearing and believing the gospel. Second Timothy 3:16–17 declares that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness, "That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works." The believer possesses the written revelation necessary for sound doctrine and godly living. That does not mean every future decision will arrive with the answer printed in a verse. Scripture does not ordinarily identify the particular employer a Christian should work for or the address of the home he should purchase. It does, however, establish the moral boundaries, spiritual priorities, and wisdom necessary for responsible decisions. God has not promised to turn every private preference into a personal revelation from heaven. He has commanded His children to understand His will, obey His word, and walk by faith instead of demanding another spectacle before taking the next step.

1. The Signs God Actually Gave

The Bible certainly contains genuine signs, dreams, visions, and extraordinary revelations, and any Christian who denies that fact has neglected substantial portions of Scripture. Gideon received signs from the Lord in Judges 6, including the well-known incidents involving the fleece. Hezekiah received a sign concerning his recovery and the movement of the shadow in 2 Kings 20. Daniel received divine revelations concerning kingdoms and future events. Joseph, the husband of Mary, received instructions through dreams concerning the safety of the young Lord Jesus Christ. Peter received a vision in Acts 10 as God was preparing him to understand the reception of Gentiles. Paul received the Macedonian vision in Acts 16:9, directing attention toward a particular field of gospel service. These accounts are genuine historical events recorded by inspiration. They must not be explained away merely because someone finds miraculous revelation inconvenient. But they must be interpreted according to their actual circumstances. The question is not whether God ever gave a sign. The question is whether an event recorded in Scripture automatically authorizes every modern Christian to manufacture a personal sign-seeking system and demand that God operate according to it.

Gideon's fleece provides an excellent example of how easily biblical history becomes distorted when the reader forgets the distinction between description and commandment. Judges 6 records the Lord commissioning Gideon to deliver Israel from Midian. The divine

instruction had already been communicated before Gideon proposed the tests involving the fleece and the dew. The passage records God's patience with him, but it does not command New Testament believers to imitate his uncertainty whenever they face an ordinary decision. Yet Christians regularly announce that they are putting out a fleece, often meaning that they have established some arbitrary circumstance which they expect God to manipulate as confirmation of their wishes. One fellow decides that if a particular person telephones before noon, he will accept a job. Another determines that if an unexpected expense disappears, the Lord must be commanding a purchase. The circumstances become the authority, while Scripture is reduced to an occasional decoration. Gideon's fleece was a historical event involving a specific divine commission to an Israelite judge. It was not an instruction manual for Christians who want heaven to arrange coincidences instead of requiring them to exercise judgment.

The same care must be applied to the signs associated with Israel and the apostolic ministry. First Corinthians 1:22 declares, “For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom:” The statement belongs to Paul's discussion of the preaching of Christ crucified and the response of those hearing it. John 20:30–31 records that Jesus performed signs which were written so that readers might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and have life through His name. Second Corinthians 12:12 identifies the signs of an apostle, including signs, wonders, and mighty deeds. Those passages demonstrate that signs possessed particular purposes within God's revealed dealings. They were not merely religious novelties provided to relieve boredom. The Christian must distinguish Israel's historical and prophetic setting, the foundational ministry of the apostles, and the responsibilities of the Church under the gospel of grace. Rightly dividing the word of truth does not require denying the miracles of Scripture. It requires refusing to steal a historical event from its proper setting and turn it into a standing order for every believer who wants God to make his personal decisions spectacular.

2. The Bible Already On The Table

The great irony of modern sign-seeking is that Christians frequently ask God to reveal matters He has already addressed plainly. First Thessalonians 4:3 declares, “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication:” There is a divine instruction concerning sexual holiness that requires no dream, fleece, vision, or unexpected atmospheric condition. First Thessalonians 5:18 declares, “In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.” There is another revealed responsibility. First Peter 2:15 identifies well doing as the will of God in the context of answering foolish accusations through righteous conduct. Romans 12:2 commands believers to avoid conformity to this world and be transformed through the renewing of

their minds. The Scriptures are not silent concerning God's moral will. They are remarkably clear about many matters that Christians prefer to complicate. The same man who says he cannot discover God's will concerning next Tuesday may already know precisely what God requires of him today. The problem is not always insufficient revelation. Sometimes the problem is insufficient obedience.

Consider the believer who is praying for divine direction concerning a dishonest business opportunity. He claims that circumstances appear favorable, that several coincidences have confirmed his impression, and that an unexpected conversation supplied the final evidence he needed. But Ephesians 4:25 commands believers to put away lying, while Romans 12:17 requires honest conduct in the sight of all men. No extraordinary circumstance can authorize dishonesty. The Christian considering marriage must likewise begin with revealed biblical principles rather than mysterious impressions. First Corinthians 7:39 states concerning the believing widow's freedom to marry, “only in the Lord.” Second Corinthians 6:14 warns against unequal yoking with unbelievers. These passages establish important boundaries, although they do not identify the particular person a believer must marry. A Christian evaluating a ministry opportunity must consider biblical doctrine, qualifications, responsibilities, and the actual work involved. When Scripture has already identified a practice as sinful, the believer does not need confirmation from heaven before rejecting it. The Lord is not obligated to send a second message explaining that He meant what He said in the first one.

Second Timothy 3:16–17 provides the foundation for understanding the sufficiency of Scripture in matters of doctrine and Christian living. The word of God is profitable for teaching, exposing error, correcting wrong conduct, and instructing believers in righteousness. The man of God is thereby furnished for good works. That does not transform the Bible into a directory containing every future address, employment contract, marriage proposal, and personal circumstance. It establishes that God's written revelation supplies the truth necessary to govern the believer's spiritual responsibilities. A Christian should therefore study Scripture, compare Scripture with Scripture, and rightly divide its instructions rather than continually seek additional authoritative messages. There are questions the Bible answers explicitly, questions it governs through principles, and questions it does not reveal in advance. Wisdom recognizes those distinctions. The Book is not defective because it does not identify which automobile a believer should purchase. Its purpose is considerably greater than serving as a supernatural shopping catalogue. It reveals the Saviour, establishes doctrine, exposes sin, and equips the redeemed to walk in righteousness.

3. The Dream That Became A Commandment

Dreams possess a remarkable ability to impress the person who experienced them, particularly when they involve familiar people, frightening circumstances, or subjects already occupying the mind. The Bible records occasions when God communicated through dreams, and those accounts must be accepted as genuine revelation within their historical settings. But the existence of inspired accounts concerning divine dreams does not establish that every dream experienced by a modern Christian is a message from Almighty God. Ecclesiastes 5:3 declares, “For a dream cometh through the multitude of business;” That observation recognizes the connection between human concerns and the experiences of sleep. A man who spends his waking hours worrying about employment should not be astonished when employment appears in his dreams. A woman deeply concerned about a family member may dream about that person without the dream establishing a supernatural prediction. The experience may be vivid, emotionally powerful, and difficult to forget, but none of those characteristics establishes divine authority. A dream does not become Scripture because the dreamer remembers it clearly, and an unpleasant night's sleep does not appoint a man to the office of prophet.

The difficulty becomes serious when private experiences are promoted into obligations for other people. Somebody claims that God revealed a particular marriage, and the person supposedly selected by heaven is expected to accept the announcement without independent judgment. Another declares that God showed him a ministry assignment and then demands that everyone around him provide money, obedience, or personal assistance because the vision supposedly came from the Lord. Such claims can become instruments of manipulation, even when the person making them sincerely believes his interpretation. First John 4:1 commands believers to try the spirits rather than accept every claim at face value. Jeremiah 17:9 warns, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” The passage reminds us that human desires and impressions require examination rather than unquestioning confidence. A Christian may sincerely misinterpret an experience, and sincerity does not create authority over another person's conscience. The announcement “God showed me” does not give one believer ownership of another believer's future. The Lord has never authorized a man to use a private dream as a substitute for another person's judgment, consent, or obedience to Scripture.

The proper response is neither gullibility nor an unnecessary campaign against everyone who reports an unusual experience. Christians may have memorable dreams, strong impressions, and circumstances they regard as personally significant. They may discuss those experiences without automatically claiming divine revelation or demanding that others accept their interpretation. The essential question concerns authority. Does the supposed message contradict Scripture? Does it command something God has forbidden?

Does it create obligations that the written word has not established? Is the individual treating an interpretation as certainty when the evidence supports only a possibility? Second Corinthians 5:7 declares, “(For we walk by faith, not by sight:)” Faith rests upon the trustworthy revelation of God rather than the constant production of visible confirmations. The safest response to an impressive dream is not necessarily to announce it to the congregation or rearrange the family finances. Sometimes the wisest response is to acknowledge that a dream occurred, refuse to invent an interpretation, and continue obeying the Bible when morning comes.

4. The Open Door That Led Nowhere

Christians frequently speak about open and closed doors when discussing providence, and the expression can be useful when handled carefully. Scripture itself employs the imagery of a door in connection with opportunities for ministry. First Corinthians 16:9 records Paul declaring, “For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries.” Notice the final expression. An opportunity existed, but opposition accompanied it. The presence of resistance did not automatically prove that Paul had departed from the will of God. Colossians 4:3 likewise records a request for prayer that God would open a door of utterance for the word. Such passages establish that circumstances may provide real opportunities for Christian service. But the presence of an opportunity does not automatically establish that every possible use of it is wise or righteous. A man may receive an unexpected promotion that would require continual dishonesty. Another may be offered a profitable arrangement that would compromise existing responsibilities. An open door is not necessarily a divine invitation. Sometimes it is simply an opportunity to make a foolish decision more conveniently than usual.

The opposite assumption is equally dangerous. Some believers interpret every difficulty as a closed door from God and every favorable circumstance as proof of His approval. Yet Acts 14:22 speaks of believers entering the kingdom of God through much tribulation, and Second Timothy 3:12 declares that those who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. The presence of opposition does not automatically invalidate faithful service. Paul encountered imprisonments, threats, hardships, and resistance throughout his ministry, yet those circumstances did not establish that he had misunderstood his calling. Conversely, a dishonest venture may prosper for a time without possessing divine approval. Psalm 73 records Asaph's struggle concerning the prosperity of the wicked, demonstrating that earthly success cannot serve as the final measure of righteousness. The Christian must therefore examine opportunities according to Scripture, legitimate obligations, and responsible judgment rather than treating circumstances as self-interpreting messages. If prosperity always proved God's approval, the wicked would become the world's most

successful theologians. If difficulty always proved disobedience, the apostle Paul would have needed to reconsider nearly every missionary journey.

One particularly revealing passage is 2 Corinthians 2:12–13. Paul explains that when he came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, a door was opened unto him of the Lord. Yet he also describes having no rest in his spirit because he did not find Titus, and he departed for Macedonia. The passage should not be exaggerated into a claim that Paul disregarded the Lord, but it demonstrates that recognizing an open opportunity did not eliminate consideration of the surrounding circumstances. The apostle made a decision within a larger ministry situation. Christian judgment often operates in similar circumstances today. A believer may receive two legitimate employment offers, discover that both are consistent with biblical principles, and need to consider family needs, finances, location, health, and existing responsibilities. Prayer is appropriate, and providence should be acknowledged, but the decision does not require inventing an infallible interpretation of every detail. God has given the believer a mind to exercise under the authority of His word. Using that mind carefully is not rebellion against divine guidance; it is part of the wisdom Scripture commands.

5. The Preacher Who Became Heaven's Telephone

The situation becomes especially dangerous when a religious personality establishes himself as the indispensable interpreter of God's private instructions for everyone else. A believer comes seeking advice about marriage, and the preacher announces that the Lord has personally identified the appropriate spouse. Another asks about employment, and the minister declares that God has shown him precisely which offer must be accepted. A third raises an honest question about the teaching being presented, only to be informed that the Holy Ghost has already settled the issue through the preacher's private revelation. Before long, biblical counsel has been replaced by spiritual dictatorship. First Peter 5:2–3 instructs elders to feed the flock of God and forbids them from being lords over God's heritage. Second Corinthians 4:5 declares, “For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.” The preacher's authority is ministerial and subject to Scripture, not an independent channel through which unquestionable commands are delivered. A faithful pastor should help a believer understand what God has written, not establish himself as the spiritual switchboard through which every important decision must pass before heaven will answer.

This counterfeit authority often protects itself by treating examination as rebellion. A person who questions a supposed prophecy is accused of unbelief. Somebody who requests biblical evidence is warned against touching the Lord's anointed. Another who refuses a demand for money is informed that his disobedience may prevent the blessing

God supposedly intended. These practices place pressure upon the conscience while avoiding the very examination Scripture commands. Acts 17:11 commends the Bereans for searching the Scriptures daily to determine whether the preaching they received was true. First Thessalonians 5:21 commands believers to prove all things. Neither passage gives a religious leader permission to declare himself exempt from biblical examination. Genuine pastoral instruction may be firm, corrective, and demanding where Scripture itself establishes a command. But the pastor must distinguish divine commandments from personal advice and private judgment. When a preacher must threaten people with the displeasure of heaven merely because they will not obey his unsupported personal impressions, the problem is not necessarily their lack of faith. The problem may be his extraordinary appetite for authority that God never gave him.

A sound pastor can provide substantial assistance without pretending to know matters that God has not revealed. He can explain biblical principles concerning marriage, employment, family obligations, financial honesty, church membership, and Christian service. He can identify obvious dangers, recommend careful investigation, and encourage prayer. He can acknowledge when several legitimate decisions remain possible and when the final responsibility belongs to the individual concerned. Proverbs 11:14 declares, “Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety.” Counsel is valuable precisely because it provides knowledge, experience, correction, and perspective rather than replacing the believer's responsibility before God. Mature counsel should make a Christian more capable of applying Scripture, not more dependent upon the personality offering advice. A preacher who teaches people to think biblically has strengthened the Church. A preacher who teaches them that they cannot think without him has manufactured a congregation of religious dependents. The difference between shepherding and controlling is often revealed by what happens when somebody respectfully says no.

6. The Will Of God In Ordinary Clothes

One reason Christians become fascinated with signs is that God's revealed will frequently concerns ordinary responsibilities rather than extraordinary experiences. A man wants to know whether he has been called to some highly visible ministry, while Ephesians 5 commands him to walk in wisdom, redeem the time, and be filled with the Spirit. A woman wants to know whether some remarkable opportunity will establish her spiritual significance, while Scripture has already instructed believers concerning thanksgiving, holiness, honesty, and faithful service. Ephesians 5 continues into household relationships, demonstrating that Christian obedience cannot be separated from ordinary life. Ephesians 6 addresses children, parents, and servants, extending the demands of the

Christian walk into responsibilities that rarely produce dramatic public attention. Colossians 3:23 declares, “And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;” That command makes everyday work an opportunity for faithful service. The will of God does not become less important because it arrives wearing work clothes instead of a preacher's suit. A Christian who neglects the ordinary duties of his station while searching for something spectacular has mistaken religious excitement for spiritual significance.

The believer's decisions should therefore be governed by a deliberate process grounded in Scripture. First, the moral requirements of God's word must be honored. A decision requiring dishonesty, deliberate immorality, or disobedience to clear biblical instruction must be rejected regardless of its apparent advantages. Where several legitimate possibilities remain, the Christian should seek wisdom through prayer, careful consideration, and trustworthy counsel. James 1:5 declares, “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.” Proverbs 15:22 recognizes the value of counsel, while James 4:15 instructs believers to acknowledge the Lord's will concerning future plans. Circumstances, obligations, health, financial realities, and the likely consequences of a decision should be considered without elevating them into infallible revelations. Prayer is not an alternative to responsible thinking. The Christian should seek God's wisdom while using the understanding God commands him to develop. A fellow who refuses to examine the contract, ignores the counsel of trustworthy people, neglects his household responsibilities, and then claims that God opened the door has not demonstrated extraordinary faith. He has demonstrated why the Bible commands wisdom.

This approach also requires distinguishing salvation from the practical guidance of the Christian life. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes salvation by grace through faith, apart from works, while Ephesians 1:13 identifies the believer's sealing with the Holy Spirit after believing the gospel. The Christian's eternal security does not depend upon discovering the perfect job, making every financial decision flawlessly, or correctly interpreting some supposed supernatural confirmation. Nevertheless, the redeemed remain accountable for how they live. Second Corinthians 5:10 establishes the judgment seat of Christ, where the believer's works will be examined. Decisions therefore matter without becoming the means of purchasing salvation. A saved man can make a foolish choice, suffer the consequences, receive correction, and remain saved through the finished work of Jesus Christ. The proper response is neither spiritual panic nor careless presumption. God's grace does not turn every mistake into righteousness, but neither does a mistaken employment decision cancel the redemption purchased by the blood of Christ. Wisdom corrects what can be corrected and continues forward under the authority of Scripture.

7. When Faith Finally Takes The Next Step

The Christian waiting for a sign must eventually confront the distinction between faith and the demand for visible certainty. Second Corinthians 5:7 declares, “(For we walk by faith, not by sight:)” Faith does not mean inventing certainty where God has not spoken. Hebrews 11:1 describes faith as the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen, while Romans 10:17 declares, “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” Biblical faith rests upon what God has revealed rather than upon the assumption that every personal expectation will be fulfilled. A believer may prayerfully make a responsible decision without knowing every consequence that will follow. He may accept employment, begin a ministry project, or undertake a necessary responsibility while acknowledging that circumstances remain in the Lord's hands. Such conduct is not an attempt to force God into a particular outcome. It is obedience to revealed principles amid the uncertainty of earthly life. Faith does not require knowing everything that lies around the next corner. It requires trusting the God who has spoken while refusing to pretend He revealed details that remain unknown.

The danger of continually demanding signs is that the habit can become an excuse for postponing obedience indefinitely. Matthew 4:7 records the Lord Jesus Christ declaring, “It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.” Christ spoke those words while resisting Satan's temptation to demand a spectacular demonstration of divine protection. The passage has its particular setting, but it exposes the folly of attempting to make God prove His faithfulness through unnecessary tests. A Christian should not deliberately create a dangerous situation and assume the Lord must intervene because he has attached the language of faith to the decision. Nor should he demand repeated confirmations of a command that Scripture has already established. John 20:29 records Christ telling Thomas, “blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.” The statement concerns faith in the risen Lord, not every ordinary decision, but it demonstrates that believing God's testimony does not require perpetual visual demonstrations. A man who demands a miracle before obeying a plain commandment has not necessarily developed extraordinary faith. He may simply be demanding that God furnish additional evidence before he agrees to take the Lord at His word.

There is also a mature Christian attitude toward uncertainty that must not be overlooked. A believer may pray earnestly, study Scripture, obtain wise counsel, and still face a decision in which no option carries a guarantee of earthly success. He may choose responsibly and later encounter difficulties that could not reasonably have been predicted. Such circumstances do not automatically prove that he departed from God's will. Proverbs 16:9 declares, “A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps.” James 4:15

instructs believers to acknowledge that future plans remain subject to God's will. These truths encourage humility rather than paralysis. The Christian should make decisions within biblical boundaries, remain teachable, and accept correction when new information reveals a better course. He should not spend the rest of his life interpreting every inconvenience as punishment for having missed a secret sign. The Lord has not promised His children an earthly existence in which responsible decisions never encounter difficulty. He has commanded them to walk wisely, trust Him, and remain faithful through circumstances they cannot completely control.

Conclusion

Ephesians 5:17 delivers a command that should bring relief to Christians exhausted by the endless search for supernatural confirmations: “Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.” The believer does not need to manufacture a spiritual mystery around every decision in order to demonstrate dependence upon God. He needs to understand the Scriptures, obey the commandments that apply to him, seek wisdom where circumstances require judgment, and refuse to claim divine certainty concerning matters God has not revealed. The Bible records genuine signs, dreams, and visions, but those historical events must be interpreted within their proper settings. Israel's prophetic history, the foundational ministry of the apostles, and the responsibilities of the Church must not be carelessly combined into one system of private revelation. Nor should a Christian imagine that because Almighty God possesses the power to work miraculously, every unusual coincidence is necessarily a message from Him. The question is not whether God can perform a miracle. He certainly can. The question is whether God has commanded the believer to replace biblical wisdom with an endless search for miraculous confirmation. The answer is found in the command to understand His will, not to invent additional revelations.

This subject should also correct the religious habit of surrendering personal responsibility to people who claim special access to divine instructions. A pastor, teacher, or experienced Christian may provide valuable counsel, explain Scripture, identify dangers, and offer helpful judgment concerning a difficult decision. But no human being possesses authority to replace the written word of God with his private impressions. A supposed prophecy does not authorize dishonesty, a dream does not establish ownership over another person's future, and an impressive coincidence cannot cancel a biblical commandment. The Holy Spirit who indwells believers does not lead them into contradiction with the Scriptures He inspired. Christians should therefore reject spiritual manipulation without becoming cynical about genuine prayer, providence, and the Lord's care for His people. God is fully capable of directing circumstances and answering prayers

without requiring believers to claim infallible knowledge of every hidden purpose behind those circumstances. The mature Christian can thank God for providential help without pretending to understand everything God has done. He can acknowledge an unexpected opportunity without converting it into an unquestionable command. He can appreciate wise counsel without surrendering the responsibility to examine it. That is not a lack of spirituality. It is spirituality governed by truth.

Finally, the Christian waiting for a sign must ask whether he has been waiting for something God never promised to provide while neglecting something God has already commanded him to accomplish. If the Scriptures command honesty, practice honesty. If they command holiness, pursue holiness. If they command thanksgiving, give thanks. If they command the proclamation of the gospel, do not spend years waiting for an extraordinary revelation before becoming willing to speak of Jesus Christ. If a legitimate decision remains uncertain, pray, seek wisdom, consider the circumstances, and act responsibly within the boundaries of God's written word. The Christian does not need to pretend that every decision is guaranteed to succeed, and he does not need to manufacture supernatural authority for ordinary judgment. He needs to walk circumspectly, redeem the time, understand the Lord's revealed will, and remain dependent upon the Saviour who redeemed him. Stop treating the Bible as insufficient because it does not contain a personalized prediction of tomorrow. Stop demanding another sign while ignoring the commandments already before you. Stop confusing feelings with revelation, coincidences with promises, and religious personalities with the voice of Almighty God. Open the Book, believe what God has written, obey what He has commanded, and walk by faith. The Lord has given His people something far more dependable than a passing impression or a mysterious dream. He has given them His word. And when the word of God has made the path plain, the Christian's responsibility is not to stand there waiting for the clouds to arrange themselves into another message. It is to take the next faithful step.

Ephesians 5:21 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 5:21

"Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God."

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"Submitting yourselves one to another"

Paul has arrived at a command that ought to trouble every Christian who enjoys exercising authority considerably more than he enjoys submitting to the authority of Almighty God: “Submitting yourselves one to another.” Notice where the verse appears. Ephesians 5:18 commands believers to be filled with the Spirit. Verse 19 describes psalms, hymns, spiritual songs, and melody directed toward the Lord. Verse 20 commands continual thanksgiving unto God the Father in the name of Jesus Christ. Now verse 21 identifies another characteristic of the Spirit-governed Christian life: submission toward fellow believers. The connection is important because some people possess a remarkably theatrical understanding of spiritual filling. They imagine that the Holy Ghost must produce unusual sensations, extraordinary claims, and spectacular religious performances. Yet Paul immediately directs attention toward singing, thanksgiving, and the proper treatment of other people. A man may announce that he is overflowing with the Holy Ghost, but if he cannot accept correction, consider another believer's needs, or surrender one ounce of personal pride, somebody ought to examine what is actually overflowing. Spirituality is not established by the volume of a testimony while the conduct contradicts the commandments.

The expression “submitting yourselves” describes a willing recognition of proper order and responsibility rather than an attitude of continual self-assertion. The believer is not commanded to spend his Christian life demanding that everyone else acknowledge his importance. Philippians 2:3 declares, “Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.” The following verse instructs believers to consider the things of others rather than becoming exclusively occupied with their own interests. Those principles directly confront the selfishness that destroys Christian fellowship. A person may possess accurate doctrine, valuable abilities, and genuine opportunities for service while becoming almost impossible to work with because every disagreement threatens his personal dignity. Another may continually insist upon receiving respect while demonstrating remarkably little consideration toward those around him. Biblical submission requires the believer to recognize that his personal preferences are not the final authority governing every relationship. The flesh loves a throne, even when the only kingdom available consists of three church committee members and an argument over the color of the carpet. The Holy Spirit teaches believers that serving Christ matters more than winning every contest for personal importance.

The words “one to another” establish that this instruction concerns the relationships of believers with one another, not merely the conduct of one particular group toward another. Romans 12:10 commands, “Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;” Galatians 5:13 likewise instructs believers, “but by love serve one another.” First Peter 5:5 declares, “Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and

be clothed with humility." These passages establish an unmistakable responsibility toward fellow Christians. The knowledgeable believer must not despise the less experienced. The wealthy believer must not treat the poor as spiritually insignificant. The minister must not imagine that his office excuses arrogance, and the ordinary church member must not consider humility unnecessary because he possesses no official position. Yet mutual submission does not mean that every person occupies precisely the same office or exercises identical authority. Scripture recognizes distinctions within congregational leadership, households, and other legitimate relationships. The believer is commanded to practice humility toward others, not to pretend that God has abolished every responsibility and distinction He subsequently explains. Mutual submission is not spiritual anarchy with religious vocabulary. It is Christian fellowship governed by humility, love, and the authority of God.

The instruction becomes especially important because verse 21 introduces the household responsibilities developed in the following passage. Ephesians 5:22 commands wives to submit themselves unto their own husbands as unto the Lord. Verse 25 commands husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it. Ephesians 6:1 instructs children to obey their parents in the Lord, while verse 4 warns fathers against provoking their children to wrath. Those commands establish distinct responsibilities rather than a system in which every member of the household possesses identical authority. Nevertheless, the general principle of verse 21 applies to Christians before those particular responsibilities are explained. A husband is not exempt from humility because he possesses responsibility as the head of his household. A wife is not relieved of personal accountability before God, and a parent is not authorized to exercise authority through cruelty. The man who discovers Ephesians 5:22 but somehow develops temporary blindness whenever he reaches Ephesians 5:25 has not mastered biblical marriage. He has merely discovered how to quote the portion that places responsibility upon somebody else. Godly order requires obedience to the whole passage.

The phrase also must not be twisted into a demand for unconditional obedience to another person's sinful wishes. Scripture never authorizes a believer to participate in wickedness merely because somebody claims authority. Acts 5:29 records Peter and the other apostles declaring, "We ought to obey God rather than men." That statement arose within their confrontation with religious authorities, but it establishes the supremacy of obedience to God. Romans 13 recognizes legitimate civil authority, while other passages establish responsibilities in the Church and household. Nevertheless, those authorities remain accountable to the Lord. A religious leader cannot demand dishonesty and excuse it through an appeal to submission. A husband cannot justify cruelty or coercion through the language of headship. A parent cannot require a child to commit wickedness and then

claim that honoring one's parents removes the child's obligation to God. Submission is never permission for sin, and biblical authority is never ownership of another person's conscience. The Lord did not command His children to obey Him until somebody with a title tells them otherwise.

Finally, the expression requires attention to the practical conduct of ordinary Christian fellowship. Submission may involve listening before answering, accepting legitimate correction, respecting the responsibilities of others, surrendering a personal preference, or serving someone who cannot provide anything in return. It may require a teacher to admit an error, a pastor to receive a justified concern, or a church member to stop treating every disagreement as a personal insult. First Corinthians 13:5 declares concerning charity that it "seeketh not her own." That principle directly confronts the endless self-interest that can poison Christian relationships. Yet biblical submission does not eliminate honest disagreement, appropriate boundaries, or the responsibility to confront wrongdoing. It requires the manner of our dealings to remain governed by righteousness rather than pride. A man who must have the final word in every conversation may eventually obtain his ambition, particularly after everyone else becomes tired of speaking to him. But getting the last word is not the same as possessing the wisdom of God. Christian humility is demonstrated through conduct, not merely through public declarations about how humble we have become.

"in the fear of God"

The final expression establishes the authority and motive governing the entire command: "in the fear of God." Paul does not direct believers to submit to one another because human approval is the highest good or because avoiding disagreement is more important than righteousness. The fear of God places every Christian relationship under the authority of Almighty God. Proverbs 1:7 declares, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction." Second Corinthians 7:1 instructs believers to perfect holiness in the fear of God. This fear involves reverence, accountability, and a proper recognition of God's holiness and authority. It is not the terror of a redeemed sinner wondering whether Jesus Christ will suddenly cancel the salvation He purchased through His blood. Ephesians 1:13 establishes the believer's sealing with the Holy Spirit after believing the gospel, and Ephesians 4:30 declares that sealing continues unto the day of redemption. The Christian does not submit to others to purchase God's acceptance. He submits because he belongs to the Lord and knows that his treatment of others matters before Him.

The fear of God also prevents submission from becoming mere people-pleasing. A Christian may appear agreeable because he fears confrontation, desires promotion, or

hopes to obtain somebody's favor. Another may outwardly respect a minister while privately cultivating resentment and dishonesty. Such behavior does not fulfill the spiritual purpose of this verse. Colossians 3:22 warns against eyeservice and menpleasing, directing attention toward sincerity of heart and the fear of God. The believer should practice humility whether people appreciate it or not, because the Lord remains the ultimate authority over his conduct. Equally, the person exercising legitimate authority must remember that he himself is accountable to God. Ephesians 6:9 reminds masters that their Master is in heaven and that there is no respect of persons with Him. A man may possess sufficient authority to silence everyone in the room, but he has not acquired sufficient authority to silence Almighty God. The fear of God ought to restrain the person giving instructions just as surely as it governs the person receiving them.

The expression therefore establishes the boundary that protects Christian submission from becoming an instrument of wickedness. Obedience to God remains supreme. Where someone commands a sinful act, biblical faithfulness requires refusing participation rather than surrendering conscience. Where serious wrongdoing occurs, appropriate correction and responsible protection must not be dismissed as rebellion. Yet ordinary disagreements and personal preferences should not be inflated into moral emergencies merely because somebody dislikes being corrected. The fear of God requires honest judgment in both directions. First Peter 2:17 commands, “Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king.” Notice that respect for others and fear of God belong together. Submission without the fear of God can become servility, while authority without the fear of God can become tyranny. The Lord commands neither. He commands relationships governed by humility, righteousness, and accountability to Himself.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 5:21 establishes mutual Christian humility and consideration as expressions of the Spirit-filled life. The command follows Paul's instructions concerning spiritual singing and continual thanksgiving, demonstrating that the government of the Holy Spirit must influence how believers treat one another. Submission requires the willingness to serve, listen, accept legitimate correction, and respect the proper responsibilities of others. Yet the verse does not abolish the specific household and congregational distinctions explained in surrounding passages. A husband, wife, parent, child, pastor, and church member may possess different responsibilities while remaining accountable to the same Lord. Biblical submission is not the removal of godly order but the rejection of fleshly pride within that order.

The expression “in the fear of God” supplies the governing motive and ultimate boundary. Christians must practice humility because they recognize the authority of Almighty God,

not merely because another person possesses influence or demands obedience. No human authority may legitimately require participation in wickedness, and no Christian should use the language of submission to excuse cruelty, manipulation, or the concealment of serious wrongdoing. Neither should ordinary believers use personal liberty as an excuse for contempt toward legitimate authority. The central lesson is that Spirit-filled Christians serve one another in humility while remaining obedient and accountable to the Lord above every human relationship.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. The Immediate Context Of Spirit-Filled Submission

Ephesians 5:18 — “but be filled with the Spirit;”

Ephesians 5:19 — “singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;”

Ephesians 5:20 — “Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father”

Ephesians 5:21 — “Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.”

2. Mutual Humility Among Believers

Romans 12:10 — “in honour preferring one another;”

Philippians 2:3 — “in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.”

Galatians 5:13 — “but by love serve one another.”

1 Peter 5:5 — “Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility:”

3. The Fear Of God Governs Conduct

Proverbs 1:7 — “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge:”

2 Corinthians 7:1 — “perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”

1 Peter 2:17 — “Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king.”

Hebrews 12:28 — “let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear:”

4. Distinct Responsibilities Within The Household

Ephesians 5:22 — “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.”

Ephesians 5:25 — “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;”

Ephesians 6:1 — “Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.”

Ephesians 6:4 — “And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath:”

5. Authority Must Never Become Domination

1 Peter 5:3 — “Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.”

Hebrews 13:17 — “for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account”

Ephesians 6:9 — “And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening:”

Colossians 4:1 — “Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal;”

6. Obedience To God Remains Supreme

Acts 5:29 — “We ought to obey God rather than men.”

Ephesians 5:11 — “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.”

Ephesians 4:15 — “But speaking the truth in love”

Galatians 6:1 — “restore such an one in the spirit of meekness;”

7. Submission Strengthens Christian Fellowship

Ephesians 4:2 — “With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;”

Ephesians 4:3 — “Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

1 Corinthians 12:25 — “that the members should have the same care one for another.”

Romans 15:1 — “We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.”

5. Reflection

Ephesians 5:21 confronts a problem that can destroy Christian fellowship while remaining carefully concealed beneath respectable religious language: the unwillingness of believers to consider anyone's interests except their own. Paul has commanded Christians to be filled with the Spirit, sing unto the Lord, and give thanks to the Father through Jesus Christ. Now he carries that spiritual responsibility into their relationships with one another. A believer may possess considerable biblical knowledge and still become impossible to work with because every disagreement threatens his personal importance. Another may

demand respect continually while offering remarkably little consideration in return. The man who cannot tolerate correction without declaring war upon his brethren has not demonstrated extraordinary spiritual maturity. He has demonstrated how thoroughly the flesh enjoys being in charge. Christian humility must become practical.

The words “one to another” also expose the error of interpreting biblical submission as though only certain Christians are required to practice humility. The following passage establishes particular responsibilities for wives, husbands, children, parents, servants, and masters. Those distinctions must be recognized rather than discarded whenever contemporary preferences find them inconvenient. Nevertheless, the general command of verse 21 remains relevant to everyone addressed by the apostle. A husband cannot demand submission while refusing the sacrificial love commanded in Ephesians 5:25. A parent cannot demand obedience while ignoring the warning against provoking children to wrath. Biblical authority is not a personal reward for the individual who enjoys giving orders. It is a responsibility before God, and the person possessing it must answer for how it is exercised. Humility belongs to every believer.

This passage must never become an excuse for spiritual manipulation, domestic cruelty, or the concealment of serious wrongdoing. Scripture commands obedience to legitimate authority, but it never authorizes anyone to demand participation in sin. Acts 5:29 establishes the supremacy of obedience to God, while Ephesians 5:11 commands believers to reprove the works of darkness. An injured person should not be required to remain silent merely because exposing wrongdoing would embarrass somebody with religious influence. Appropriate boundaries, truthful reporting, and necessary protection do not automatically constitute rebellion against biblical authority. Nevertheless, ordinary disagreements must not be exaggerated into accusations of wickedness simply because personal preferences have been challenged. The fear of God requires both respect for legitimate responsibility and refusal to make human authority an excuse for disobeying the Lord. Neither truth may be sacrificed.

The expression “in the fear of God” also corrects the mistaken idea that submission concerns nothing more than outward manners. A man may appear agreeable while privately cultivating resentment, dishonesty, or manipulation. Another may perform acts of service primarily because he expects recognition or personal advantage. Such conduct may impress observers without demonstrating the inward humility Scripture requires. The fear of God reminds believers that the Lord examines motives as well as appearances. Second Corinthians 7:1 connects the fear of God with practical holiness, demonstrating that reverence should influence the entire Christian walk. A person who behaves humbly only while influential people are watching has not learned submission to Almighty God. He

has learned how to perform humility when the audience is profitable. Genuine service must remain sincere.

The instruction also requires careful distinction between salvation and Christian conduct. No sinner purchases eternal life by submitting to another person, respecting a pastor, or demonstrating excellent manners. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes salvation by grace through faith, apart from human works. Ephesians 1:13 identifies the sealing of the believer with the Holy Spirit after believing the gospel. Submission belongs to the practical responsibilities of those already redeemed rather than the conditions by which redemption is obtained. Yet eternal security does not eliminate accountability for selfishness, arrogance, or cruelty. Christians must allow the Scriptures to correct their conduct without imagining that every failure cancels the finished work of Jesus Christ. Grace secures salvation through the Saviour, but it never appoints the old man's pride to govern the household or congregation. Saved people remain responsible to walk in the Spirit.

Finally, Ephesians 5:21 should lead believers toward relationships characterized by humility, honest communication, proper respect, and continuing obedience to the Lord. The strong should not despise the weak, and the knowledgeable should not treat the inexperienced with contempt. Those entrusted with authority should exercise it responsibly, while those under legitimate authority should reject unnecessary rebellion and selfishness. Where wrongdoing exists, truth must be spoken and appropriate correction pursued rather than concealed for the sake of appearances. Where ordinary differences arise, charity should prevail over the flesh's desire to win every argument. The Spirit-filled Christian does not spend his life demanding a throne from which to command everybody else. He recognizes that Jesus Christ is Lord and that every believer stands accountable before Him. Serve faithfully, receive correction, respect godly order, refuse wickedness, and remember the command: “Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.”

Ephesians 5:22 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 5:22

“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.”

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

“Wives, submit yourselves”

Paul has arrived at a command that modern society frequently despises, religious hypocrites occasionally abuse, and careless Bible teachers sometimes explain without bothering to read the surrounding verses: “Wives, submit yourselves.” Notice that the apostle addresses wives specifically, not every woman indiscriminately. The instruction follows Ephesians 5:21, which declares, “Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.” That preceding verse establishes humility among believers as part of the Spirit-filled Christian life. Now Paul begins addressing particular responsibilities within the household. The passage does not appear in a discussion of the spiritual inferiority of women or the supposed superiority of every man. It concerns God's order for marriage. Colossians 3:18 confirms the instruction: “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.” The agreement between these passages establishes that submission is a biblical responsibility rather than an invention of human tradition. God did not ask modern society to vote upon His instructions before permitting them to appear in Scripture. But neither did He authorize arrogant men to turn those instructions into weapons for satisfying their own pride.

The expression “submit yourselves” describes a willing recognition of the order God has established within marriage. It does not require a wife to become intellectually helpless, spiritually silent, or incapable of exercising judgment. Proverbs 31:26 declares concerning the virtuous woman, “She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness.” That woman possesses discernment, manages responsibilities, exercises initiative, and contributes substantially to her household. Her abilities do not contradict her place within the marriage. The distinction between responsibility and personal worth must remain clear. Galatians 3:28 declares that believers are one in Christ Jesus, establishing their shared standing in salvation without eliminating the particular responsibilities explained elsewhere in Scripture. First Peter 3:7 identifies husbands and wives as “heirs together of the grace of life.” A woman does not become less intelligent because she marries, and a man does not become more intelligent simply because somebody placed a wedding ring upon his finger. Marriage establishes responsibilities; it does not perform miracles upon the husband's judgment.

The command also requires recognition that willing submission differs from forced compliance. Paul addresses the wife's responsibility before God; he does not instruct husbands to obtain submission through intimidation, humiliation, or cruelty. Ephesians 5:25 subsequently commands husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it. The man who eagerly quotes verse 22 while ignoring verse 25 has selected the portion that imposes responsibility upon somebody else while quietly

discarding the portion that confronts his own conduct. Scripture does not authorize that arrangement. Christian marriage should involve honest communication, consideration, proper respect, and obedience to the Lord. A wife may express disagreement, provide counsel, and identify foolish decisions without automatically rejecting biblical order. Submission is not the disappearance of a woman's judgment. It is the recognition of her responsibility within marriage under the authority of God. The husband who mistakes that responsibility for permission to become a domestic dictator has confused headship with tyranny.

“unto your own husbands”

The next expression establishes a limitation that careless interpreters sometimes overlook: “unto your own husbands.” Notice those two words, “your own.” The apostle is not establishing universal domestic authority for every male over every female. The command concerns a particular marriage relationship. A woman is not required to submit to an unrelated man merely because he happens to be male, nor does this passage place every unmarried woman under the personal authority of every married man in the congregation. Colossians 3:18 uses the same designation, directing wives toward their own husbands. First Peter 3:1 likewise declares, “Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands.” Repeating the limitation matters because biblical interpretation must respect the actual words God has given. Some men can discover the word “submit” from the opposite end of the church building but suddenly develop a remarkable inability to read the words “your own.” The command is specific, and its boundaries are not available for unauthorized expansion.

The relationship described is marriage, not ownership. Genesis 2:24 declares, “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.” The Lord Jesus Christ reaffirmed this principle in Matthew 19:5–6. Marriage establishes a new household relationship in which husband and wife belong together in a covenantal union. The husband does not acquire a servant whose only purpose is to fulfill his preferences, and the wife does not enter a relationship in which her spiritual responsibilities are erased. First Corinthians 7:3–4 establishes mutual obligations within marriage, demonstrating that the union carries responsibilities in both directions. A Christian husband should therefore exercise leadership through responsibility, fidelity, and sacrificial concern rather than self-indulgence. A man who wants the authority of a husband while refusing the obligations of a husband is asking for the privileges of marriage without its responsibilities. The Bible never authorized that bargain, regardless of how confidently he announces himself the head of the house.

The expression also directs attention toward the practical unity of the household. A husband and wife will sometimes face disagreements concerning finances, employment, parenting, family obligations, and other legitimate decisions. Biblical submission does not eliminate discussion or require the wife to pretend that every proposal her husband makes possesses divine wisdom. A godly husband should desire the benefit of his wife's knowledge and judgment rather than treat her counsel as an inconvenience. Proverbs 31:11 declares concerning the virtuous woman, “The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her.” Trust is difficult to establish where one person refuses to listen and the other is expected never to express concern. Proper order should strengthen the household rather than turn every disagreement into a contest for domination. A husband who refuses wise counsel because it came from his wife has not demonstrated biblical leadership. He has demonstrated that his pride is capable of making an expensive decision with remarkable confidence.

“as unto the Lord”

The final expression supplies the spiritual foundation of the command: “as unto the Lord.” Paul does not instruct a Christian wife to regard her husband as divine, sinless, or incapable of error. The husband remains a fallen human being who requires the mercy, correction, and guidance of Almighty God. The expression identifies the wife's responsibility as part of her obedience to Jesus Christ. Colossians 3:18 clarifies the principle by declaring that submission is “fit in the Lord.” The responsibility is therefore governed by the Lord's authority rather than the husband's personal superiority. A Christian wife should seek to honor the Lord through her conduct within marriage, just as her husband must honor Christ through the sacrificial love commanded in the following verses. The husband is not Jesus Christ, and the wedding ceremony did not make him Jesus Christ's replacement. Any man who begins behaving as though his word is equal to God's word has promoted himself into an office heaven never established.

The expression also establishes an essential boundary concerning obedience. A husband cannot legitimately require his wife to participate in adultery, dishonesty, criminal conduct, false worship, or any other practice contrary to God's commandments. Acts 5:29 declares, “We ought to obey God rather than men.” That principle does not abolish legitimate authority; it establishes its proper limits. Ephesians 5:11 commands believers to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness but rather reprove them. Consequently, a Christian wife is not required to conceal serious wrongdoing merely because exposure would embarrass her husband. Nor does biblical submission require remaining in immediate danger when protection is necessary. Seeking appropriate safety, lawful intervention, or responsible counsel is not equivalent to rejecting Almighty God's authority.

A man cannot command wickedness, attach the phrase “as unto the Lord,” and expect heaven to authorize the transaction. Scripture does not become an accomplice to sin because somebody quotes a verse while committing it.

Finally, submission “as unto the Lord” must be understood within the larger illustration Paul develops concerning Christ and the Church. Ephesians 5:23 identifies the husband as the head of the wife and Christ as the head of the Church. Verse 25 commands husbands to love their wives, “even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;” That is the standard confronting the man who possesses responsibility within marriage. Christ's love was sacrificial, not selfish. His concern was for the good of those He loved rather than the satisfaction of His own sinful appetites, for He had none. The husband must not pretend to possess Christ's divine perfection, but he is commanded to follow the pattern of sacrificial love. The man who insists that his wife imitate the Church's submission while he refuses to imitate Christ's love has read the illustration backward. Biblical marriage requires the wife to recognize godly order and the husband to shoulder godly responsibility. Neither receives permission to abandon the commands addressed personally to them.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 5:22 establishes the wife's responsibility to recognize the order God has appointed within marriage while remaining personally accountable to Jesus Christ. The command concerns wives and their own husbands, not the submission of every woman to every man. Its immediate context is the Spirit-filled Christian life, including humility, thanksgiving, and the fear of God. Biblical submission does not establish female spiritual inferiority, erase personal judgment, or require unquestioning agreement with every decision a husband makes. The following verses explain the husband's corresponding responsibilities through the example of Christ's sacrificial love for the Church. The wife is commanded to submit within marriage, while the husband is commanded to love sacrificially. Neither command exists to excuse neglect of the other.

The expression “as unto the Lord” supplies both the proper motive and the governing boundary. The wife's responsibility arises from obedience to Christ, whose authority remains supreme over every human relationship. Submission cannot authorize wrongdoing, cruelty, coercion, or the concealment of serious sin. Likewise, the husband's responsibility as head does not establish ownership of his wife's conscience or relieve him of accountability before God. Salvation is received equally through faith in Jesus Christ, while the particular responsibilities of marriage concern the redeemed person's practical walk. The central lesson is that biblical submission belongs within a marriage governed by God's authority, where the wife honors the Lord through her conduct and the husband answers to the same Lord for his love, leadership, and treatment of her.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. The Spirit-Filled Context Of Submission

Ephesians 5:18 — “but be filled with the Spirit;”

Ephesians 5:20 — “Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father”

Ephesians 5:21 — “Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.”

Ephesians 5:22 — “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.”

2. God's Particular Order Within Marriage

Colossians 3:18 — “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.”

1 Peter 3:1 — “Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands;”

Ephesians 5:23 — “For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church:”

Genesis 2:24 — “and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.”

3. Christ And The Church As The Pattern

Ephesians 5:24 — “Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.”

Ephesians 5:25 — “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;”

Ephesians 5:29 — “For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it”

Ephesians 5:32 — “This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.”

4. The Husband's Responsibility Before God

Ephesians 5:28 — “So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies.”

Ephesians 5:33 — “and the wife see that she reverence her husband.”

1 Peter 3:7 — “Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife”

Colossians 3:19 — “Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.”

5. The Wisdom And Worth Of A Godly Wife

Proverbs 31:10 — “Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies.”

Proverbs 31:11 — “The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her”

Proverbs 31:26 — “She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness.”

Proverbs 31:30 — “but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised.”

6. The Limits Of Human Authority

Acts 5:29 — “We ought to obey God rather than men.”

Ephesians 5:11 — “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.”

Psalm 82:4 — “Deliver the poor and needy: rid them out of the hand of the wicked.”

Romans 13:4 — “For he is the minister of God to thee for good.”

7. Spiritual Equality And Mutual Christian Care

Galatians 3:28 — “for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.”

1 Peter 3:7 — “as being heirs together of the grace of life;”

Philippians 2:3 — “in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.”

Galatians 5:13 — “but by love serve one another.”

5. Reflection

Ephesians 5:22 confronts a subject that many Christians would rather avoid because modern society has become increasingly hostile toward the very idea of biblical authority within marriage. Yet the believer cannot remove a commandment merely because it contradicts popular opinion. Paul plainly instructs wives to submit to their own husbands as unto the Lord. That instruction belongs to the Christian household and must be understood according to its surrounding context. The previous verse commands mutual humility in the fear of God, while the following verses establish the husband's responsibility for sacrificial love. The Bible does not teach that marriage is a contest in which the loudest person wins authority. It establishes responsibilities that both husband and wife must recognize before Almighty God. Rejecting one responsibility because the other is sometimes abused does not constitute faithful interpretation.

The command must also be distinguished from the foolish assumption that submission establishes the wife's spiritual inferiority. Scripture identifies believing husbands and wives

as heirs together of the grace of life. Salvation is received through faith in Jesus Christ, not through marriage, gender, or the performance of household responsibilities. A Christian woman possesses direct accountability before the Lord, spiritual gifts for service, and the responsibility to study and obey Scripture. Proverbs 31 describes a capable woman exercising wisdom, diligence, and considerable practical responsibility. Nothing in Ephesians 5:22 requires a husband to disregard his wife's judgment or treat her opinions as worthless. A man who refuses intelligent counsel because it came from his wife has not demonstrated superior spiritual authority. He has merely allowed personal pride to become the most influential adviser in his household. Biblical headship requires wisdom.

The expression “your own husbands” establishes an important limitation that must never be ignored. Paul does not grant every man universal authority over every woman. He addresses the particular relationship established through marriage. That relationship involves fidelity, trust, mutual concern, and the responsibilities explained throughout the passage. The husband cannot claim the privileges of marriage while continually refusing its obligations. Neither should the wife treat every legitimate exercise of household responsibility as an attack upon her dignity. A marriage cannot flourish when both people become more interested in proving their independence than fulfilling their responsibilities. The biblical answer is not selfish domination on one side or perpetual contention on the other, but obedience to God's instructions governing both.

The words “as unto the Lord” also prevent submission from becoming an excuse for wickedness. No husband possesses authority to command his wife to violate Scripture, participate in dishonesty, endure coercion without seeking protection, or conceal serious wrongdoing. Acts 5:29 establishes that obedience to God remains supreme over human demands. A woman endangered by abuse may seek safety and appropriate assistance without rejecting her responsibility before Christ. Likewise, a husband who uses Scripture to intimidate his wife must answer for his own conduct rather than hide behind the portion of the passage addressed to her. The man who quotes submission while practicing cruelty is not defending biblical marriage. He is using sacred words to excuse unscriptural behavior. God's commandments must not become instruments for protecting sin.

This passage must also remain distinct from the doctrine of salvation. A woman does not receive eternal life through submission to her husband, and a man does not receive eternal life through successful leadership of his household. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes salvation by grace through faith, apart from human works. Ephesians 1:13 identifies the believer's sealing with the Holy Spirit after believing the gospel. Household responsibilities concern the practical walk of those already redeemed. Nevertheless, eternal security does not make disobedience, selfishness, or cruelty acceptable. Both husband and wife must allow

Scripture to correct their conduct. The blood of Jesus Christ secures salvation, but it does not grant the flesh permission to turn the home into a battlefield of pride and resentment. Christian grace should produce grateful obedience.

Finally, Ephesians 5:22 should direct attention toward the complete biblical picture of marriage rather than an isolated command used to win domestic arguments. The wife is instructed to submit to her own husband as unto the Lord, while the husband is instructed to love his wife as Christ loved the Church. Those responsibilities are distinct, but both require humility, self-denial, and obedience to God. Where disagreement arises, honest communication and wise counsel should replace unnecessary contention. Where wrongdoing occurs, truth and appropriate correction must not be sacrificed to preserve appearances. A Christian husband should be concerned with becoming a man whose conduct reflects sacrificial love, not merely a man who enjoys quoting verses about authority. A Christian wife should recognize her responsibility before Christ without surrendering obedience to Christ Himself. The command remains clear: "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord."

Ephesians 5:23 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 5:23

"For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body."

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"For the husband is the head of the wife"

Paul begins with a declaration that establishes the divine order of marriage and immediately places a tremendous responsibility upon the man who occupies the position described: "For the husband is the head of the wife." Notice the opening word "For." The apostle is explaining the instruction in Ephesians 5:22, where wives are commanded to submit themselves unto their own husbands as unto the Lord. Verse 23 supplies the doctrinal reason for that instruction. God has established headship within the marriage relationship, and the Christian has no authority to erase that arrangement merely because contemporary society finds it objectionable. First Corinthians 11:3 declares, "But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the

man; and the head of Christ is God." That passage establishes an order of responsibility, not a declaration that women possess inferior intelligence, lesser spiritual value, or reduced access to the grace of God. The husband is called the head of the wife, not the owner of the wife, the saviour of the wife, or the infallible interpreter of every decision made inside the house. A man who cannot distinguish headship from ownership has already demonstrated his need for considerable biblical instruction.

The word "head" identifies a position of responsibility within the marriage. The man is not instructed to exercise headship through indifference, selfishness, intimidation, or a continual demand for personal recognition. Ephesians 5:25 commands husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it. The responsibility of the husband must therefore be understood alongside the sacrifice required of him. Genesis 2:24 establishes marriage as a union in which a man leaves father and mother, cleaves unto his wife, and becomes one flesh with her. That union creates a household with its own responsibilities rather than a relationship in which the husband remains an irresponsible child while expecting his wife to manage everything. A man who refuses to provide appropriate care, listen to wise counsel, or accept responsibility for his conduct has little reason to congratulate himself upon possessing the title of head. Headship is not a comfortable chair from which a man issues orders while his wife carries every burden. It is a position that demands responsibility, fidelity, self-denial, and the willingness to answer before Almighty God for how that responsibility has been exercised.

The instruction also must not be confused with a claim that the husband automatically possesses superior wisdom concerning every matter. Proverbs 31 describes a virtuous woman who exercises sound judgment, manages practical affairs, and contributes substantially to the welfare of her household. Proverbs 31:11 declares, "The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her." Such trust is incompatible with the foolish assumption that a wife must remain silent whenever she possesses knowledge her husband lacks. A godly husband should value his wife's counsel, appreciate her abilities, and recognize that leadership does not require pretending he knows everything. First Peter 3:7 commands husbands to dwell with their wives according to knowledge and give them honour as heirs together of the grace of life. Biblical headship operates within a relationship of spiritual dignity, marital unity, and accountable responsibility. A fellow who refuses his wife's sensible advice simply because he is determined to prove who is in charge may eventually prove it by leading the entire household into a completely avoidable disaster. A man can occupy the driver's seat and still drive straight into a ditch.

"even as Christ is the head of the church"

The second expression lifts the discussion far above ordinary household administration: “even as Christ is the head of the church.” Paul establishes a comparison between the husband's relationship to his wife and Jesus Christ's relationship to the Church. Notice that the comparison is grounded in Christ's actual authority rather than a husband's personal ambition. Ephesians 1:22 declares that God “gave him to be the head over all things to the church,” while Ephesians 1:23 identifies the Church as His body. Colossians 1:18 likewise declares, “And he is the head of the body, the church.” This is no reference merely to a religious building, a denominational headquarters, or an earthly institution claiming exclusive ownership of Christ's people. The Church in this doctrinal setting is the spiritual body of Jesus Christ, composed of those who belong to Him. Christ is its Head, and His authority cannot be transferred to a religious personality who imagines himself entitled to govern the whole body. The Church already has a Head, and His name is Jesus Christ. Any religious official who claims authority superior to the written word of that Head has appointed himself to a position heaven never offered him.

The comparison also identifies the character of authority that must govern the marriage relationship. Christ does not exercise headship through sinful pride, cruelty, ignorance, or the exploitation of those belonging to Him. Ephesians 5:25 explains His sacrificial love, while verse 29 describes His care for the Church through the language of nourishing and cherishing. The husband's role reflects this pattern in a limited, human manner. He cannot possess Christ's divine perfection, but he is commanded to follow the principle of sacrificial love. Consequently, the husband who demands submission while continually neglecting his wife's welfare has violated the very illustration he claims to defend. Nor does the wife become the spiritual equivalent of a helpless child merely because Paul compares marriage with Christ and the Church. Both spouses remain accountable to the Lord, whose authority governs the entire arrangement. The husband who wants to resemble Christ only in the matter of being called head has selected the easiest portion of the comparison and ignored the costly part. Christ gave Himself for the Church. The selfish husband would prefer that everybody else give themselves for him.

The expression also requires the distinction between Christ's perfect headship and the husband's imperfect exercise of marital authority. The Lord Jesus Christ possesses divine authority, complete righteousness, and unfailing wisdom. No earthly husband possesses those qualities in himself. Therefore, the comparison cannot authorize a man to treat his opinions as Scripture or demand obedience to wickedness. Ephesians 5:21 has already commanded believers to submit themselves one to another in the fear of God, establishing the governing importance of accountability before the Lord. Acts 5:29 declares, “We ought to obey God rather than men.” Human responsibility remains subordinate to divine authority. The Christian wife must recognize the order of marriage without surrendering her

duty to obey Christ, and the Christian husband must exercise headship without pretending to possess Christ's infallibility. The Lord never intended the marriage illustration to transform a sinful man into a household deity. He intended that man's responsibility to be measured against the sacrificial example of the sinless Saviour. The difference ought to produce humility rather than arrogance.

“and he is the saviour of the body”

The final expression establishes a doctrinal distinction that must never be overlooked: “and he is the saviour of the body.” The “he” in this clause refers to Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church, not to the earthly husband as the spiritual saviour of his wife. The body is the Church, as Ephesians 1:22–23 and Colossians 1:18 plainly establish. Christ's headship over the Church is inseparable from His work of salvation. He did not merely organize a religious society, establish moral rules, or provide an example of honorable living. He redeemed sinners through His own blood and brought believers into His spiritual body. Ephesians 1:7 declares, “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;” First Corinthians 12:13 explains that believers are baptized by one Spirit into one body. The husband is the head of the wife within marriage, but he is not the Redeemer of her soul. No marriage certificate has ever conferred the power to forgive sins, and no wedding ring possesses the saving virtue of the blood of Jesus Christ.

The distinction becomes especially important when religious teachers begin confusing household authority with spiritual salvation. A Christian wife does not receive eternal life through submission to her husband, and an unsaved wife does not obtain regeneration because she has married a believing man. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes salvation by grace through faith apart from works. Romans 4:5 declares that faith is counted for righteousness to the one who believes on Him who justifies the ungodly. The same gospel applies to men and women, married and unmarried, rich and poor. Galatians 3:28 establishes that believers are one in Christ Jesus, while other passages explain their distinct responsibilities within marriage and the Church. These truths do not contradict one another because standing in Christ and responsibilities within human relationships address different matters. A wife does not need her husband's permission to believe the gospel, and a husband cannot believe the gospel on her behalf. Each sinner must come to Jesus Christ, because the Saviour of the body is Christ Himself.

Finally, the description of Christ as “the saviour of the body” prevents the marriage comparison from becoming an excuse for male self-importance. The Lord's authority over His Church rests within a relationship established by His redeeming love. Ephesians 5:25–27 describes Christ giving Himself for the Church and sanctifying and cleansing it, with the

ultimate purpose of presenting it glorious. No husband accomplishes that saving and sanctifying work for his wife in the manner Christ accomplishes it for His Church. The husband may love, protect, encourage, teach, and faithfully fulfill his responsibilities, but he cannot replace the Lord's unique office. Nor may any pastor or denominational official claim to be the spiritual saviour of Christ's people. The redeemed belong to Jesus Christ, and their eternal security rests upon His finished work. The earthly husband is responsible for how he treats his wife; Jesus Christ alone is responsible for the redemption He accomplished for His body. Confuse those offices, and before long a sinful man will be demanding honors that belong exclusively to the Son of God.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 5:23 establishes the husband's headship within marriage by comparing that relationship with the headship of Jesus Christ over the Church. The comparison explains the instruction given to wives in verse 22, but it also introduces the tremendous responsibility placed upon husbands in the following verses. Biblical headship concerns divine order, marital responsibility, and sacrificial love rather than spiritual superiority or unrestricted personal authority. The husband remains accountable to God, while the wife possesses equal standing in salvation through Jesus Christ. The Church, meanwhile, is the spiritual body of Christ, and He alone is its supreme Head.

The final expression, “and he is the saviour of the body,” establishes the essential distinction between the earthly illustration and the divine reality. Jesus Christ alone purchased redemption through His blood, and neither a husband nor an earthly religious official can assume His saving office. Marriage illustrates the relationship between Christ and His Church without making the two relationships identical in every respect. The central lesson is that biblical headship carries responsibility, but Christ's headship includes a saving work no earthly husband can accomplish. The man must follow the Saviour's example without ever pretending to take the Saviour's place.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. The Immediate Context Of Marital Headship

Ephesians 5:21 — “Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.”

Ephesians 5:22 — “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.”

Ephesians 5:23 — “For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church:”

Ephesians 5:25 — “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;”

2. God's Established Order Within Marriage

Genesis 2:24 — “and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.”

1 Corinthians 11:3 — “and the head of the woman is the man;”

Colossians 3:18 — “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.”

1 Peter 3:7 — “Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife”

3. Jesus Christ Is The Head Of The Church

Ephesians 1:22 — “and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,”

Ephesians 1:23 — “Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.”

Colossians 1:18 — “And he is the head of the body, the church:”

1 Corinthians 12:27 — “Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.”

4. Christ's Sacrificial Love Governs The Illustration

Ephesians 5:25 — “even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;”

Ephesians 5:28 — “So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies.”

Ephesians 5:29 — “but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:”

Colossians 3:19 — “Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.”

5. Christ Alone Is The Saviour Of The Body

Ephesians 5:23 — “and he is the saviour of the body.”

Ephesians 1:7 — “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins”

Titus 3:5 — “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us”

1 Timothy 2:5 — “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;”

6. Believers Share The Same Spiritual Standing

Ephesians 2:8 — “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:”

Galatians 3:28 — “for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.”

1 Peter 3:7 — “as being heirs together of the grace of life;”

1 Corinthians 12:13 — “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body”

7. Human Authority Remains Accountable To God

Acts 5:29 — “We ought to obey God rather than men.”

Ephesians 5:11 — “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.”

Ephesians 6:9 — “And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening:”

1 Peter 5:3 — “Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.”

5. Reflection

Ephesians 5:23 establishes a biblical truth that many husbands are eager to claim but considerably fewer appear enthusiastic about practicing according to its full meaning. Paul declares that the husband is the head of the wife, and the statement must not be discarded merely because society rejects the idea of marital headship. Nevertheless, the apostle immediately compares that relationship with Christ's headship over the Church. That comparison ought to produce humility rather than arrogance. Jesus Christ exercised His headship through sacrificial love, not selfish domination. The fellow who enjoys reminding his wife that he is the head of the household while refusing responsibility for its welfare has discovered the title without understanding the office. Biblical headship requires considerably more than giving orders.

The comparison also exposes the foolishness of husbands who interpret leadership as permission to disregard their wives. Scripture describes the virtuous woman as wise, capable, trustworthy, and valuable beyond earthly riches. A husband should therefore appreciate his wife's counsel rather than assume that receiving advice somehow threatens his authority. First Peter 3:7 commands husbands to give honour to their wives as heirs together of the grace of life. That instruction leaves no room for contempt, deliberate humiliation, or the assumption that marriage establishes spiritual inequality. A wife may possess greater knowledge concerning particular responsibilities without violating the order God established. The husband who treats intelligent counsel as rebellion may eventually demonstrate his authority by leading the household into difficulties that wiser judgment could have prevented. Headship is not omniscience.

The words concerning Christ's headship over the Church also require careful doctrinal interpretation. The Church is the spiritual body of Jesus Christ, not merely a religious building or an organization directed by human officials. Ephesians 1:22–23 identifies Christ as Head and the Church as His body. Colossians 1:18 establishes His preeminence over that body. No pastor, bishop, denominational authority, or religious institution possesses the right to replace Him. Legitimate ministers must remain subject to His word rather than assume authority that belongs exclusively to the Saviour. A preacher may be entrusted with the oversight of a congregation, but he has not been appointed the substitute head of the universal Church. Jesus Christ requires no earthly replacement to exercise His divine authority.

The final declaration, “and he is the saviour of the body,” establishes an even greater distinction. No husband can save his wife's soul through marital authority, and no wife receives eternal life through submission to her husband. Salvation belongs to Jesus Christ alone through His finished work upon Calvary. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes salvation by grace through faith, apart from human works. The believer's place in Christ's body is therefore not purchased through marriage, domestic obedience, or successful household leadership. Those responsibilities concern the Christian walk, not the means of regeneration. The husband may possess authority within marriage, but he cannot forgive sins, reconcile a soul to God, or provide eternal redemption. The blood of Jesus Christ accomplishes what no earthly relationship can supply.

This passage must also never become an excuse for cruelty, coercion, or the concealment of serious wrongdoing. Human authority remains subordinate to the commandments of Almighty God. A husband cannot require his wife to participate in dishonesty, immorality, or other wickedness and then demand obedience by quoting the language of headship. Where abuse or serious danger exists, seeking protection and appropriate assistance does not constitute rebellion against Jesus Christ. The husband himself must answer for his treatment of his wife, just as the wife must answer for her own conduct before God. Scripture establishes responsibilities for both rather than offering immunity to either. A man who quotes the Bible to defend his authority while violating its commandments concerning love has not found a spiritual defense for his behavior. He has provided evidence against himself.

Finally, Ephesians 5:23 should direct husbands and wives toward the complete instruction of the passage rather than isolated statements used to win arguments. The wife is commanded to recognize the order God established, while the husband is commanded to demonstrate sacrificial love. Both belong to the Lord, and both must submit their conduct to His word. The husband should assume responsibility, pursue righteousness, seek

wisdom, and provide loving care without pretending to possess divine perfection. The wife should exercise biblical submission without surrendering her personal obligation to obey Christ. The household does not need a little dictator wearing a wedding ring and quoting Ephesians whenever somebody disagrees with him. It needs a husband who understands that headship carries responsibility and a wife who honors the Lord through her own conduct. Above them both stands Jesus Christ, the Head and Saviour of His body.

Ephesians 5:24 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 5:24

"Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing."

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ"

Paul begins with a declaration that connects the marriage relationship directly to one of the greatest doctrinal truths revealed in the New Testament: the relationship between Jesus Christ and His Church. Notice the opening word "Therefore." The apostle is drawing a conclusion from Ephesians 5:22–23, where wives are instructed to submit themselves unto their own husbands and the husband is identified as the head of the wife. But Paul does not leave the instruction resting upon an earthly custom or the personal superiority of a man. He establishes a comparison with Christ's headship over His body. Ephesians 1:22 declares that God "gave him to be the head over all things to the church," while verse 23 identifies the Church as His body. Colossians 1:18 likewise declares, "And he is the head of the body, the church." Christ's authority over the Church is divine, righteous, and absolute. The Church does not possess a collection of competing heads, and the Lord Jesus Christ has never advertised a vacancy for an earthly replacement. He is the Head, and the redeemed are responsible to acknowledge His authority.

The expression "as the church is subject unto Christ" identifies the pattern behind Paul's instruction. The Church belongs to the Saviour who purchased its redemption through His blood. Ephesians 1:7 declares, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;" First Corinthians 12:13 explains that believers are brought into one body by the Spirit. Consequently, the Church's

submission to Christ does not purchase its salvation; it is the proper response of those who belong to Him. That distinction must remain intact when applying the illustration to marriage. A wife does not earn salvation through obedience to her husband, nor does a husband's authority determine whether she possesses eternal life. Salvation remains the free gift of God through faith in Jesus Christ. The redeemed Church follows its Head because it belongs to Him, not because successful obedience makes His blood sufficient. Confuse salvation with submission, and before long somebody will be attempting to turn marriage into another religious system of works.

The comparison also requires recognizing the enormous difference between the perfect Headship of Christ and the imperfect leadership of an earthly husband. Jesus Christ is sinless, possesses all wisdom, and never commands unrighteousness. No husband can truthfully claim those qualifications. He may possess genuine spiritual maturity, practical wisdom, and a sincere desire to honor God, but he remains capable of mistakes, selfishness, and disobedience. The Church's subjection to Christ therefore supplies the divine model without transforming the husband into an infallible authority. Ephesians 5:25 immediately commands husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it. The husband must be measured by that sacrificial responsibility rather than merely borrowing the language of headship. A man who wants his wife to follow the Church's example while he refuses to follow Christ's example has selected a remarkably convenient half of the illustration. The Bible did not establish marriage so that a sinful man could enjoy the privileges of divine authority without accepting the obligations of godly leadership.

“so let the wives be to their own husbands”

The second expression applies the comparison to the marriage relationship: “so let the wives be to their own husbands.” Notice that Paul is addressing wives, not issuing a universal command requiring every woman to submit to every man. The words “their own husbands” establish the specific relationship under consideration. Ephesians 5:22 uses the same limitation, while Colossians 3:18 declares, “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.” First Peter 3:1 likewise instructs wives concerning their own husbands. These passages establish a consistent New Testament teaching concerning marital order. Nevertheless, the command must not be expanded beyond its intended relationship. A woman is not required to surrender personal judgment to every male acquaintance, and an unmarried woman does not become the personal subordinate of every married man in the congregation. Some fellows can locate the word “submit” with extraordinary speed but require considerable assistance finding the words “your own.”

God's commandments possess boundaries, and an overconfident interpreter has no authority to erase them.

The expression also does not imply that a wife's intelligence, spiritual maturity, or practical abilities must be inferior to her husband's. Proverbs 31 describes a virtuous woman who exercises wisdom, conducts business, manages household responsibilities, and earns the trust of her husband. Proverbs 31:26 declares, “She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness.” First Peter 3:7 identifies believing husbands and wives as heirs together of the grace of life. Their common standing in Christ is not contradicted by the particular responsibilities established within marriage. A husband who refuses to hear his wife's counsel merely to preserve his sense of superiority may be demonstrating pride rather than biblical leadership. The passage recognizes household order without requiring foolishness from either spouse. A wise wife is not a threat to a godly husband. She is a blessing to him. The man who insists upon making every decision alone simply to prove he is the head may eventually prove that a head can function with remarkably little judgment.

The words “so let the wives be” also emphasize the wife's personal responsibility before the Lord. Paul addresses her conduct; he does not command husbands to force submission through intimidation or coercion. The passage must be read alongside Ephesians 5:21, where believers are instructed to submit themselves one to another in the fear of God. It must also be read alongside verse 25, where husbands are commanded to demonstrate sacrificial love. Neither spouse receives permission to neglect the commandments addressed personally to them because the other has failed. A wife should seek to fulfill her responsibility before Christ, while a husband must exercise his responsibility with wisdom, love, and humility. Proper household order should encourage cooperation rather than become a continual contest for personal dominance. Biblical marriage is not a wrestling match in which the winner obtains the privilege of quoting Scripture at the loser. It is a relationship in which both husband and wife must answer to Almighty God for their own conduct.

“in every thing”

The final expression gives the instruction its breadth: “in every thing.” Those words are not an invitation to explain away the command until it means absolutely nothing. Paul is not describing an occasional courtesy performed only when a wife already agrees with every preference expressed by her husband. The instruction concerns the ordinary range of responsibilities belonging to marriage and household life. Questions concerning finances, children, employment, family obligations, and the direction of the household may require cooperation even when husband and wife initially disagree. The wife is instructed to recognize her husband's responsibility rather than regard every legitimate decision as a

challenge to her independence. Nevertheless, the expression appears within a passage repeatedly governed by submission to the Lord. The Bible does not command a wife to cooperate only when cooperation costs nothing, but neither does it place her husband's wishes above the commandments of Almighty God.

The boundaries become unmistakable when the husband demands participation in wickedness. Acts 5:29 establishes the principle, “We ought to obey God rather than men.” Ephesians 5:11 commands believers to refuse fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. Therefore, a husband cannot require his wife to commit fraud, conceal abuse, participate in immorality, or violate God's word and then claim that “in every thing” authorizes his demand. Colossians 3:18 confirms that marital submission must be “as it is fit in the Lord.” Neither does the passage require a wife to remain in immediate physical danger rather than seek safety or appropriate assistance. Such boundaries do not abolish marital headship; they recognize that human authority remains subordinate to divine authority. A husband cannot command sin, wave Ephesians 5:24 in the air, and expect the Holy Ghost to endorse the arrangement. The verse establishes marital order, not a private exemption from the rest of the Bible.

The breadth of the command also requires a husband to consider the seriousness of the responsibility entrusted to him. Because the wife's submission concerns the whole course of marriage, the husband's decisions may affect her well-being, children, financial security, spiritual life, and future opportunities. He should therefore exercise judgment with humility, listen carefully, and refuse to treat household leadership as an opportunity for selfish indulgence. Ephesians 5:28 commands husbands to love their wives as their own bodies. First Corinthians 7:3–4 establishes reciprocal marital obligations, demonstrating that marriage is not arranged entirely for one person's benefit. A wise husband should welcome responsible counsel, and a godly wife should recognize the importance of household unity. The more seriously a man takes the words “in every thing,” the more seriously he ought to take his own accountability. Headship is not a license to have one's way in everything; it is a responsibility to seek what is right before God in everything.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 5:24 establishes the Church's subjection to Jesus Christ as the pattern for the wife's submission within marriage. The command follows the identification of the husband as head of the wife and Christ as Head and Saviour of the Church. The comparison establishes a genuine responsibility for wives without making husbands divine, infallible, or spiritually superior. The words “their own husbands” limit the instruction to the marriage relationship, while “in every thing” emphasizes its application throughout lawful marital

responsibilities. The husband is simultaneously commanded to exercise sacrificial love rather than selfish domination.

The passage must also be understood within the greater authority of Jesus Christ. The Church's Head is sinless; an earthly husband is not. Therefore, marital submission cannot authorize disobedience to God, participation in wickedness, or the concealment of serious wrongdoing. Nor does submission purchase salvation or remove the wife's personal accountability before the Lord. The central lesson is that biblical marriage requires genuine submission within God's established order, while every exercise of human authority remains subject to Christ and His written word.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. The Church's Subjection To Christ

Ephesians 1:22 — “and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,”

Ephesians 1:23 — “Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.”

Colossians 1:18 — “And he is the head of the body, the church:”

Ephesians 5:24 — “Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ”

2. Marriage And God's Established Order

Ephesians 5:22 — “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.”

Ephesians 5:23 — “For the husband is the head of the wife”

Colossians 3:18 — “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.”

1 Peter 3:1 — “Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands;”

3. The Husband's Corresponding Responsibilities

Ephesians 5:25 — “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;”

Ephesians 5:28 — “So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies.”

Colossians 3:19 — “Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.”

1 Peter 3:7 — “giving honour unto the wife”

4. Marital Unity And Mutual Care

Genesis 2:24 — “and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.”

Proverbs 31:11 — “The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her”

1 Corinthians 7:3 — “Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence:”

Philippians 2:3 — “in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.”

5. God's Authority Above Human Demands

Acts 5:29 — “We ought to obey God rather than men.”

Ephesians 5:11 — “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.”

Ephesians 5:21 — “Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.”

Ephesians 4:15 — “But speaking the truth in love”

6. The Spiritual Worth Of A Godly Wife

Proverbs 31:10 — “Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies.”

Proverbs 31:26 — “She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness.”

1 Peter 3:7 — “as being heirs together of the grace of life;”

Galatians 3:28 — “for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.”

7. Marriage As A Picture Of Christ And The Church

Ephesians 5:25 — “even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;”

Ephesians 5:27 — “That he might present it to himself a glorious church”

Ephesians 5:29 — “but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:”

Ephesians 5:32 — “This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.”

5. Reflection

Ephesians 5:24 confronts two opposing errors that have created considerable confusion concerning biblical marriage. On one side stands the modern notion that God's established order may be discarded whenever it becomes unpopular. On the other stands the religious hypocrite who discovers the command concerning submission and immediately attempts to use it as permission for selfish domination. Neither approach handles the passage honestly. Paul establishes the Church's subjection to Christ as the pattern for the wife's responsibility within marriage. That comparison must be respected without pretending that an earthly husband possesses the divine perfection of Jesus Christ. The man who wants his

wife to acknowledge his headship while refusing to acknowledge Christ's headship over himself has misunderstood the very foundation of the arrangement. Biblical order begins with obedience to God.

The words “in every thing” also prevent Christians from reducing submission to an occasional courtesy that operates only when everybody already agrees. Marriage involves responsibilities, decisions, sacrifices, and circumstances in which two people may possess different judgments. A wife should recognize the husband's responsibility within the household rather than assume that every disagreement requires a contest for authority. Nevertheless, the command does not require surrendering the ability to think, speak truthfully, or provide wise counsel. Proverbs 31 presents a woman whose judgment and diligence contribute substantially to her family's welfare. Her abilities are not portrayed as defects that must be suppressed. A husband who wants a wife incapable of disagreeing with him has not necessarily found biblical harmony. He may simply be searching for somebody who will applaud every decision, including the foolish ones. Godly submission and honest counsel can coexist.

The husband's responsibility becomes especially important because the comparison is with Jesus Christ. Ephesians 5:25 commands husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it. That is a considerably more demanding standard than merely announcing who occupies the position of head. A godly husband must consider his wife's welfare, accept responsibility for his decisions, and demonstrate fidelity and sacrificial care. He should not expect submission to compensate for his refusal to exercise wisdom. Nor should he manipulate Scripture to preserve personal comfort while shifting every difficult responsibility onto his wife. The Bible did not appoint the husband head of the household so that he could become its most demanding dependent. Leadership that continually requires sacrifice from others while refusing personal responsibility is a poor imitation of Christ.

The passage also requires a distinction between spiritual standing and practical responsibility. The Church belongs to Jesus Christ through redemption, and salvation remains the gift of God through faith rather than the reward of successful obedience. A wife does not earn eternal life through submission to her husband, and her husband cannot preserve her salvation through his leadership. Galatians 3:28 identifies the unity believers possess in Christ, while First Peter 3:7 describes husbands and wives as heirs together of the grace of life. Those truths establish shared spiritual dignity without erasing the particular responsibilities assigned within marriage. The husband may be the head of the wife, but he is not the saviour of the wife. Her soul belongs to Jesus Christ, and her ultimate accountability remains before Him.

The command must never be used to protect cruelty, coercion, or serious wrongdoing. Human authority does not become divine authority merely because the Bible establishes a responsibility to submit. Acts 5:29 declares that obedience to God takes precedence over obedience to men. Consequently, a husband cannot legitimately demand participation in wickedness or require his wife to conceal serious offenses. Where danger exists, seeking safety, responsible assistance, or lawful protection does not constitute rejection of the Lord's commandments. Such principles must not become excuses for treating ordinary differences of opinion as though they were criminal offenses. But neither should ordinary language about household harmony be used to minimize genuine harm. A man who must frighten his wife into submission has already abandoned the sacrificial character of the leadership he claims to represent. Christ's example condemns selfish domination.

Finally, Ephesians 5:24 should direct husbands and wives toward the complete instruction of Ephesians 5 rather than isolated verses selected for winning arguments. The wife is commanded to recognize the order established within marriage, while the husband is commanded to love sacrificially. Both are instructed within a passage describing the Spirit-filled Christian life. Both must recognize the authority of Jesus Christ, receive biblical correction, and refuse conduct contrary to God's word. A healthy Christian household requires more than the ability to recite the proper doctrinal arrangement; it requires the willingness to live according to the responsibilities that arrangement establishes. The Christian home does not need a husband pretending to be Christ or a wife pretending that Scripture never established marital order. It needs two believers who recognize that Jesus Christ is Lord, that His word governs their responsibilities, and that the marriage relationship should reflect His truth rather than provide another battlefield for the flesh.

Ephesians 5:25 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 5:25

"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;"

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"Husbands, love your wives"

Paul has arrived at a command that ought to make every Christian husband considerably more interested in his responsibilities than in his authority: **"Husbands, love your wives."**

Notice the change in the person addressed. Ephesians 5:22–24 establishes the wife's responsibility concerning submission within marriage, but verse 25 turns directly toward the man. The apostle has already declared that the husband is the head of the wife. Now he explains what must govern the exercise of that headship. The command is not for husbands to demand affection, collect admiration, or congratulate themselves upon occupying a position established by God. It is to love their wives. Colossians 3:19 reinforces the instruction: **"Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them."** The two passages belong together. **A man who can quote every verse concerning his wife's submission but cannot locate the command to love her has not mastered biblical marriage. He has merely discovered how to read the portion that places responsibility upon somebody else.**

The word **"love"** establishes an obligation that reaches beyond romantic attraction, favorable circumstances, and temporary emotional enthusiasm. The Christian husband is commanded to demonstrate faithful concern for the woman to whom he has committed himself in marriage. Genesis 2:24 establishes the union of husband and wife as one flesh, while Ephesians 5:28 commands men to love their wives as their own bodies. Such love involves fidelity, consideration, provision according to ability, personal sacrifice, honest communication, and responsible care. It must continue when youth fades, sickness arrives, financial circumstances change, or ordinary responsibilities become difficult. First Corinthians 13:5 declares concerning charity that it **"seeketh not her own."** There stands a direct rebuke to the selfishness that attempts to make every marital decision serve one person's preferences. **Marriage does not give a husband a personal servant whose principal purpose is making his life comfortable. It gives him a responsibility to love someone whose welfare must matter to him even when that love requires sacrifice.**

This command also confronts the mistaken idea that love can be established merely through providing money or maintaining outward respectability. A husband may work diligently, pay his bills, and possess a favorable reputation among his acquaintances while treating his wife with coldness, contempt, or continual criticism. Another may speak affectionately in public while becoming harsh and inconsiderate inside the household. Such contradictions must be examined according to Scripture. First Peter 3:7 commands husbands to dwell with their wives according to knowledge and give them honour. Ephesians 4:29 requires communication that ministers grace to hearers. A husband should therefore consider how he speaks, listens, corrects, encourages, and responds when his wife expresses legitimate concerns. Love does not require abandoning truth or pretending every disagreement is unimportant, but it does require righteous conduct. **The fellow who tells everybody how much he loves his wife while making her afraid to express an**

opinion has confused his public testimony with his private character. The Lord examines both.

“even as Christ also loved the church”

The next expression establishes the extraordinary standard by which the husband's love must be measured: **“even as Christ also loved the church.”** Paul does not direct the husband toward the customs of society, the behavior of other men, or the romantic expectations of popular entertainment. He directs his attention toward the Lord Jesus Christ. Ephesians 5:23 identifies Christ as the Head of the Church, while Ephesians 1:22–23 identifies the Church as His body. Colossians 1:18 confirms, **“And he is the head of the body, the church.”** The reference is therefore to Christ's spiritual body, composed of believers united to Him, not merely to a particular religious building or earthly institution. Jesus Christ did not surrender His life to purchase stained-glass windows, denominational headquarters, or a congregation's property deed. He came to redeem sinners. **The Church belongs to Christ because He purchased its redemption, not because some religious organization successfully registered His name as its exclusive property.**

The words **“Christ also loved”** direct attention toward love demonstrated through action rather than mere profession. Romans 5:8 declares, **“But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”** Christ did not wait until sinners became worthy of His sacrifice before demonstrating His love. His death was the expression of divine grace toward the undeserving. That reality does not require husbands to excuse deliberate wrongdoing or tolerate abuse; Christ's saving love never makes sin righteous. It does, however, rebuke the selfish habit of making ordinary kindness entirely dependent upon whether one's spouse has behaved perfectly. A man may refuse affection, consideration, or assistance because his wife disappointed him in some matter, then insist that he is following the Lord. **A husband who loves only when his wife has satisfied every expectation has established a reward system, not demonstrated the sacrificial concern described in this passage. Christ's love exposes the difference.**

Nevertheless, the comparison must be interpreted without confusing an earthly husband with the sinless Saviour. Jesus Christ possesses divine righteousness, complete wisdom, and authority no human being can claim. His love for the Church is perfect, while even the most faithful husband remains capable of error and requires continued spiritual growth. The command is to follow the pattern of Christ's love, not to assume Christ's unique office. Nor does the passage permit a husband to decide that his wishes are automatically righteous because he occupies the position of head. Philippians 2:5 instructs believers to possess the mind of Christ, whose humiliation and obedience reveal self-denying service. Christian leadership should therefore be characterized by responsibility rather than vanity.

The husband who wants to resemble Christ only when somebody mentions authority has selected the most convenient portion of the comparison. When the subject turns to self-denial, service, and sacrifice, the resemblance must continue.

“and gave himself for it”

The final expression reveals the supreme demonstration of Christ's love: **“and gave himself for it.”** Notice what the Saviour gave. Paul does not say merely that Christ gave advice, encouragement, religious instruction, or an inspiring example. He gave Himself. Galatians 2:20 declares concerning the Son of God, **“who loved me, and gave himself for me.”** Galatians 1:4 likewise declares that Christ **“gave himself for our sins.”** His sacrifice was voluntary, personal, and sufficient for the redemption accomplished through His blood. Ephesians 1:7 establishes that believers possess forgiveness of sins through that blood. First Peter 1:18–19 contrasts corruptible silver and gold with the precious blood of Christ. **Calvary was not a religious demonstration arranged to impress an audience. The Son of God gave Himself to accomplish a redemption that no earthly effort, ceremony, or moral improvement could purchase.** That saving work belongs to Christ alone.

The expression also prevents the marriage illustration from becoming a doctrine of salvation through domestic obedience. An earthly husband cannot die as the sinless substitute for his wife, pay the penalty for her sins, or secure her eternal redemption through personal sacrifice. Jesus Christ alone accomplished that work. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes salvation by grace through faith, while Ephesians 1:13 identifies the believer's sealing with the Holy Spirit after believing the gospel. Consequently, Christ's sacrifice is the foundation of salvation, while the husband's responsibility is to demonstrate self-giving love within marriage. These truths must remain distinct. A husband may be called upon to endure real hardship or make costly sacrifices for his wife, but his efforts cannot repeat Calvary. **The wedding ring did not make the husband a redeemer. It established a relationship in which he is commanded to follow the example of the Redeemer without pretending to possess His divine power.**

The practical force of **“gave himself”** should nevertheless disturb every husband who measures love exclusively according to what his wife provides for him. Christ's love was costly. The husband is therefore called to abandon selfish habits, accept legitimate responsibilities, and put his wife's welfare ahead of unnecessary personal indulgence. Sometimes sacrifice involves financial provision; sometimes it requires patience, restraint, truthful confession, or the willingness to surrender a cherished preference. It may involve caring faithfully during illness, bearing difficult responsibilities, or making a necessary apology when pride would prefer silence. Yet sacrificial love must not be turned into

permission for one spouse to harm or exploit the other. Christ's example establishes righteous love, not the celebration of wickedness. **A man does not need to announce that he would die for his wife while refusing every opportunity to live faithfully for her. The husband who speaks magnificently about sacrifice but cannot be inconvenienced has not yet understood what Paul placed before him.**

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 5:25 establishes **sacrificial love as the governing responsibility of the Christian husband**. The command follows Paul's instructions concerning marital submission and headship, but it places the husband's conduct under the example of Jesus Christ Himself. Biblical headship cannot legitimately be separated from love, responsibility, fidelity, consideration, and self-denial. The husband is not given permission to dominate his wife, disregard her counsel, or demand sacrifices he continually refuses to make himself. Christ's love for the Church provides the pattern, while the husband's daily treatment of his wife reveals whether he is taking that pattern seriously.

The verse also contains a profound doctrine concerning **Christ's unique sacrifice for His spiritual body**. The Church belongs to Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for its redemption. No husband can reproduce that saving work or become the spiritual saviour of his wife. Salvation rests upon Christ's finished sacrifice, while marital faithfulness concerns the responsibilities of redeemed people. **The central lesson is that a Christian husband must measure his leadership by the sacrifice of Christ rather than the satisfaction of his own desires. The cross establishes the pattern of his love, not an excuse for his authority.**

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. The Immediate Context Of Christian Marriage

Ephesians 5:21 — **“Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.”**

Ephesians 5:22 — **“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.”**

Ephesians 5:23 — **“For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church:”**

Ephesians 5:24 — **“Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.”**

2. The Husband's Command To Love

Ephesians 5:25 — **“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;”**

Ephesians 5:28 — **“So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies.”**

Ephesians 5:29 — **“but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:”**

Colossians 3:19 — **“Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.”**

3. Christ Demonstrated Sacrificial Love

Romans 5:8 — **“while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”**

Galatians 2:20 — **“who loved me, and gave himself for me.”**

John 15:13 — **“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”**

1 John 3:16 — **“Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us:”**

4. Christ Is Head Of His Spiritual Body

Ephesians 1:22 — **“and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,”**

Ephesians 1:23 — **“Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.”**

Colossians 1:18 — **“And he is the head of the body, the church:”**

1 Corinthians 12:27 — **“Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.”**

5. Redemption Was Purchased Through Christ's Blood

Ephesians 1:7 — **“In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins”**

Galatians 1:4 — **“Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world”**

1 Peter 1:19 — **“But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:”**

Acts 20:28 — **“feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.”**

6. Love Must Govern Everyday Conduct

1 Peter 3:7 — **“Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife”**

Ephesians 4:29 — **“Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth”**

Philippians 2:4 — **“Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.”**

1 Corinthians 13:5 — **“Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked”**

7. Salvation And Marital Service Remain Distinct

Ephesians 2:8 — **“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:”**

Ephesians 1:13 — **“after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,”**

Ephesians 4:30 — **“whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.”**

Ephesians 5:26 — **“That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 5:25 confronts the Christian husband with a standard far greater than the customs of society or his personal expectations concerning marriage. Paul does not command him merely to provide financially, maintain authority, or preserve a respectable reputation before the congregation. He commands him to love his wife according to the example of Jesus Christ. That example leaves no room for selfish leadership masquerading as biblical headship. A husband may accurately explain the wife's responsibility concerning submission while failing miserably to fulfill the responsibility addressed to himself. **The man who wants to be treated like the head of the household should begin by behaving like someone responsible for its welfare.** Godly headship is not an honorary title.

The command becomes especially demanding when marriage encounters disappointment, disagreement, sickness, or financial difficulty. Romantic affection may accompany genuine love, but the biblical responsibility cannot depend entirely upon favorable emotions. A husband should demonstrate faithfulness when his wife needs help, patience when circumstances become frustrating, and honesty when he has made a mistake. He must not use employment, ministry responsibilities, or personal exhaustion as permanent excuses for neglect. Nor should he assume that providing material necessities excuses harshness or contempt. Colossians 3:19 specifically warns husbands against bitterness toward their wives. **A man who announces that he would die for his wife but**

refuses to speak kindly to her has made an impressive claim without demonstrating the ordinary obedience that ought to support it. Sacrificial love begins in daily conduct.

The comparison with Christ and the Church also exposes the religious error of turning marital authority into personal domination. Jesus Christ is the sinless Head of His body, while every earthly husband remains a fallible man who needs correction. Scripture commands husbands to give their wives honor and exercise loving care rather than demand unquestioning admiration. The husband should welcome wise counsel, acknowledge his limitations, and refuse to treat disagreement as rebellion. His responsibility does not permit threats, cruelty, coercion, or the concealment of serious wrongdoing. A wife may seek appropriate protection when danger exists without violating her obligation to Jesus Christ. **The husband who quotes biblical headship to defend wicked conduct has not established his authority. He has demonstrated why his conduct requires biblical correction.** Christ's example condemns selfish domination.

The final expression, **"and gave himself for it,"** establishes another essential distinction. Christ's sacrifice accomplished redemption through His blood, while the husband's sacrificial love concerns his earthly responsibilities within marriage. No husband can forgive his wife's sins through his authority or obtain eternal life for her through his obedience. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes salvation by grace through faith, apart from human works. The wife belongs to Christ through personal faith in the gospel, not through the spiritual accomplishments of her husband. Likewise, a man's salvation does not depend upon achieving perfection in his marriage, although his conduct remains accountable before God. **The husband must never confuse the privilege of following Christ's example with the impossible ambition of replacing Christ Himself.** There is one Saviour of the body.

This instruction should also transform the way husbands examine their own priorities. A man may spend considerable energy protecting his reputation, defending his decisions, or demanding recognition for the sacrifices he believes he has made. Yet genuine love does not continually maintain an account of every inconvenience endured. Philippians 2:4 commands believers to consider the things of others rather than concentrating exclusively upon their own interests. That principle should influence finances, parenting, household responsibilities, communication, and the use of personal time. A husband should consider whether his choices serve his family's genuine welfare or merely preserve his comfort. **The Christian home does not need a man who considers every act of service an extraordinary concession deserving immediate applause. It needs faithful love that continues when nobody is watching.** Sacrifice is responsibility, not performance.

Finally, Ephesians 5:25 directs every Christian husband toward Calvary as the supreme example of self-giving love. The Lord Jesus Christ did not merely speak affectionately concerning the Church; He gave Himself for it. That sacrifice remains unique in its saving power, but its example must influence the conduct of redeemed men. Where a husband has practiced selfishness, he should acknowledge it rather than defend it. Where he has neglected his wife, he should correct his conduct through faithful action rather than another impressive promise. Where ordinary disagreements arise, humility and biblical wisdom should replace unnecessary struggles for control. **Stop measuring the success of your marriage merely by how much respect you receive, and begin examining how faithfully you demonstrate the love God commands.** The instruction remains unmistakable: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;"

Ephesians 5:26 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 5:26

"That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,"

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"That he might sanctify"

Paul now reveals the divine purpose behind the sacrifice described in the preceding verse: **"That he might sanctify."** Notice the connection. Ephesians 5:25 declares, **"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;"** Verse 26 continues by explaining what Christ purposes to accomplish for the Church He loved. The Saviour did not merely die to establish a religious organization, provide an inspiring moral example, or collect a following of people who occasionally admire His teachings. He gave Himself for a people whom He would set apart unto God. The word **"sanctify"** concerns that setting apart for a holy purpose. John 17:17 records the Lord praying, **"Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth."** The purpose is not simply that believers should possess a respectable religious appearance while continuing to live according to the corruption of the flesh. The Lord has redeemed His people for Himself. **Christ did not purchase the Church with His blood so that the redeemed could spend the remainder of their lives pretending that holiness is an optional accessory to salvation.**

The expression also requires a proper distinction between the believer's standing in Jesus Christ and his practical condition during earthly life. First Corinthians 6:11 declares, **“And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”** Notice that the Corinthians are identified as washed, sanctified, and justified even though the epistle exposes considerable carnality among them. Their position before God rests upon the saving work of Christ rather than their successful attainment of sinless perfection. Hebrews 10:10 declares that believers are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. Yet Scripture also commands continuing growth in holiness and obedience. Those truths do not contradict each other. The Christian is set apart through Christ and is responsible to walk according to that position. **A man who has been washed and sanctified ought not spend his days defending the mud from which the Lord delivered him. The fact that salvation is secure does not make disobedience respectable.**

Sanctification also directs attention toward the Lord's ultimate purpose for His Church. Ephesians 5:27 explains that Christ intends to present the Church to Himself glorious, holy, and without blemish. That future presentation must not be confused with the present condition of every individual believer. Christians still experience temptation, struggle with the flesh, and require correction through Scripture. Galatians 5:17 establishes the continuing conflict between the flesh and the Spirit, while Ephesians 4:30 reminds believers that they remain sealed unto the day of redemption. Nevertheless, the Saviour's final purpose does not change because His people are presently imperfect in their conduct. His work includes both their secure standing in Him and the holiness appropriate to belonging to Him. **The Church may currently contain believers who require considerable correction, but Christ has not abandoned His purpose because some of His people have been behaving like fools. He is preparing a glorious Church, not negotiating a permanent peace treaty with the old man.**

“and cleanse it”

The next expression identifies another aspect of the Saviour's purpose: **“and cleanse it.”** The word **“it”** refers to the Church mentioned in Ephesians 5:25, not to a church building, denominational headquarters, or earthly institution possessing exclusive authority over salvation. Ephesians 1:22–23 identifies the Church as Christ's body, and Colossians 1:18 declares, **“And he is the head of the body, the church.”** This distinction is essential because careless interpretation can turn the entire passage into a collection of claims about religious organizations rather than the spiritual body of Jesus Christ. The Lord gave Himself for His people, not for the furniture in their meetinghouse. First Corinthians 12:13 explains that believers are baptized by one Spirit into one body. Christ's cleansing concern

therefore belongs to those united to Him through salvation. **A congregation may possess immaculate floors, magnificent windows, and a perfectly polished pulpit while its members remain badly in need of biblical correction. The Lord is considerably more concerned with the spiritual condition of His people than with the appearance of their property.**

The cleansing described must be understood in connection with the redemption already accomplished through Christ's blood. Ephesians 1:7 declares, **"In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;"** That redemption is not repeatedly purchased whenever a Christian confesses a fault or reads another chapter of Scripture. The sacrifice of Jesus Christ is sufficient, and salvation is received by grace through faith. Nevertheless, the believer's ongoing conduct requires examination and correction. First John 1:9 addresses the honest acknowledgment of sin, while Ephesians 4:22–24 commands believers to put off the old man and put on the new. Those instructions belong to practical fellowship and sanctification rather than another payment for eternal life. **The blood of Christ accomplished redemption; the word of Christ exposes the dirt that a redeemed man should no longer be defending. The Christian who confuses these truths may end up either working to purchase salvation or using salvation as an excuse to avoid obedience.**

The expression also exposes the uselessness of attempting to cleanse the Church through human religious traditions while neglecting the Scriptures. Some imagine that holiness can be manufactured through elaborate ceremonies, institutional regulations, impressive clothing, or the constant multiplication of rules. Others abandon biblical correction altogether and assume that speaking frequently about grace makes practical holiness unnecessary. Neither approach agrees with the passage. Christ is the One who sanctifies and cleanses His Church, and the following words identify the instrument involved. Human rules may produce outward conformity, but they cannot replace the truth of God. Likewise, a congregation that refuses to confront sin has not become more spiritual merely because everybody feels comfortable. **A religious institution can manufacture a remarkable appearance of cleanliness by requiring everybody to wear the same uniform, but matching clothes do not produce matching hearts. The Lord did not command His people to polish the outside of religion while allowing the inside to decay.**

"with the washing of water by the word"

The final expression identifies the means of cleansing: **"with the washing of water by the word."** Notice those last three words carefully: **"by the word."** Paul does not say that the Church is cleansed through the authority of a preacher, the traditions of a denomination, or the supposed spiritual power of religious water administered by human hands. He

connects the cleansing with the word. John 15:3 declares, **“Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.”** Psalm 119:9 asks, **“Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word.”** The picture of washing is readily understood. Water removes physical uncleanness, and the truth of Scripture exposes and corrects spiritual defilement in the believer's conduct. The comparison is not permission to invent a new sacrament through which human effort purchases regeneration. **The Bible does not need a religious salesman standing beside a tank of water promising eternal life in exchange for participation in his ceremony. The Saviour has already purchased redemption through His blood, and His word supplies the truth by which His people are instructed and corrected.**

The doctrine of baptismal regeneration collapses when ceremonial washing is made the means of obtaining salvation contrary to the gospel of grace. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes salvation through faith, not works, while Ephesians 1:13 identifies the sealing of believers after hearing and believing the gospel. Titus 3:5 declares, **“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;”** The verse identifies divine mercy and the renewing of the Holy Ghost rather than establishing salvation through a minister's performance of a ceremony. Water baptism possesses its proper place as an act of obedience and testimony, but it must not be elevated into a substitute for faith in Jesus Christ. The wording of Ephesians 5:26 specifically directs attention toward the cleansing associated with the word. **A man may emerge from a baptistry thoroughly wet without having believed the gospel, and another may believe on Jesus Christ without having time to arrange a public ceremony. The power to save belongs to Christ, not to the plumbing.**

The washing of the word also requires more than carrying a Bible, displaying a Bible, or repeatedly declaring that the Bible is the final authority. Hebrews 4:12 describes the word of God as living and powerful, capable of discerning the thoughts and intents of the heart. Second Timothy 3:16 declares that Scripture is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness. James 1:22 commands, **“But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.”** That is where practical cleansing becomes uncomfortable. Scripture exposes dishonesty, selfishness, bitterness, immorality, doctrinal error, and fleshly pride. The believer must respond rather than merely admire the accuracy of the exposure. A preacher can spend years defending the authority of Scripture while refusing its correction concerning his own behavior. **The fellow who takes a bath every morning but refuses to let the water touch him has invented a remarkably ineffective method of getting clean. Likewise, the Christian who reads the**

Bible only to confirm his own opinions has missed much of the cleansing work its truth is intended to accomplish.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 5:26 establishes **Christ's purpose to sanctify and cleanse the Church through the word of God**. The verse follows the declaration that Jesus Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it, connecting His saving sacrifice with His continuing purpose for His redeemed people. Sanctification concerns being set apart unto God, while cleansing emphasizes the removal of defilement. The believer's secure position in Christ must remain distinct from his continuing responsibility to pursue holiness. The word of God is central to that practical cleansing because it reveals divine truth, exposes sin, corrects error, and instructs Christians in righteousness.

The passage also distinguishes **Christ's unique work for His spiritual body from the earthly husband's responsibilities within marriage**. The Church is composed of believers united to Jesus Christ, not merely the members of an earthly religious institution. The washing described in verse 26 must not be transformed into a doctrine of salvation through water baptism or religious ceremony. Redemption rests upon Christ's blood, while His word governs the believer's walk. The following verse reveals His ultimate purpose of presenting the Church glorious and without blemish. **The central lesson is that Christ did not merely redeem a people from sin's penalty; He also intends His people to be set apart in holiness, cleansed through His truth, and ultimately presented unto Himself.**

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. Christ Gave Himself For His Body

Ephesians 5:25 — **“Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;”**

Ephesians 1:22 — **“and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,”**

Ephesians 1:23 — **“Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.”**

Colossians 1:18 — **“And he is the head of the body, the church:”**

2. Sanctification Belongs To Christ's Work

Hebrews 10:10 — **“we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”**

1 Corinthians 6:11 — **“but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified”**

John 17:17 — **“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.”**

Ephesians 5:27 — **“That he might present it to himself a glorious church,”**

3. God's Word Is The Cleansing Instrument

Ephesians 5:26 — **“That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,”**

John 15:3 — **“Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.”**

Psalm 119:9 — **“Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word.”**

Psalm 119:11 — **“Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.”**

4. Scripture Exposes And Corrects Defilement

2 Timothy 3:16 — **“profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:”**

Hebrews 4:12 — **“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword,”**

James 1:22 — **“But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.”**

Ephesians 4:22 — **“That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man”**

5. Salvation Is Not Purchased By Ceremonies

Ephesians 2:8 — **“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:”**

Titus 3:5 — **“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us,”**

Ephesians 1:13 — **“after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,”**

Romans 4:5 — **“But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.”**

6. Redeemed Believers Must Pursue Holiness

Galatians 5:16 — **“Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.”**

Ephesians 4:30 — **“whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.”**

1 John 1:9 — **“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”**

1 Peter 2:2 — **“As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:”**

7. Christ Will Present His Church Glorious

Ephesians 5:27 — **“not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.”**

2 Corinthians 11:2 — **“for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.”**

Colossians 1:22 — **“to present you holy and unblameable and unreproveable in his sight:”**

Revelation 19:7 — **“for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 5:26 confronts a serious contradiction among believers who loudly profess the authority of Scripture while allowing remarkably little of that Scripture to correct their daily conduct. Paul declares that Christ sanctifies and cleanses His Church with the washing of water by the word. That statement gives the written word a central place in the Christian's spiritual life. A man may possess an impressive library, defend the King James Bible, and quote hundreds of passages while continually refusing the correction those passages demand. He may know everything about the cleansing power of the word except how to submit himself to it. **A Bible that remains closed upon the shelf will not correct the conduct of the man who refuses to open it.** Spiritual cleansing requires truth received and obeyed.

The passage also exposes the religious error of confusing outward ceremonial washing with the salvation purchased through Jesus Christ. Ephesians 1:7 establishes redemption through His blood, while Ephesians 2:8–9 declares salvation by grace through faith apart from human works. The believer does not purchase forgiveness through a minister's ceremony or repeated acts of personal righteousness. Water baptism has its proper place in Christian obedience, but it cannot replace the finished work of Calvary. The cleansing described in this passage is specifically connected with the word of God. **A religious ceremony may change a man's outward appearance without changing his standing before Almighty God.** The sinner needs Christ, and the redeemed need His truth governing their lives.

The distinction between standing and state must remain equally clear. First Corinthians 6:11 identifies believers as washed, sanctified, and justified, yet the surrounding epistle corrects substantial carnality among those same Christians. Their salvation did not depend upon achieving perfect practical holiness, but their conduct required serious correction. Ephesians 4:30 establishes the believer's sealing unto the day of redemption, while Ephesians 5 commands a walk appropriate to that security. Eternal life does not eliminate the continuing struggle against the flesh. **The Christian who uses eternal security as permission to defend known sin has confused the permanence of Christ's salvation with approval of his own disobedience.** Grace establishes the believer's position and calls him toward faithful conduct.

The washing of the word also requires believers to receive correction without transforming every unwelcome truth into a personal attack. Second Timothy 3:16 declares Scripture profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness. Those functions can disturb comfortable habits and expose cherished excuses. A preacher who never permits the Bible to confront his own errors has little reason to demand that everyone else accept his rebukes. Likewise, a congregation that wants encouragement without correction has reduced spiritual nourishment to a diet of religious sweets. **The word of God was not given merely to make Christians feel admirable. It was given to teach them truth and correct what contradicts it.** Cleansing sometimes requires confronting what the flesh prefers to conceal.

The marriage illustration must also be handled according to its proper limits. Christ sanctifies and cleanses His spiritual body, while the earthly husband is commanded to love his wife sacrificially. No husband possesses authority to forgive his wife's sins, regenerate her soul, or replace the Saviour's work. He should encourage biblical instruction, demonstrate faithful conduct, and care for his wife's spiritual welfare without imagining that he controls her relationship with Christ. Nor may he use the language of spiritual cleansing to justify harshness, humiliation, or coercion. **The husband who claims to be cleansing his household while filling it with fear has misunderstood both the love of Christ and the authority of Scripture.** Godly leadership serves righteousness through love.

Finally, Ephesians 5:26 directs attention toward the future purpose revealed in the following verse. Christ intends to present His Church glorious, without spot or wrinkle, holy and without blemish. That promise should encourage believers who recognize the imperfections still present in their earthly walk. The Saviour has not abandoned His people, and His finished work remains the foundation of their hope. Nevertheless, Christians should not use that future presentation as an excuse to neglect present obedience. They

should study the Scriptures, acknowledge sin, receive correction, and walk in the Spirit. **Let the Book expose what needs correcting, and let the redeemed respond faithfully. Christ did not purchase His Church to leave it contentedly covered in the filth of the old life. He gave Himself that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.**

Ephesians 5:27 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 5:27

"That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"That he might present it to himself a glorious church"

Paul now brings the reader face to face with one of the most magnificent promises concerning the future of the Church of Jesus Christ: **"That he might present it to himself a glorious church."** Notice the connection with the preceding verses. Ephesians 5:25 declares that Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it. Verse 26 explains that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word. Now verse 27 reveals the glorious purpose toward which that redemptive and sanctifying work is directed. The Lord Jesus Christ intends to present His Church to Himself in a condition of complete holiness and glory. This is not a description of a religious organization preparing for another impressive anniversary celebration. It concerns the spiritual body of Christ, composed of redeemed believers who belong to Him through faith in the gospel. Ephesians 1:22–23 identifies Christ as the Head of the Church and declares that the Church is His body. **The Lord did not shed His blood to purchase a denominational headquarters, an expensive auditorium, or a collection of religious institutions. He redeemed a people, and He intends to present those people unto Himself in glory.**

The expression **"present it to himself"** is especially significant because it identifies both the One accomplishing the work and the One receiving the Church. Christ is not preparing His body for presentation to an earthly bishop, a religious council, or some denominational authority claiming exclusive ownership of His people. He is preparing the Church for Himself. Second Corinthians 11:2 declares, **"for I have espoused you to one husband,**

that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." There is the language of espousal and presentation. Revelation 19:7 likewise declares, **"for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready."** These passages employ the sacred relationship of marriage to reveal something concerning Christ's future relationship with His redeemed body. The imagery must not be dragged into fleshly speculation about heavenly marriage or the physical details of relationships God has not explained. Ephesians 5:32 identifies the matter as a great mystery concerning Christ and the Church. **The Bible has revealed enough to establish the glorious certainty of that relationship without inviting every imaginative preacher to furnish heaven with arrangements that Almighty God never described.**

The adjective **"glorious"** directs attention toward the Church's future condition rather than its present earthly appearance. Anyone who has spent sufficient time among Christians knows that the Church is not presently displaying perfect practical holiness through every member. Believers still struggle with the flesh, disagree over doctrine, require correction, and sometimes behave in ways that disgrace the Saviour whose name they profess. First Corinthians 3:1–4 demonstrates that Paul addressed saved people who were behaving carnally. Yet their present imperfections do not overturn Christ's declared purpose. Philippians 3:21 describes the Saviour who **"shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body."** The future transformation of redeemed believers belongs to the completion of God's saving purpose, not to an earthly institution's ability to manufacture perfection through religious regulations. **The Church may presently have members who cannot settle an argument over the furniture without displaying the old man's temper, but its future glory does not depend upon that temper. It depends upon the Saviour who purchased the Church and has declared what He intends to accomplish.**

"not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing"

The second expression describes the perfection of the Church's intended presentation: **"not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing."** Paul employs the language of appearance and purity within his illustration of Christ and the Church. A spot suggests a stain or defilement; a wrinkle suggests an imperfection in the presentation of what should be beautiful and complete. The apostle then extends the description with the words **"or any such thing,"** leaving no room for some remaining category of blemish that the previous expressions happened not to identify. The picture is one of comprehensive purity rather than partial improvement. Notice the standard carefully. Christ does not promise to present a Church containing only a few respectable stains that can be overlooked when the lighting is favorable. He intends a glorious Church without spot or wrinkle. **The Saviour is**

not preparing a bride whose corruption will simply be concealed beneath an impressive religious garment. He is preparing His Church for a holiness that requires no deceptive covering, no cosmetic repairs, and no carefully arranged excuses.

The imagery also recalls the sacrificial perfection of Jesus Christ Himself. First Peter 1:19 describes His precious blood **"as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."** Hebrews 9:14 identifies Christ as the One who offered Himself without spot to God. These passages establish the sinless character and sufficient sacrifice of the Redeemer. The Church does not become the Saviour's equal in deity or acquire an independent righteousness capable of purchasing redemption. Its glorious condition results from belonging to the One whose sacrifice was perfect. Second Corinthians 5:21 declares, **"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."** The essential distinction is between Christ's inherent sinlessness and the righteousness believers possess through Him. **The spotless Lamb did not die so that sinners could construct their own righteousness out of religious accomplishments. He died because their righteousness could never accomplish what His blood accomplished at Calvary.** The glory of the Church rests upon the perfection of its Redeemer.

Neither should the promise be twisted into a doctrine claiming that every Christian has already attained sinless perfection in his present mortal flesh. Galatians 5:17 establishes the continuing conflict between flesh and Spirit. Romans 7 records Paul's struggle with the flesh, while Ephesians 4:30 commands believers not to grieve the Holy Spirit by whom they are sealed unto the day of redemption. Those instructions would make little sense if every saved person had already become incapable of practical disobedience. Yet neither may eternal security become an excuse for remaining comfortable with known sin. Ephesians 5:26 identifies the cleansing work associated with the word, and the surrounding chapters repeatedly command believers to put away the conduct of the old man. The future absence of every spot should encourage present faithfulness rather than produce indifference. **A man who boasts that he has already achieved perfect holiness generally discovers a remarkable exception to his perfection whenever somebody points out a fault. The Bible does not command believers to pretend the flesh has disappeared. It commands them to walk in the Spirit while trusting Christ to complete what He has promised.**

"but that it should be holy and without blemish"

The final expression establishes the positive purpose behind everything Paul has described: **"but that it should be holy and without blemish."** Notice the contrast. The Church is not merely to be free from spots and wrinkles; it is to possess the holiness appropriate to its relationship with Jesus Christ. Holiness is not a decorative religious expression describing impressive outward manners. It concerns separation unto God and

conformity to His righteous character. Ephesians 5:26 identifies Christ's purpose to sanctify and cleanse the Church, while verse 27 reveals the perfect result He intends. Colossians 1:22 speaks of presenting believers **"holy and unblameable and unreproveable in his sight."** The accomplishment belongs to the Saviour's redemptive purpose. **The Church's final perfection will not be a monument to man's successful effort at improving himself. It will be an eternal testimony to the grace, righteousness, and power of Jesus Christ.** Heaven will have no need for a committee to explain away the remaining imperfections of the redeemed.

The words **"without blemish"** also distinguish the Church's future condition from the present responsibility of believers to pursue practical holiness. First Thessalonians 4:3 declares, **"For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication:"** First Peter 1:15 commands believers to be holy in all manner of conversation. Such instructions require present obedience rather than passive admiration of future promises. The believer should reject dishonesty, immorality, bitterness, false doctrine, and the other corrupt practices Scripture condemns. Yet those acts of obedience do not purchase eternal salvation or establish the final perfection described in this verse. Hebrews 10:14 declares, **"For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."** The believer's standing rests upon Christ's finished offering, while his present walk remains subject to scriptural correction. **A Christian should not make peace with a stain merely because he knows Christ will ultimately present His Church without blemish. The promise of future perfection is encouragement toward holiness, not permission to postpone obedience until eternity.**

Finally, the words must remain connected to the marriage illustration that governs Ephesians 5:22–33. Paul is revealing the relationship between Christ and His Church while instructing husbands to love their wives sacrificially. The earthly husband cannot sanctify his wife in the redemptive sense, remove her sins through his own righteousness, or present her faultless before Almighty God through personal authority. Those accomplishments belong exclusively to Jesus Christ. The husband is commanded to demonstrate faithful love, encourage holiness, and care for his wife's welfare without pretending to occupy the Saviour's office. Ephesians 5:32 declares, **"This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church."** That statement prevents the interpreter from reducing the passage to a collection of ordinary marital suggestions. **The marriage relationship illustrates a greater spiritual reality. The husband is commanded to love according to Christ's example, but only Christ possesses the power to prepare and present His redeemed body in perfect holiness.** The glory belongs to the Bridegroom, not to the human illustration.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 5:27 establishes **the future glorious presentation of the Church to Jesus Christ as the purpose toward which His redemptive and sanctifying work is directed**. Christ loved the Church, gave Himself for it, and sanctifies and cleanses it through the word. His ultimate intention is to present His body to Himself without spot, wrinkle, or any such thing. The Church in this passage is the spiritual body of Christ rather than merely a particular congregation or religious institution. The imagery of espousal and marriage connects with Second Corinthians 11:2 and Revelation 19:7, while Ephesians 5:32 identifies the relationship as a great mystery. The promise concerns what Christ will accomplish, not an earthly religious organization's achievement of universal perfection.

The passage also distinguishes **the believer's secure standing in Christ, present responsibility for sanctification, and future glorification**. Salvation rests upon the finished work of Jesus Christ, while the Christian's daily walk requires continuing obedience and correction. The final absence of every blemish does not mean believers have already attained sinless perfection in their present flesh. Nor does it excuse practical wickedness. The promise encourages holiness because Christ's purpose for His Church is holiness. **The central lesson is that the Church's future glory depends upon the perfect Saviour who purchased it, cleanses it, and will ultimately present it unto Himself without blemish.**

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. Christ's Purpose For The Church

Ephesians 5:25 — **“Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;”**

Ephesians 5:26 — **“That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,”**

Ephesians 5:27 — **“That he might present it to himself a glorious church”**

Ephesians 5:32 — **“This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.”**

2. The Church Is Christ's Spiritual Body

Ephesians 1:22 — **“and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,”**

Ephesians 1:23 — **“Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.”**

Colossians 1:18 — **“And he is the head of the body, the church:”**

1 Corinthians 12:27 — **“Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.”**

3. The Future Presentation Of The Redeemed

2 Corinthians 11:2 — **“that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.”**

Revelation 19:7 — **“for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.”**

Colossians 1:22 — **“to present you holy and unblameable and unreproveable in his sight:”**

Jude 24 — **“to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,”**

4. The Spotless Saviour And His Sacrifice

1 Peter 1:19 — **“But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:”**

Hebrews 9:14 — **“who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God”**

2 Corinthians 5:21 — **“For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin;”**

1 John 3:5 — **“And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin.”**

5. Present Sanctification Through God's Truth

John 17:17 — **“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.”**

1 Thessalonians 4:3 — **“For this is the will of God, even your sanctification”**

1 Peter 1:15 — **“But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;”**

2 Timothy 3:16 — **“profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:”**

6. Salvation And Practical Holiness Distinguished

Ephesians 2:8 — **“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:”**

Ephesians 1:13 — **“after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,”**

Ephesians 4:30 — **“whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.”**

Hebrews 10:14 — **“For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.”**

7. The Future Transformation Of The Believer

Philippians 3:20 — **“For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:”**

Philippians 3:21 — **“Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body”**

1 Corinthians 15:52 — **“and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.”**

Romans 8:23 — **“waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 5:27 establishes a magnificent truth that should correct the discouraged believer and silence the religious boaster: **Jesus Christ intends to present His Church to Himself in glory.** The promise does not rest upon the organizational success of a denomination, the accomplishments of a celebrated preacher, or the ability of Christians to manufacture perfect conduct through human determination. It rests upon the Saviour who loved the Church and gave Himself for it. The Lord has not abandoned His body because its members presently require correction. Nor has He surrendered His purpose because some congregations have become spiritually careless. **The Church's ultimate glory will not be the trophy of human religious achievement. It will be the everlasting testimony of the One who purchased redemption through His own blood.** That assurance belongs to Christ's saving work.

The declaration concerning the Church's presentation also exposes the error of confusing Christ's spiritual body with an earthly institution. Ephesians 1:22–23 identifies the Church as His body, while First Corinthians 12:13 explains the believer's incorporation into that body through the Spirit. A local congregation may serve faithfully, preach sound doctrine, and provide valuable spiritual instruction, but it does not become the exclusive owner of Christ's redeemed people. Neither does a religious building possess the salvation purchased at Calvary. **The Lord did not die for stained-glass windows, impressive pulpits, or denominational property. He died for sinners.** The Church that will be presented glorious belongs to Him, not to an organization claiming authority over His inheritance.

The description **“not having spot, or wrinkle”** must also be distinguished from the false teaching that Christians have already attained complete sinless perfection. The New

Testament repeatedly commands believers to reject sin, resist the flesh, receive correction, and walk in the Spirit. Such instructions acknowledge the continuing necessity of practical sanctification. First Corinthians 3 describes carnal believers who required serious correction, while Ephesians 4:30 identifies the Holy Spirit's sealing unto redemption. The believer's security does not remove his responsibility for godly conduct. **A Christian who claims to have become incapable of sin has developed a remarkably convenient explanation for every fault somebody else discovers.** The Bible requires honesty concerning present weakness while directing attention toward the perfection Christ will accomplish.

The passage also confronts the opposite error of using future glory as an excuse for present disobedience. Some believers appear remarkably enthusiastic about the promise of a spotless Church while demonstrating little concern for the spiritual stains presently corrupting their conduct. They defend dishonesty, tolerate bitterness, neglect Scripture, and excuse practices the Lord has plainly condemned. Yet Ephesians 5:26 identifies the cleansing associated with the word of God. Second Timothy 3:16 establishes Scripture's usefulness for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness. **The believer who expects Christ to present a glorious Church should not spend his earthly life defending the very corruption from which Christ intends His people to be free.** Eternal security should encourage grateful obedience, not careless rebellion.

The marriage imagery supplies another important lesson concerning the relationship between Christ and His people. Second Corinthians 11:2 describes believers as espoused to one husband, while Revelation 19:7 announces the marriage of the Lamb. These passages reveal a relationship of extraordinary spiritual significance, although Scripture does not explain every detail of its future fulfillment. The interpreter must therefore distinguish revealed doctrine from imaginative speculation. Earthly marriage provides an illustration, but no husband possesses the saving power or perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ. **The earthly bridegroom may promise lifelong love, but only the heavenly Bridegroom possesses the power to present His redeemed body without blemish.** The glory of that presentation belongs to Christ.

Finally, Ephesians 5:27 should encourage every redeemed believer to look beyond the failures and frustrations of the present Christian walk toward the certainty of the Saviour's completed purpose. Earthly congregations may struggle, individual believers may require correction, and the flesh may continue resisting the commandments of God. Yet Christ remains faithful to His own redemptive work. The Christian should therefore study Scripture, pursue holiness, acknowledge sin, and serve the Lord without imagining that personal effort purchases salvation. **The spotless Church will not be the result of**

sinners successfully polishing themselves into glory. It will be the result of Jesus Christ completing what His grace began. The promise stands: “That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.”

Ephesians 5:28 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 5:28

“So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.”

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

“So ought men to love their wives”

Paul continues his instructions concerning Christian marriage with a statement that ought to put every husband under the searching examination of Almighty God's word: **“So ought men to love their wives.”** Notice the opening word **“So.”** The apostle is connecting this command directly to the example established in Ephesians 5:25–27. Christ loved the Church, gave Himself for it, and intends to present it to Himself glorious, holy, and without blemish. Now Paul turns toward the earthly husband and declares that his love must follow the pattern already established by the Saviour. The husband is not being asked whether he finds his wife attractive, whether their circumstances remain favorable, or whether he believes she has adequately appreciated his efforts. He is being commanded to love her. **The man who can explain Christ's sacrificial love for the Church while treating his own wife as an inconvenience has managed to understand the illustration without learning its lesson.** Biblical knowledge becomes a poor substitute for obedience when the passage confronting a man's conduct is the very passage he enjoys teaching to somebody else.

The expression **“ought men”** establishes an obligation rather than an optional recommendation for exceptionally affectionate husbands. Paul does not announce that men may love their wives whenever their natural inclinations happen to agree with the command. Colossians 3:19 declares, **“Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.”** There is the positive responsibility and the negative prohibition standing together. Love must be demonstrated, and bitterness must be rejected. A man may possess a legitimate concern regarding something his wife has done, but legitimate

concern does not authorize habitual contempt, deliberate humiliation, or the refusal to demonstrate ordinary kindness. The husband remains responsible for his own conduct even when disagreements arise. Likewise, biblical love does not require pretending that wrongdoing is acceptable or that honest correction should never occur. **The Lord did not command husbands to abandon their judgment, but He certainly did not command them to turn every disagreement into an excuse for behaving like an irritated dictator.** Love requires truth and righteousness rather than selfish indulgence.

The command also exposes the religious hypocrisy of husbands who devote extraordinary attention to their wives' responsibilities while remaining conveniently forgetful concerning their own. Ephesians 5:22 addresses wives, and verse 23 identifies the husband's headship. But verse 25 commands sacrificial love, and verse 28 repeats that responsibility with unmistakable force. The husband who wishes to exercise biblical authority must therefore recognize the weight of biblical accountability. Headship does not excuse laziness, selfishness, cruelty, or the refusal to accept wise counsel. First Peter 3:7 commands husbands to dwell with their wives according to knowledge and give them honour. Such conduct demands consideration rather than personal vanity. **A husband who spends more time defending his authority than demonstrating his love has confused the position of head with the privilege of having everybody else carry his responsibilities.** Godly leadership requires more than an impressive collection of verses concerning submission. It requires obedience to the commandments addressed directly to the man himself.

“as their own bodies”

The next expression establishes the manner in which that love must be demonstrated: **“as their own bodies.”** Paul is connecting the husband's responsibility to the one-flesh union established by God in marriage. Genesis 2:24 declares that a man shall leave his father and mother, cleave unto his wife, and become one flesh with her. Ephesians 5:31 repeats that instruction within the very passage under consideration. The wife is therefore not an unrelated person whose welfare may be disregarded whenever the husband's preferences become inconvenient. She belongs with him in the marriage relationship God has established. The comparison assumes the ordinary human concern for one's own physical welfare. A man who is hungry seeks food, one who is injured seeks care, and one who is exhausted recognizes the need for rest. Paul applies that ordinary concern to the husband's treatment of his wife. **The fellow who would never deliberately neglect his own necessities while continually disregarding his wife's needs has discovered a remarkable way to divide what God declared should be one flesh.** The marriage union makes her welfare his concern.

The application reaches into ordinary practical responsibilities rather than remaining confined to dramatic declarations of affection. A husband should be concerned when his wife is ill, overburdened, discouraged, or struggling with responsibilities that require assistance. He should exercise wisdom concerning finances, household obligations, personal safety, and the care of children. Such concern does not require every marriage to possess an identical arrangement of work or household responsibilities. Circumstances, health, abilities, and family needs differ. Nevertheless, the command requires genuine attention rather than an attitude that considers the wife's difficulties entirely her own problem. Ephesians 5:29 continues, **"For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:"** There is the language of nourishment and tender care. **A husband who loudly announces that he would die protecting his wife but refuses to assist her when she is genuinely overwhelmed ought to consider whether his heroic speech has become considerably more impressive than his ordinary conduct.** Biblical love is demonstrated where everyday responsibilities require sacrifice.

The phrase **"as their own bodies"** must not be twisted into a doctrine that makes the husband the owner of his wife's person or gives him unrestricted control over her decisions. Marriage establishes unity and reciprocal obligations, not permission for coercion. First Corinthians 7:3–4 recognizes responsibilities belonging to both husband and wife, while First Peter 3:7 identifies them as heirs together of the grace of life. The husband must therefore treat his wife with honor and recognize her personal accountability before Jesus Christ. He cannot invoke the one-flesh union to justify intimidation, physical violence, sexual coercion, or other wrongdoing. Nor does loving one's wife require encouraging sinful conduct or surrendering every responsibility in order to avoid disagreement. Love must remain governed by the righteousness of God. **A man who claims that his wife is part of his own flesh while treating her in a manner he would never tolerate toward himself has supplied a powerful argument against his conduct.** The Bible commands care, not ownership disguised as affection.

"He that loveth his wife loveth himself"

The final sentence brings the entire argument to its practical conclusion: **"He that loveth his wife loveth himself."** Paul is not commanding the husband to become a worshipper of his own importance. He is explaining the consequence of the marital union. Since husband and wife are one flesh, genuine love directed toward the wife is consistent with the husband's own welfare. Genesis 2:23 records Adam's declaration concerning the woman, **"This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh."** The following verse establishes the one-flesh union that governs the marriage relationship. Matthew 19:6 likewise declares,

“Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh.” Those words demonstrate the unity that marriage establishes before God. A husband should therefore recognize that contempt toward his wife damages the relationship in which he himself participates. **The man who continually tears down his wife while expecting his marriage to remain strong resembles a fellow enthusiastically chopping holes in the bottom of his own boat while congratulating himself for being the captain.** He may possess authority over the vessel, but authority does not make the vessel seaworthy.

The statement also reveals why marital selfishness is ultimately destructive. A husband who ignores his wife's needs, ridicules her concerns, or continually seeks personal advantage may obtain some immediate satisfaction, but he undermines the trust and affection upon which a healthy marriage depends. First Corinthians 13:5 declares concerning charity that it **“seeketh not her own.”** Philippians 2:4 commands believers to look upon the things of others rather than becoming entirely occupied with personal interests. Those principles should be especially recognizable within marriage. Genuine love does not require the husband to surrender truth, tolerate serious wrongdoing, or deny legitimate personal needs. It requires him to recognize that his wife's welfare cannot be treated as a competing interest that must continually lose whenever his own preferences are involved. **The husband who treats marriage as a contest in which his wife must lose so that he can win has misunderstood the nature of the union. When one flesh becomes a battlefield between two competing kingdoms, nobody should be surprised when the household suffers.**

Finally, the expression directs attention back toward the greater spiritual reality of Christ and His Church. Ephesians 5:30 declares, **“For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.”** Verse 32 identifies the relationship as a great mystery concerning Christ and the Church. The earthly one-flesh union illustrates something concerning the spiritual unity believers possess with their Saviour. Yet the comparison must be rightly divided. Jesus Christ is the sinless Head and Saviour of His body, while the earthly husband remains a fallible man responsible for loving his wife. A husband cannot save his wife's soul, cleanse her sins through his own blood, or accomplish the redemption belonging exclusively to Christ. He can, however, demonstrate sacrificial concern that reflects the character of the Saviour's love. **Christ's relationship with the Church supplies the pattern, but the husband's responsibility must be practiced in the ordinary circumstances of earthly marriage. A man who claims to love Christ while deliberately mistreating the wife God has commanded him to cherish has allowed his profession to outrun his obedience.**

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 5:28 establishes **the husband's responsibility to love his wife according to the unity God has created within marriage**. The command continues Paul's comparison between Christ's sacrificial love for the Church and the husband's duty toward his wife. The one-flesh relationship means that a wife's welfare should never be treated as an insignificant concern unrelated to the husband's responsibilities. Biblical love requires fidelity, practical care, patience, wise leadership, and consideration. It cannot be reduced to romantic feelings, financial provision alone, or impressive declarations of affection that disappear when ordinary sacrifices become necessary.

The verse also reveals **the inseparable connection between marital unity and sacrificial responsibility**. By loving his wife, the husband acts consistently with the one-flesh union in which he himself participates. Yet this unity does not authorize domination, erase individual accountability, or grant permission for sinful conduct. The marriage relationship illustrates Christ's relationship with His Church without making an earthly husband the Saviour of his wife. **The central lesson is that a Christian husband must treat his wife's welfare as inseparable from his own, demonstrating the sacrificial concern that Scripture commands rather than the selfishness that destroys the unity God established.**

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. The Husband's Command To Love

Ephesians 5:25 — **“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;”**

Ephesians 5:28 — **“So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies.”**

Ephesians 5:29 — **“For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it”**

Colossians 3:19 — **“Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.”**

2. The One-Flesh Union Established By God

Genesis 2:23 — **“This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh:”**

Genesis 2:24 — **“and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.”**

Matthew 19:6 — **“Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh.”**

Ephesians 5:31 — **“and they two shall be one flesh.”**

3. Biblical Love Requires Practical Consideration

Philippians 2:4 — **“Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.”**

1 Corinthians 13:5 — **“Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked”**

1 Peter 3:7 — **“Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife”**

Romans 12:10 — **“Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;”**

4. Christ's Love Provides The Greater Pattern

Ephesians 5:25 — **“even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;”**

Ephesians 1:22 — **“and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,”**

Colossians 1:18 — **“And he is the head of the body, the church:”**

Ephesians 5:30 — **“For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.”**

5. Marriage Involves Mutual Responsibilities

1 Corinthians 7:3 — **“Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband.”**

Proverbs 31:11 — **“The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her”**

Proverbs 31:26 — **“She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness.”**

Galatians 5:13 — **“but by love serve one another.”**

6. Marital Authority Remains Under God's Word

Ephesians 5:21 — **“Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.”**

Acts 5:29 — **“We ought to obey God rather than men.”**

Ephesians 5:11 — **“And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.”**

Colossians 3:19 — **“Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.”**

7. Salvation And Marital Service Are Distinct

Ephesians 2:8 — **“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:”**

Ephesians 1:13 — **“after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,”**

Ephesians 5:32 — **“This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.”**

2 Corinthians 5:10 — **“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ;”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 5:28 confronts the Christian husband with a responsibility that cannot be satisfied merely by announcing his position within the household. Paul has already established the husband's headship, but now he commands love according to the one-flesh union of marriage. The husband must recognize that his wife's welfare is not an optional concern to be considered only after his personal preferences have been satisfied. A man may possess sound doctrine, maintain honest employment, and provide materially for his household while remaining selfish in the treatment of his wife. **The Bible did not appoint the husband head of the household so that he could become its most demanding dependent.** His position establishes responsibility, not exemption from sacrifice.

The comparison with one's own body also exposes the contradiction of husbands who carefully attend to their personal needs while disregarding the burdens their wives carry. A man knows when he is hungry, tired, discouraged, or physically uncomfortable, and he normally expects those conditions to receive reasonable attention. Yet he may become remarkably indifferent when his wife experiences similar difficulties. Ephesians 5:29 describes nourishing and cherishing, establishing the principle of practical care. That concern should influence communication, finances, health, household responsibilities, and the ordinary treatment of one another. **A husband who would never neglect his own physical welfare while continually neglecting his wife's needs has misunderstood the one-flesh relationship.** Love must be demonstrated beyond impressive promises.

The words **“He that loveth his wife loveth himself”** also correct the foolishness of treating marriage as a competition between two independent kingdoms. The husband and wife are united in a relationship established by Almighty God, and selfish conduct damages the very union in which both participate. Constant criticism, financial dishonesty, contemptuous speech, and the refusal to receive wise counsel can weaken trust and destroy peace. Proverbs 31 describes a capable wife whose husband safely trusts her, demonstrating that godly marriage benefits from her judgment and abilities. The husband

need not pretend that every decision he makes is infallible. **A man who silences his wife's wisdom merely to prove that he is in charge may eventually discover that authority without judgment is a remarkably expensive possession.** Humility strengthens leadership.

This passage must never become an excuse for coercion or the mistreatment of a spouse. The one-flesh union does not grant the husband unrestricted control over his wife's conscience, nor does headship authorize threats, violence, or participation in wickedness. Acts 5:29 establishes that obedience to God takes precedence over human demands. Likewise, sacrificial love does not require pretending that serious wrongdoing is harmless or that necessary protection should be avoided. Where danger exists, appropriate safety and responsible assistance remain legitimate. **The man who claims to love his wife as his own body while deliberately injuring or intimidating her has supplied evidence against his own profession.** Biblical love must agree with righteousness and truth.

The greater comparison with Christ and His Church also requires careful doctrinal distinctions. Jesus Christ is the Head and Saviour of His spiritual body, while the earthly husband remains a fallible man responsible for his conduct. No husband can redeem his wife's soul, forgive her sins through personal authority, or obtain eternal life on her behalf. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes salvation by grace through faith, apart from works. Marriage illustrates Christ's relationship with His Church without making the human illustration equal to the divine reality. **The husband is commanded to follow Christ's sacrificial example, not to assume Christ's saving office.** Both spouses remain individually accountable before the Lord who redeemed them.

Finally, Ephesians 5:28 should lead every Christian husband toward an examination of his ordinary conduct rather than another attempt to defend his authority. Does he demonstrate faithful concern when his wife is struggling, or does he become irritated because her difficulties interrupt his plans? Does he listen when she offers wise counsel, or does pride demand that every decision originate with him? Does he speak with kindness when disagreements arise, or does he mistake harshness for leadership? The Bible's command remains clear regardless of his answers. **A husband does not need to prove his willingness to die for his wife through dramatic speeches while refusing to live faithfully for her in ordinary circumstances.** The Lord requires love that nourishes, cherishes, and serves the marriage He established. **“So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.”**

Ephesians 5:29 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 5:29

"For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:"

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"For no man ever yet hated his own flesh"

Paul begins this verse with an observation so ordinary that it ought to embarrass every husband who has managed to neglect his wife while remaining exceptionally attentive to himself: **"For no man ever yet hated his own flesh."** Notice the opening word **"For."** The apostle is explaining the statement in Ephesians 5:28, where he declares, "So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself." His reasoning rests upon the one-flesh union established by Almighty God in Genesis 2:24. A husband and wife are not two strangers conducting a temporary business arrangement for their mutual convenience. They have entered a marriage relationship in which God recognizes their union as one flesh. Paul therefore appeals to man's ordinary concern for his own physical welfare to demonstrate how a husband ought to regard his wife. A man normally recognizes when he is hungry, tired, uncomfortable, or in need of assistance, and he takes appropriate steps to address those conditions. **The husband who never forgets his own needs but repeatedly overlooks his wife's has developed a remarkable ability to care for one half of a relationship God declared should be one flesh.** His problem is not necessarily a lack of information. It may be an abundance of selfishness.

The expression must be understood as Paul's description of the ordinary human disposition toward self-preservation and bodily care, not as a denial that people may sometimes engage in self-destructive conduct. Scripture recognizes the corruption of the flesh, the foolishness of human decisions, and the suffering that can accompany personal wrongdoing. Nevertheless, the general principle remains unmistakable. A man ordinarily protects his body from danger, obtains food when hungry, seeks relief from pain, and makes provision for his own comfort. He does not consider those actions extraordinary demonstrations of personal generosity. Yet some husbands treat similar concern for their wives as though they have performed a sacrifice deserving a public monument. First Peter 3:7 commands husbands to dwell with their wives according to knowledge and give them honour. That requires understanding rather than indifference. **A fellow who considers buying himself a meal perfectly reasonable but helping his exhausted wife an astonishing act of heroism has not yet understood Paul's argument.** The wife is not a

distant neighbor occasionally receiving charitable assistance; she is the woman joined to him in marriage.

This observation also confronts the husband's tendency to interpret headship as unrestricted personal privilege. Ephesians 5:23 identifies the husband as the head of the wife, but the following verses establish the responsibilities accompanying that position. Headship cannot be separated from the sacrificial love commanded in Ephesians 5:25 or the one-flesh care described here. Genesis 2:23 records Adam's declaration concerning the woman, “This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh.” The Lord subsequently established the union of husband and wife in Genesis 2:24. The marriage relationship therefore possesses a unity that should influence the husband's treatment of his wife throughout their shared life. A husband may have genuine responsibilities requiring difficult decisions, but he must not imagine that his wife's welfare becomes irrelevant whenever those decisions inconvenience him. **The man who insists that he is the head while treating his wife like an unnecessary attachment has misunderstood the body he claims responsibility for. A head that continually injures the body is not demonstrating remarkable leadership. It is demonstrating that something has gone badly wrong with its judgment.**

“but nourisheth and cherisheth it”

The next expression identifies what ordinary bodily care actually involves: **“but nourisheth and cherisheth it.”** Notice the two words carefully. To nourish involves providing what is necessary for life, strength, and continued well-being. To cherish involves treating something with particular care, affection, and concern. Paul is not describing a relationship in which a man grudgingly supplies the bare minimum necessary to prevent complaint while remaining personally indifferent. He is describing deliberate care. The husband should understand that his wife's welfare requires more than an occasional declaration that he loves her. A woman may need practical assistance, financial provision, consideration during illness, patient communication, protection from genuine danger, and faithful companionship. The particular circumstances will differ from household to household, but the responsibility remains. Colossians 3:19 declares, **“Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.” A husband who provides money while continually dispensing bitterness has supplied one necessity while poisoning the atmosphere in which his wife must live. Scripture commands nourishment and cherishing, not a financial transaction accompanied by constant contempt.**

The word **“nourisheth”** also exposes the foolishness of measuring marital love exclusively by impressive gestures. A husband may purchase an expensive anniversary gift while remaining absent from the ordinary responsibilities of married life. Another may speak

eloquently about protecting his wife while refusing to help when practical difficulties arise. A third may maintain an excellent reputation among coworkers and fellow church members while treating his own household as an inconvenience. The Bible's instruction reaches beyond public demonstrations into consistent personal conduct. Philippians 2:4 declares, **“Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.”** The principle applies throughout Christian fellowship and should be especially evident within marriage. Genuine love pays attention to the real needs of another person rather than merely offering whatever demonstration happens to flatter the giver. **It is possible to purchase flowers for a wife while refusing to listen to a word she says, just as it is possible to preach a magnificent sermon about Christian love while making the people closest to you miserable.** The Lord examines conduct, not advertising.

The word **“cherisheth”** adds something that cannot be reduced to material provision alone. The wife is to be valued, honored, and treated with affection appropriate to the marriage relationship. First Peter 3:7 commands husbands to give honour unto the wife, while Proverbs 31:11 describes a virtuous woman whose husband safely trusts her. Such honor requires the husband to recognize his wife's dignity, judgment, and personal responsibilities before God. Cherishing does not mean surrendering truth, tolerating deliberate wickedness, or pretending that disagreements never occur. It means that disagreement must not become an excuse for humiliation or cruelty. A wife should be able to offer sensible counsel without being treated as though her intelligence threatens her husband's position. **The fellow who enjoys calling his wife his greatest earthly blessing while publicly belittling her has confused possession with appreciation. A cherished wife is not merely praised when the audience is listening; she is treated with consideration when nobody is present to applaud the husband.** Biblical affection must survive ordinary life.

“even as the Lord the church”

The final expression lifts the entire discussion above earthly marriage and directs attention toward the supreme example: **“even as the Lord the church.”** Notice that Paul does not merely instruct husbands to observe how other men treat their wives. He directs them toward the Lord Jesus Christ and His care for His spiritual body. Ephesians 5:25 declares that Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it. Verse 26 reveals His sanctifying and cleansing purpose, while verse 27 describes His intention to present the Church to Himself glorious, holy, and without blemish. These statements establish something far greater than affectionate language. The Saviour purchased redemption through His own blood and continues to care for those who belong to Him. **The Church does not survive because its earthly members have become exceptionally successful at preserving themselves. It**

belongs to the Lord who redeemed it, and its future rests upon the faithfulness of its Head. The husband is directed toward that pattern of faithful concern.

The Church mentioned here must also be identified correctly. Ephesians 1:22–23 declares that Christ was given to be Head over all things to the Church, **"Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."** Colossians 1:18 confirms that He is the Head of the body, the Church. Paul is not describing the maintenance of a religious building, the financial survival of a denomination, or the promotion of a particular congregation's reputation. The comparison concerns the spiritual body of Jesus Christ, composed of believers united to Him through salvation. Ephesians 5:30 continues, **"For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones."** That relationship is spiritual and must not be transformed into fleshly speculation concerning the literal anatomy of Christ's redeemed people. **The Lord's concern for His Church is not measured by how impressive the church building looks after somebody finishes painting the front doors. His body consists of redeemed people, and His care reaches far beyond the property lines of any earthly religious organization.**

Finally, the comparison establishes both the husband's responsibility and the limits of his authority. Jesus Christ is the sinless Saviour and Head of the Church, while an earthly husband remains a fallible man who needs grace, correction, and instruction. A husband cannot redeem his wife, forgive her sins through personal authority, or guarantee her eternal salvation by exercising successful household leadership. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes salvation by grace through faith, while Ephesians 1:13 identifies the believer's sealing with the Holy Spirit after believing the gospel. Nevertheless, the husband's inability to duplicate Christ's saving work does not excuse neglect of the practical example. He must nourish, cherish, protect, and care faithfully within the responsibilities of marriage. **The Lord did not command husbands to become saviours of their wives. He commanded them to love their wives according to the example of the Saviour. The man who cannot distinguish those responsibilities is likely to become either a domestic tyrant or an irresponsible spectator, and Scripture authorizes neither position.**

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 5:29 establishes **the husband's responsibility to nourish and cherish his wife according to the natural concern he demonstrates for his own body**. The apostle continues his argument concerning the one-flesh union established by God, showing that marital love must involve genuine care rather than merely a profession of affection. Nourishing emphasizes faithful provision for genuine needs, while cherishing emphasizes honor, tenderness, and personal concern. The passage therefore confronts neglect,

selfishness, bitterness, and any supposed exercise of headship that treats a wife as an inferior possession. Biblical leadership must be demonstrated through love appropriate to the relationship God has established.

The verse also connects **the earthly marriage relationship with Christ's faithful care for His spiritual body, the Church**. Jesus Christ nourishes and cherishes those who belong to Him, having purchased their redemption through His own blood. His work remains unique in its saving power, while the husband's responsibility is to follow the pattern of sacrificial concern without claiming the Saviour's divine office. The believer's standing in Christ must remain distinct from practical marital obedience. **The central lesson is that the husband who recognizes his wife as one flesh with himself must care for her faithfully, while Christ's relationship to His Church provides the supreme example of that care.**

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. The Husband's Responsibility To Love

Ephesians 5:25 — **“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;”**

Ephesians 5:28 — **“So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies.”**

Ephesians 5:29 — **“but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:”**

Colossians 3:19 — **“Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.”**

2. Marriage Establishes A One-Flesh Union

Genesis 2:23 — **“This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh:”**

Genesis 2:24 — **“and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.”**

Matthew 19:6 — **“Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh.”**

Ephesians 5:31 — **“and they two shall be one flesh.”**

3. Nourishment And Cherishing In Marriage

Ephesians 5:29 — **“For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it”**

1 Peter 3:7 — **“dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife”**

Proverbs 31:11 — **“The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her”**

1 Corinthians 7:3 — **“Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence:”**

4. Love Must Be Demonstrated Through Conduct

Philippians 2:4 — **“Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.”**

Galatians 6:2 — **“Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.”**

1 Corinthians 13:5 — **“seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked”**

1 John 3:18 — **“let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.”**

5. Christ's Sacrificial Care For His Church

Ephesians 5:25 — **“Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;”**

Ephesians 5:26 — **“That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,”**

Ephesians 5:27 — **“That he might present it to himself a glorious church”**

Colossians 1:18 — **“And he is the head of the body, the church:”**

6. The Church Belongs To Christ's Body

Ephesians 1:22 — **“and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,”**

Ephesians 1:23 — **“Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.”**

1 Corinthians 12:27 — **“Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.”**

Ephesians 5:30 — **“For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.”**

7. Christ Alone Secures Eternal Salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — **“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:”**

Ephesians 1:13 — **“after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,”**

Ephesians 4:30 — **“whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.”**

1 Timothy 2:5 — **“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 5:29 confronts a contradiction that ought to trouble every husband who professes to believe the Bible: the willingness to care diligently for himself while neglecting

the woman God has joined to him in marriage. Paul does not command husbands merely to speak affectionately or provide occasional demonstrations of generosity. He describes the ordinary attention a man gives his own flesh and applies that care to his wife. A husband recognizes his own hunger, exhaustion, discomfort, and need for assistance without requiring somebody to deliver a sermon explaining their importance. **The man who knows exactly what he needs but remains perpetually confused about his wife's needs has demonstrated that selfishness can survive even an excellent knowledge of Scripture.** Biblical love requires practical concern.

The words **"nourisheth and cherisheth"** establish responsibilities that extend beyond earning a paycheck or maintaining an impressive public reputation. A Christian husband should demonstrate concern for his wife's health, safety, spiritual welfare, and legitimate burdens. He should listen when she expresses a difficulty instead of automatically treating the conversation as an accusation against his leadership. When sickness, exhaustion, or unexpected trouble arrives, the marriage relationship should produce practical assistance rather than another argument over whose responsibilities are greater. Colossians 3:19 specifically commands husbands not to become bitter against their wives. **A man may provide every material convenience while making the household miserable through his temper. The Lord commands more than provision; He commands cherishing.** Affection must govern conduct.

The one-flesh union also exposes the foolishness of turning marriage into a contest for personal advantage. Genesis 2:24 declares that husband and wife become one flesh, while Ephesians 5:28 explains that loving one's wife is consistent with loving oneself. The husband should therefore recognize that undermining his wife's dignity or deliberately damaging their relationship harms the union in which he himself participates. He should value her judgment, receive sensible counsel, and avoid treating every disagreement as rebellion against his authority. Proverbs 31 describes a trustworthy woman whose wisdom strengthens her household. **A husband who continually humiliates his wife while boasting that he is the head has adopted the peculiar strategy of weakening the very relationship he claims to lead.** Godly leadership requires humility.

The passage must never be twisted into permission for controlling or injuring another person. Marriage establishes unity, but unity does not erase a wife's personal accountability before Jesus Christ or grant her husband ownership of her conscience. Biblical headship cannot authorize cruelty, intimidation, coercion, or demands that violate God's commandments. Likewise, ordinary marital disagreements should be addressed through honest communication rather than unnecessary struggles for power. Where serious danger or wrongdoing exists, appropriate protection and responsible assistance

remain legitimate. **The man who claims to cherish his wife while deliberately frightening or harming her has contradicted the very command he professes to defend.** Scripture establishes loving responsibility, not domination disguised as spiritual authority.

The comparison with Christ and His Church also demands careful doctrinal interpretation. Jesus Christ is the Head and Saviour of His spiritual body, while an earthly husband remains a fallible man responsible for his marriage. Ephesians 1:22–23 identifies the Church as Christ's body, and Ephesians 5:30 describes believers as members of that body. Salvation is received through faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ rather than through successful household leadership. A husband cannot redeem his wife's soul, forgive her sins through personal authority, or guarantee eternal life through his sacrifices. **The earthly husband is commanded to reflect the Saviour's care without pretending to possess the Saviour's divine office.** Christ alone accomplishes redemption.

Finally, Ephesians 5:29 should cause Christian husbands to examine what their ordinary conduct teaches concerning the love of Jesus Christ. A man may deliver impressive speeches about sacrifice while refusing small inconveniences necessary for his wife's welfare. He may faithfully attend church while neglecting kindness, patience, and honest communication at home. The Scriptures require those contradictions to be corrected rather than defended through another quotation concerning headship. Genuine love should become visible through faithful provision, trustworthy conduct, consideration, and a willingness to accept responsibility. **Do not merely announce that you would die for your wife while refusing to live faithfully for her. Nourish her, cherish her, honor her, and remember the Lord's example.** The command remains: **“For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:”**

Ephesians 5:30 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 5:30

“For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.”

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

“For we are members of his body”

Paul has arrived at one of the most profound declarations concerning the believer's spiritual union with Jesus Christ: **"For we are members of his body."** Notice that opening word **"For."** The apostle is explaining why Christ nourishes and cherishes the Church, as declared in Ephesians 5:29. The Lord does not treat His redeemed people as strangers who happen to attend a religious organization bearing His name. They are members of His own body. Ephesians 1:22–23 declares that God gave Christ to be Head over all things to the Church, **"Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."** Colossians 1:18 confirms, **"And he is the head of the body, the church."** That establishes the spiritual relationship underlying the entire marriage illustration. The husband is commanded to love his wife as his own flesh, and the reason Christ cares for His Church is that the redeemed belong to His body. **A Christian is not merely a name recorded in a church membership book. He belongs to Jesus Christ Himself, and no earthly institution has the authority to improve upon that relationship.**

The word **"members"** deserves particular attention because it identifies individual believers as belonging to one spiritual body. First Corinthians 12:13 declares, **"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body,"** and verse 27 adds, **"Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular."** That baptism by the Spirit must not be confused with the physical ceremony of water baptism, nor should it be converted into some extraordinary religious experience that only a select class of believers has supposedly obtained. The passage concerns incorporation into Christ's body through the Spirit. The Corinthians included people who required serious correction concerning divisions, pride, and carnality, yet Paul addressed them as members of the body. Their failures did not authorize them to defend sin, but neither did their spiritual membership depend upon successful religious performance. Ephesians 1:13 establishes the sealing of believers after hearing and believing the gospel. **The Lord does not have one spiritual body for the extraordinarily religious and another for ordinary believers who have not yet learned how to sound impressive during a church service. The saved belong to Christ through the work of God, not through religious promotion.**

The expression also establishes a distinction between Christ's spiritual body and the earthly congregations in which believers assemble. A local church possesses legitimate responsibilities concerning worship, doctrine, fellowship, discipline, and service. The New Testament recognizes congregational leadership and the importance of believers assembling together. Nevertheless, Ephesians 5:30 describes membership in Christ's body, not merely attendance at a particular meetinghouse or submission to a denominational authority. The redeemed belong to the Saviour whether their congregation gathers in a magnificent building or a modest room. Their spiritual standing is not purchased through membership dues, ceremonial registration, or the personal approval of

a religious official. This does not excuse isolation from Christian fellowship or disregard for proper congregational responsibilities. It establishes that Christ Himself remains the Head of the spiritual body. **A preacher may shepherd a congregation, but he did not purchase the sheep with his blood. The man who treats Christ's people as his private religious property has forgotten who owns the flock and who paid for it.**

“of his flesh, and of his bones”

The second expression intensifies the declaration with language that reaches directly into the marriage relationship Paul has been explaining: **“of his flesh, and of his bones.”** These words are not accidental decoration attached to an otherwise completed sentence. They establish the remarkable connection between the believer's union with Christ and the original institution of marriage. Genesis 2:23 records Adam declaring concerning the woman, **“This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh:”** The following verse establishes that a man shall leave his father and mother, cleave unto his wife, and become one flesh with her. Ephesians 5:31 repeats that principle, while verse 32 declares, **“This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.”** The earthly marriage relationship provides an illustration of a greater spiritual union. **Adam recognized the woman as belonging with him in a unique relationship, and Paul uses that same language to describe the astonishing relationship between Jesus Christ and His redeemed Church. Marriage is the illustration; Christ and His Church are the greater reality being revealed.**

The expression must also be handled carefully because the union described is spiritual rather than a claim that believers physically possess portions of Christ's glorified anatomy. The Lord Jesus Christ possesses a genuine resurrected body. Luke 24:39 records Him declaring, **“for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.”** His bodily resurrection is a fundamental truth of the gospel, not a symbolic invention. Yet Christians remain physically distinct individuals during their present earthly lives. The believer does not acquire a measurable piece of Christ's bone or become physically joined to His resurrected flesh through some mysterious biological process. First Corinthians 12:13 identifies the Spirit's work in forming the one body, while Colossians 1:27 speaks of **“Christ in you, the hope of glory:”** Scripture establishes genuine spiritual union without requiring the interpreter to invent physical mechanics God has not revealed. **A mystery is not permission for imagination to manufacture doctrine. When the Book declares spiritual union, believe the declaration; when the Book does not explain its physical machinery, leave the machinery out of the sermon.**

Finally, the language **“of his flesh, and of his bones”** reinforces the security and dignity of belonging to Jesus Christ. The believer's union rests upon the completed redemption

accomplished by the Saviour, not upon the unstable strength of fallen flesh. Ephesians 4:30 declares that believers are sealed by the Holy Spirit unto the day of redemption. John 10:28 records the Lord declaring concerning His sheep, **“And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish,”** while Romans 8:38–39 establishes that nothing in the stated categories can separate believers from the love of God in Christ Jesus. Those passages provide direct assurances concerning the security of the redeemed. Ephesians 5:30 enriches that assurance by describing believers as members of Christ's body. Yet the doctrine must not be turned into an excuse for continuing in sin. **The Saviour did not make His people members of His body so they could spend their earthly lives defending the corruption of the old man. Union with Christ establishes security, but it also establishes a solemn responsibility to walk according to the One to whom we belong.**

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 5:30 establishes **the believer's spiritual membership in the body of Jesus Christ**. Paul explains the Lord's care for His Church by identifying redeemed believers as members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. The language connects directly with Genesis 2:23–24 and the one-flesh union of marriage, revealing the greater spiritual reality illustrated through that earthly relationship. Christ is the Head of the Church, and believers are united to Him through the work of the Holy Spirit. This union must not be confused with literal physical incorporation into Christ's resurrected anatomy or with membership in a particular earthly religious organization.

The verse also reinforces **the security, unity, and responsibilities of those who belong to Christ**. Redemption is received by grace through faith, while incorporation into His spiritual body is accomplished through the Spirit. The believer's standing rests upon Christ's finished work rather than personal achievement. Nevertheless, membership in His body establishes obligations toward fellow believers and requires a walk consistent with His holiness. The surrounding passage also requires husbands to demonstrate faithful concern for their wives according to the example of Christ's care for the Church. **The central lesson is that redeemed believers belong to Jesus Christ in a spiritual union established by God, and that union should produce security in His promises, humility toward His people, and obedience to His word.**

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. Jesus Christ Is The Head Of His Body

Ephesians 1:22 — **“and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,”**

Ephesians 1:23 — **“Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.”**

Colossians 1:18 — **“And he is the head of the body, the church:”**

1 Corinthians 12:27 — **“Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.”**

2. The Spirit Unites Believers Into One Body

1 Corinthians 12:13 — **“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body”**

Ephesians 1:13 — **“after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,”**

Ephesians 2:16 — **“And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross,”**

Romans 12:5 — **“So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.”**

3. The Marriage Mystery Revealed Through Genesis

Genesis 2:23 — **“This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh:”**

Genesis 2:24 — **“and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.”**

Ephesians 5:31 — **“and they two shall be one flesh.”**

Ephesians 5:32 — **“This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.”**

4. Christ Nourishes And Cherishes His Church

Ephesians 5:25 — **“Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;”**

Ephesians 5:28 — **“So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies.”**

Ephesians 5:29 — **“For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it”**

Ephesians 5:30 — **“For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.”**

5. The Believer's Spiritual Union With Christ

1 Corinthians 6:17 — **“But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.”**

Colossians 1:27 — **“Christ in you, the hope of glory:”**

2 Corinthians 5:17 — **“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature:”**

John 15:5 — **“I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him”**

6. Eternal Security Through Jesus Christ

Ephesians 2:8 — **“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:”**

Ephesians 4:30 — **“whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.”**

John 10:28 — **“And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish”**

Romans 8:39 — **“shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”**

7. Members Of One Body Must Care For One Another

Romans 12:4 — **“For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office:”**

1 Corinthians 12:25 — **“That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.”**

Ephesians 4:15 — **“may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:”**

Ephesians 4:25 — **“for we are members one of another.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 5:30 establishes a truth that ought to put an end to the religious notion that salvation is merely membership in an earthly organization. Paul declares that believers are members of Christ's body, of His flesh, and of His bones. That relationship cannot be purchased through donations, earned through faithful attendance, or conferred through the approval of a minister. It is established through the saving work of Jesus Christ and the Spirit's incorporation of believers into His body. A congregation may provide valuable instruction and fellowship, but it cannot replace the Saviour. **The Christian does not belong to Jesus Christ because a church secretary entered his name into a membership register. He belongs to Christ because the Lord redeemed him.** The distinction is essential.

The language concerning Christ's flesh and bones also exposes the danger of attempting to explain spiritual realities through unsupported physical speculation. Scripture establishes the literal bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ, but it describes the believer's union with Him through the work of the Spirit. First Corinthians 12:13 declares that believers are baptized by one Spirit into one body. The passage does not teach that Christians acquire measurable portions of Christ's resurrected anatomy or become independent additions to His divine nature. Ephesians 5:32 identifies the relationship as a great mystery concerning

Christ and the Church. **A mystery revealed by Scripture should be believed according to what God has written, not expanded through whatever fascinating theory a preacher's imagination manages to manufacture.** Faith accepts divine revelation.

The verse also provides strong encouragement concerning the believer's eternal security. Ephesians 1:13 establishes the sealing of those who have believed the gospel, while Ephesians 4:30 declares that sealing continues unto the day of redemption. John 10:28 promises eternal life to Christ's sheep and declares that they shall never perish. These assurances rest upon the Saviour's faithfulness rather than the Christian's flawless performance. Nevertheless, spiritual membership does not make disobedience acceptable. A believer may grieve the Holy Spirit, require correction, and suffer consequences for sinful conduct without purchasing another salvation. **The same Lord who secures His people commands them to walk according to the holiness of the One to whom they belong.** Security and responsibility remain distinct.

The doctrine of one spiritual body also confronts the pride and division that can arise among professing Christians. First Corinthians 12 explains that different members possess different functions while belonging to the same body. No believer should imagine that his ministry, knowledge, or personal accomplishments make the other members unnecessary. Likewise, a Christian should not treat those with fewer resources or less visible abilities as spiritually insignificant. The Lord's body is not arranged according to human popularity, financial influence, or public recognition. Genuine differences in doctrine still require biblical examination, and spiritual unity must never become an excuse for accepting false teaching. **But a man who treats every other believer as disposable while announcing his loyalty to Christ's body has misunderstood what membership means.** Fellowship requires truth and care.

The marriage illustration supplies another important application. Paul uses the husband's responsibility to nourish and cherish his wife as a picture of Christ's care for His Church. That comparison should confront husbands who emphasize their authority while neglecting their responsibility to demonstrate sacrificial love. The earthly husband remains fallible, and he cannot duplicate the Saviour's redeeming work. Nevertheless, his treatment of his wife should reflect faithful concern rather than selfish domination. Likewise, the wife remains accountable to Jesus Christ and must fulfill her responsibilities within marriage. **The husband who demands recognition as head while refusing to nourish and cherish his wife has borrowed the language of Christ's authority without following the example of Christ's love.** Biblical headship requires obedience.

Finally, Ephesians 5:30 should lead every redeemed believer toward gratitude, confidence, and practical holiness. The Christian belongs to Jesus Christ through a spiritual

relationship established by God, not through the changing approval of religious institutions. That membership provides no excuse for treating sin lightly or neglecting the responsibilities given to the Church. Believers should study Scripture, walk in the Spirit, care for fellow members, and resist the flesh's constant demand for personal importance. Their confidence must remain fixed upon the Saviour who purchased redemption and remains Head over His body. **Do not spend your Christian life behaving like an orphan when God has joined you to His Son. Do not treat Christ's body as a disposable religious association. Remember the declaration: "For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones."**

Ephesians 5:31 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 5:31

"For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh."

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother"

Paul begins this verse by reaching all the way back to the institution of marriage in the second chapter of Genesis: **"For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother."** Notice the opening expression, **"For this cause."** The apostle is not introducing a new institution that began with the Church or establishing marriage according to the customs of his own generation. He is quoting the principle first revealed in Genesis 2:24: **"Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh."** That declaration was made before the fall of man, before the Mosaic law, before the establishment of Israel as a nation, and long before the present dispensation of grace. Marriage therefore cannot be dismissed as a temporary religious arrangement invented by human society. It belongs to God's original design for mankind. **The same Almighty God who created Adam and Eve established the union between husband and wife. A civilization may rewrite its opinions about marriage a thousand times, but changing public opinion does not give fallen men authority to rewrite the opening chapters of Genesis.**

The words **“shall a man leave his father and mother”** identify a fundamental change in earthly responsibilities. A son begins life under the care and authority of his parents, but marriage establishes a new household in which he must assume responsibilities appropriate to being a husband. The command does not mean abandoning elderly parents, refusing necessary assistance, or treating one's father and mother with contempt. Ephesians 6:2 continues to declare, **“Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;)”** The believer must distinguish leaving parental household authority from neglecting legitimate family obligations. A married man may honor his parents while recognizing that his wife is now his closest earthly companion and that his marriage must not be continually governed by parental preferences. **Some men want the privileges of marriage while retaining the responsibilities of a dependent child, expecting their wives to manage adulthood while their parents continue making the important decisions. The Bible does not describe marriage as a ceremony through which a mother acquires another child to supervise. It establishes a new household.**

The instruction also exposes the difficulties that arise when extended family relationships are permitted to overrule marital responsibilities. Parents may provide valuable counsel, practical assistance, and loving encouragement, but they must recognize that their married children have established households of their own. A husband who continually permits his parents to dictate the decisions of his marriage may undermine the unity he has promised to preserve. Likewise, a wife who treats every disagreement as an opportunity to recruit her relatives against her husband can damage trust and cooperation. This does not mean spouses must isolate themselves from family or refuse wise advice. It means that marital responsibilities must not be surrendered merely to satisfy outside preferences. Genesis 2 establishes a new relationship with its own obligations. **A marriage cannot flourish when the husband and wife are expected to remain permanent members of competing family governments. The wedding establishes a household, not a branch office where every decision requires approval from the previous administration.**

“and shall be joined unto his wife”

The second expression identifies the new relationship that follows leaving father and mother: **“and shall be joined unto his wife.”** Notice that Paul does not describe a temporary partnership maintained only while both people remain satisfied with their circumstances. The language concerns a genuine union established through marriage. Genesis 2:24 employs the word **“cleave,”** and the Lord Jesus Christ confirms the seriousness of that relationship in Matthew 19:6: **“What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.”** The institution of marriage carries responsibilities concerning fidelity, faithfulness, and the preservation of the union. The husband is not

commanded to exchange one set of personal conveniences for another and abandon the arrangement whenever sacrifice becomes necessary. Nor should the wife treat marriage as an agreement in which every responsibility disappears whenever expectations remain unmet. **The marriage vow is not a temporary lease upon companionship, and the wedding ring is not a decoration that removes the obligation to remain faithful when ordinary life becomes difficult.** God has established a union deserving serious commitment.

The expression **"joined unto his wife"** must also be understood within the biblical principle of exclusive marital fidelity. The original marriage involved one man and one woman, and Ephesians 5 repeatedly addresses the relationship between a husband and his own wife. Marriage is not presented as an arrangement in which one spouse is free to cultivate competing intimate relationships while expecting the other to preserve the appearance of faithfulness. Hebrews 13:4 declares, **"Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge."** The bodily relationship belongs within the marriage covenant rather than becoming an instrument of selfish pleasure detached from responsibility. First Corinthians 6:16 demonstrates the seriousness of sexual union by connecting it with the one-flesh language of Scripture. **The man who declares that his wife is one flesh with him while deliberately joining himself to another woman has not discovered an advanced understanding of Christian liberty. He has demonstrated his willingness to violate the union God commanded him to honor.** Fidelity is not an optional improvement added to marriage by especially devoted Christians.

Yet the permanence and sacredness of marriage must never be twisted into permission for cruelty or the concealment of serious wrongdoing. Scripture recognizes the destructive seriousness of adultery, addresses difficult marital circumstances, and establishes that human authority remains accountable to God. Matthew 19:9 and First Corinthians 7:10–15 must be examined in their proper settings rather than pretending that every marriage problem can be answered by repeating one isolated sentence. A spouse endangered by violence or serious abuse may need protection and appropriate assistance; the command concerning marital union is not an instruction to remain defenseless in immediate danger. Likewise, reconciliation cannot be manufactured through religious pressure while wrongdoing continues without correction. The original design establishes the righteousness of marital faithfulness, not a private kingdom in which one person may commit wickedness without accountability. **A husband cannot use the word "joined" as a chain with which to imprison his wife, and a wife cannot use the seriousness of marriage to justify controlling her husband through threats and manipulation. The God**

who established the union also established the commandments governing its conduct.

“and they two shall be one flesh”

The final expression brings the marriage principle to its magnificent conclusion: **“and they two shall be one flesh.”** Notice that Paul identifies **“they two,”** referring to the man and woman joined in marriage. The Lord Jesus Christ used the same principle in Mark 10:8: **“And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh.”** The union does not mean that husband and wife cease to possess distinct bodies, personalities, abilities, or responsibilities. They remain two individuals while belonging together in the unique relationship God established. The words identify a profound union involving bodily intimacy, covenantal faithfulness, and a shared earthly life. The surrounding verses explain why husbands must love their wives as their own bodies. A man should recognize that his treatment of his wife affects the relationship of which he himself is a part. **The fellow who continually mistreats his wife while boasting about being head of the household resembles a man chopping holes in his own boat while announcing that he remains captain. His authority over the vessel will be of little comfort when the vessel begins sinking.**

The one-flesh principle reaches beyond physical intimacy into the practical unity of husband and wife. Their decisions concerning household responsibilities, finances, children, spiritual priorities, and the future of the marriage should reflect the shared nature of their relationship. This does not require identical personalities or the abandonment of legitimate individual abilities. Proverbs 31 describes a wife whose judgment, diligence, and initiative contribute substantially to her household. First Peter 3:7 commands husbands to honor their wives as heirs together of the grace of life. The husband should therefore value his wife's wisdom rather than treat it as competition, while the wife should recognize the responsibilities God has established within marriage. **God did not join two lives together so they could spend every evening operating as rival governments, each determined to prevent the other from exercising influence. One flesh requires cooperation, honesty, and the willingness to consider another person's welfare as inseparable from one's own.**

Finally, the language of one flesh prepares the reader for the extraordinary statement in Ephesians 5:32: **“This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.”** Paul has been discussing marriage, but throughout the passage he has also been revealing the relationship between Jesus Christ and His redeemed body. Ephesians 5:30 declares, **“For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.”** The connection with Genesis 2:23–24 is unmistakable. Adam and Eve provide the original

human marriage relationship, while the union of Christ and His Church reveals a greater spiritual reality. Romans 5:14 identifies Adam as **"the figure of him that was to come,"** and First Corinthians 15:45 contrasts the first Adam with the last Adam, Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, the interpreter must not confuse earthly marriage with the physical mechanics of the believer's union with Christ. **The Church is spiritually united to its Saviour, not physically fused to His resurrected anatomy. Marriage provides the picture; the spiritual body of Christ is the greater truth toward which the apostle directs attention.**

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 5:31 establishes **marriage as a divinely instituted union involving separation from former parental authority, faithfulness to one's spouse, and the creation of a one-flesh relationship**. Paul reaches back to Genesis 2:24, demonstrating that the foundation of marriage predates the Mosaic law and the establishment of the Church. Leaving father and mother does not mean abandoning parental honor or legitimate responsibilities, but it does establish a new household with its own obligations. Being joined to one's wife emphasizes marital commitment and fidelity, while becoming one flesh identifies the profound unity of the marriage relationship. That unity must govern ordinary conduct, including decisions, personal sacrifice, and the treatment of one's spouse. **Marriage is not intended to be two independent lives competing for personal advantage while retaining a convenient legal arrangement. It is a union established by God and sustained through faithful responsibility.**

The verse also establishes **the connection between the original marriage of Adam and Eve and the spiritual relationship between Christ and His Church**. The language of Genesis prepares the reader for the mystery revealed in Ephesians 5:32. Christ is the Head of His spiritual body, while believers are members of that body through the work of the Holy Spirit. This spiritual relationship must not be confused with the physical union of earthly marriage or used to construct speculative doctrines concerning the glorified body of Christ. Salvation remains the gift of God through faith rather than the result of marital obedience. **The central lesson is that the one-flesh union of marriage was established by Almighty God and serves as an earthly illustration of the greater spiritual union between Jesus Christ and His redeemed Church.**

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. Marriage Was Established At Creation

Genesis 2:18 — **"It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him."**

Genesis 2:22 — **“And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman”**

Genesis 2:23 — **“This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh:”**

Genesis 2:24 — **“Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife:”**

2. Leaving Parents Establishes A New Household

Ephesians 5:31 — **“For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother”**

Genesis 2:24 — **“and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.”**

Ephesians 6:2 — **“Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;)”**

1 Timothy 5:8 — **“But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith”**

3. Marriage Requires Faithful Union

Matthew 19:6 — **“What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.”**

Mark 10:9 — **“What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.”**

Hebrews 13:4 — **“Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled:”**

1 Corinthians 7:3 — **“Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband.”**

4. Two Become One Flesh

Ephesians 5:31 — **“and they two shall be one flesh.”**

Mark 10:8 — **“And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh.”**

1 Corinthians 6:16 — **“for two, saith he, shall be one flesh.”**

Ephesians 5:28 — **“He that loveth his wife loveth himself.”**

5. Marriage Requires Sacrificial Responsibility

Ephesians 5:25 — **“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;”**

Colossians 3:19 — **“Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.”**

1 Peter 3:7 — **“dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife”**

Philippians 2:4 — **“Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.”**

6. Adam And Christ In Biblical Comparison

Romans 5:14 — **“who is the figure of him that was to come.”**

1 Corinthians 15:45 — **“The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.”**

Ephesians 5:30 — **“For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.”**

Ephesians 5:32 — **“This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.”**

7. The Church Is Spiritually United To Christ

Ephesians 1:22 — **“and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,”**

Ephesians 1:23 — **“Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.”**

1 Corinthians 12:13 — **“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body”**

1 Corinthians 6:17 — **“But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 5:31 establishes a foundation for marriage that existed long before human governments began writing laws concerning domestic relationships. Paul reaches back to Genesis because the institution belongs to God's original design for mankind. The command to leave father and mother establishes a new household rather than a permanent extension of childhood dependence. A married man must recognize that his wife and their shared responsibilities now possess a particular priority. Nevertheless, honoring parents remains a biblical obligation, and leaving does not authorize abandonment of aging family members. **The husband who wants the privileges of marriage while expecting his parents to continue managing every important decision has misunderstood the meaning of leaving.** A new household requires mature responsibility.

The instruction concerning being joined to one's wife likewise exposes the casual treatment of marital faithfulness. Scripture does not present marriage as an arrangement maintained merely while personal desires remain satisfied. The union establishes obligations concerning fidelity, trust, cooperation, and sacrifice. Hebrews 13:4 warns

concerning adultery because sexual faithfulness belongs to the righteousness of marriage. Yet the seriousness of the union must not become an excuse for protecting cruelty or concealing serious wrongdoing. Appropriate safety and accountability remain necessary when harm occurs. **A wedding vow is not permission to behave wickedly while demanding that the other spouse endure everything without correction.** The God who established marriage also established the commandments governing its conduct.

The words **"they two shall be one flesh"** confront the selfishness that can turn a marriage into a contest between competing personal ambitions. Husband and wife remain distinct individuals, but their union requires genuine concern for each other's welfare. Ephesians 5:28 commands husbands to love their wives as their own bodies. That responsibility involves care, fidelity, and a willingness to accept sacrifice rather than continually demand personal satisfaction. Likewise, a wife should recognize the biblical responsibilities established within her marriage. Neither spouse is authorized to treat every disagreement as an opportunity for domination. **The man who repeatedly injures the unity of his marriage while boasting about his authority resembles a captain drilling holes in his own vessel.** Leadership without love destroys trust.

The passage also exposes the religious error of confusing household responsibility with spiritual superiority. A husband's position within marriage does not establish that he possesses greater intelligence, wisdom, or value before Almighty God. First Peter 3:7 identifies believing husbands and wives as heirs together of the grace of life. Their responsibilities differ, but their salvation rests upon the same Saviour. Neither receives eternal life through successful performance of marital duties. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes salvation by grace through faith, apart from works. **The husband is not the saviour of his wife, and the wife does not obtain redemption through submission to her husband.** Jesus Christ alone provides salvation.

The greater spiritual significance appears when Paul connects Genesis 2 with Christ and His Church. Ephesians 5:30 declares that believers are members of Christ's body, while verse 32 identifies the relationship as a great mystery. The original marriage of Adam and Eve provides an illustration through which this spiritual truth can be understood. Yet Scripture does not authorize speculative explanations concerning the physical mechanics of union with Christ. First Corinthians 12:13 identifies the Holy Spirit's work in bringing believers into one body. The spiritual reality is genuine even where its complete nature exceeds human understanding. **The Christian should believe what God has revealed without manufacturing elaborate explanations for what God has chosen not to describe.** Faith requires submission to Scripture.

Finally, Ephesians 5:31 should direct every Christian household toward the responsibilities established by the Lord rather than the changing expectations of society. Marriage requires leaving former dependencies, remaining faithful to one's spouse, and recognizing the unity God has created. It requires husbands to love sacrificially and wives to fulfill their responsibilities before Christ. It also requires both to reject selfishness, receive correction, and exercise godly wisdom when difficulties arise. Above the earthly illustration stands the greater relationship between Jesus Christ and His redeemed body. **Marriage is not merely a convenient arrangement between two independent lives. It is a union established by God and used by Scripture to illustrate a magnificent spiritual mystery.** The command remains: **"For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh."**

Ephesians 5:32 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 5:32

"This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church."

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"This is a great mystery"

Paul has arrived at one of the most profound doctrinal declarations in the entire fifth chapter of Ephesians: **"This is a great mystery."** Notice that the statement does not appear in isolation. The apostle has been discussing the relationship between husbands and wives, comparing the husband's responsibility to love his wife with the Lord Jesus Christ's sacrificial love for His Church. Ephesians 5:25 declares that Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it. Verse 30 identifies redeemed believers as members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. Verse 31 then reaches backward to Genesis 2:24, where God established the original marriage relationship between man and woman. Now Paul declares that something greater than ordinary marriage is involved. The earthly union illustrates a spiritual reality concerning Christ and His redeemed people. **The mystery is not that men and women get married. That has been happening since Genesis. The mystery concerns the extraordinary spiritual union between Jesus Christ and the Church, which the marriage relationship illustrates.** A man who reads the chapter merely to collect arguments about household authority has overlooked the greater truth the Holy Spirit is revealing.

The word **“mystery”** must be understood according to Scripture rather than the inventions of religious superstition. In ordinary conversation, a mystery may describe an unsolved crime or an unexplained event. In Paul's doctrinal teaching, however, a mystery frequently concerns divine truth formerly hidden and subsequently revealed according to God's purpose. Ephesians 3:5–6 explains that the mystery concerning Gentiles being fellowheirs and members of the same body was not made known in other ages as it is now revealed. Colossians 1:26 likewise describes **“Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:”** Therefore, the mystery is not an invitation to manufacture secret doctrines from imagination. God has revealed the truth necessary for believers to understand their position in Christ, even though the complete manner of spiritual union exceeds human explanation. **A mystery revealed by God is not permission for a preacher to invent whatever the Bible forgot to mention. The Scriptures reveal the doctrine; the preacher's responsibility is to believe and explain what has been written.** The difference between revelation and speculation is the difference between studying God's Book and decorating it with human guesses.

The adjective **“great”** emphasizes the extraordinary significance of the relationship Paul is describing. Genesis 2:23 records Adam declaring concerning Eve, **“This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh:”** The following verse establishes that husband and wife become one flesh. Yet the apostle now connects that original marriage with believers who are spiritually joined to Jesus Christ. First Corinthians 6:17 declares, **“But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.”** The Christian remains an individual person, living in a physical body, while belonging to the spiritual body of the risen Saviour. Jesus Christ is in heaven, and redeemed believers continue their earthly lives, yet Scripture declares their genuine spiritual union with Him. No physician can examine that relationship with a medical instrument, and no laboratory can measure the spiritual membership described in Ephesians 5:30. Nevertheless, the inability to describe its physical mechanics does not make divine revelation uncertain. **The Christian does not need to become part of Christ's literal anatomical structure to belong to His spiritual body. The union is real because God declares it real, not because human investigation has discovered a way to put it beneath a microscope.**

“but I speak concerning Christ and the church”

The second expression identifies the specific subject of the mystery and prevents the interpreter from wandering into unrelated speculation: **“but I speak concerning Christ and the church.”** Paul is telling the reader exactly what he means. The passage concerns the Lord Jesus Christ and His redeemed body. Ephesians 1:22–23 declares that Christ is Head over all things to the Church, **“Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all**

in all." Colossians 1:18 confirms that He is the Head of the body, the Church. This is not merely a discussion of religious organizations, denominational structures, or the physical buildings where believers assemble. The spiritual body of Christ consists of those who belong to Him through salvation. First Corinthians 12:13 identifies the work of the Spirit in baptizing believers into one body. **The Church is not a religious corporation whose ownership changes whenever a new president, pastor, or committee assumes office. It belongs to Jesus Christ, who purchased redemption through His own blood.** The mystery concerns that living spiritual relationship, not the earthly machinery through which religious institutions conduct their affairs.

The expression also requires careful distinction between Israel under its national covenants and the Church as Christ's spiritual body. God made specific promises to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the nation of Israel, and those promises must not be casually transferred to the Church whenever a preacher discovers an attractive Old Testament passage. Romans 11:1 declares concerning Israel, **"God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin."** Paul's teaching concerning the Church reveals that believing Jews and Gentiles are united in one spiritual body through Jesus Christ. Ephesians 3:6 identifies Gentiles as fellowheirs and of the same body through the gospel. That revelation does not erase God's historical dealings with Israel or convert every Old Testament prophecy into a symbolic description of Christianity. **The same Bible that reveals the Church as Christ's body also records God's promises to Israel. A man who cannot distinguish those subjects may possess a complete Bible, but he has mixed its doctrines together until the distinctions God established are nearly impossible to recognize.** Rightly dividing the Scriptures preserves the meaning of both.

Finally, Paul directs attention toward Christ and the Church because that relationship supplies the higher standard for the earthly marriage instructions surrounding the verse. Ephesians 5:25 commands husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it. Verse 29 describes nourishing and cherishing, while verse 33 returns to the responsibilities of husbands and wives. The spiritual mystery does not eliminate the practical commandments. Instead, it demonstrates why Christian marriage should reflect sacrificial concern, faithfulness, and proper responsibility. Yet the husband must never assume that his earthly position makes him the saviour of his wife's soul. Jesus Christ alone purchases redemption, sanctifies His spiritual body, and prepares His Church for its future presentation. Second Corinthians 11:2 employs the language of espousal to Christ, while Revelation 19:7 announces the marriage of the Lamb. These passages reveal a glorious relationship without authorizing fleshly speculation concerning heavenly marriage. **The earthly husband is an imperfect illustration; Jesus Christ is the perfect Saviour.**

The marriage relationship provides the picture, but the Lord and His Church are the great mystery Paul intends the Christian to understand.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 5:32 reveals **the great mystery concerning the spiritual union between Jesus Christ and His Church**. Paul uses the original marriage relationship established in Genesis 2 to illustrate the greater relationship between the risen Saviour and those redeemed through His blood. The Church is Christ's spiritual body, and believers are its members through the work of the Holy Spirit. This truth was not revealed in previous ages with the fullness now made known through the apostle Paul's teaching. The mystery does not mean that God's revelation is unintelligible or that Christians should invent explanations for matters Scripture leaves undisclosed. **God has revealed the reality of the union, identified its spiritual nature, and established the responsibilities belonging to those united with His Son.**

The passage also establishes **the importance of rightly dividing Israel and the Church, earthly marriage and spiritual union, and Christ's unique saving work and the husband's practical responsibilities**. Adam and Eve provide a meaningful illustration, but the complete doctrine concerning Christ's body must come from the New Testament revelation. The marriage relationship demonstrates the seriousness of sacrificial love, while salvation itself rests exclusively upon Jesus Christ. The Church's future presentation in glory belongs to His redemptive purpose. **The central lesson is that earthly marriage illustrates a magnificent spiritual mystery: Jesus Christ is united to His redeemed Church, and that union should produce confidence in His promises, faithfulness to His word, and gratitude for the Saviour who purchased His people.**

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. The Mystery Revealed Through The Apostles

Ephesians 3:5 — **“as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;”**

Ephesians 3:6 — **“That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body”**

Colossians 1:26 — **“Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:”**

Romans 16:25 — **“according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began,”**

2. The Original Marriage And Its Greater Significance

Genesis 2:23 — **“This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh:”**

Genesis 2:24 — **“and they shall be one flesh.”**

Ephesians 5:31 — **“and they two shall be one flesh.”**

Ephesians 5:32 — **“This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.”**

3. Christ Is The Head Of His Spiritual Body

Ephesians 1:22 — **“and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,”**

Ephesians 1:23 — **“Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.”**

Colossians 1:18 — **“And he is the head of the body, the church:”**

1 Corinthians 12:27 — **“Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.”**

4. The Holy Spirit Unites Believers To Christ

1 Corinthians 12:13 — **“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body”**

1 Corinthians 6:17 — **“But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.”**

Ephesians 2:16 — **“And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross”**

Romans 12:5 — **“So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.”**

5. Christ's Sacrificial Love For His Church

Ephesians 5:25 — **“Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;”**

Ephesians 5:26 — **“That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,”**

Ephesians 5:29 — **“but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:”**

Colossians 3:19 — **“Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.”**

6. The Church And The Marriage Of The Lamb

2 Corinthians 11:2 — **“for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.”**

Revelation 19:7 — **“for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.”**

Revelation 19:8 — **“And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white:”**

Ephesians 5:27 — **“That he might present it to himself a glorious church”**

7. Israel And The Church Must Be Distinguished

Romans 11:1 — **“Hath God cast away his people? God forbid.”**

Ephesians 2:12 — **“being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise”**

Ephesians 3:6 — **“and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:”**

2 Timothy 2:15 — **“rightly dividing the word of truth.”**

8. Adam And Christ In Biblical Comparison

Romans 5:14 — **“who is the figure of him that was to come.”**

1 Corinthians 15:22 — **“For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”**

1 Corinthians 15:45 — **“The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.”**

2 Corinthians 5:17 — **“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature:”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 5:32 reveals a spiritual truth that reaches far beyond ordinary marriage counseling. Paul declares that the relationship between Christ and His Church constitutes a great mystery, and the Christian should approach that declaration with reverence for what God has revealed. The Bible does not present salvation as merely joining a religious society or adopting a collection of acceptable moral practices. It establishes that redeemed believers become members of the spiritual body of Jesus Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit. **The Church is not a human organization attempting to make itself worthy of Christ's attention; it is the body He purchased through His blood.** That distinction destroys religious boasting and directs glory toward the Saviour.

The mystery also demonstrates why the Scriptures must be rightly divided rather than forced into whatever theological arrangement happens to please the interpreter. God revealed specific promises to Israel, while Paul's epistles explain the spiritual body composed of believing Jews and Gentiles in Jesus Christ. Those truths must be understood according to their respective contexts. The Church does not become Israel merely because

a preacher prefers the promises given to that nation. Neither should the original marriage of Adam and Eve be treated as though every detail secretly describes some previously undisclosed feature of the Church. **A Bible teacher who turns every historical account into an elaborate symbolic invention may produce an entertaining sermon, but entertainment is a poor substitute for sound doctrine.** Revelation must govern interpretation.

The union between Christ and His Church should also provide profound assurance concerning the believer's standing before God. Ephesians 5:30 identifies Christians as members of Christ's body, while Ephesians 1:13 establishes their sealing with the Holy Spirit after believing the gospel. Salvation rests upon the finished work of Jesus Christ rather than the strength of fallen flesh. A believer may require correction, struggle with temptation, and experience the chastening of his heavenly Father, but those realities do not cancel the promises of redemption. Nevertheless, spiritual security must never become permission for deliberate disobedience. **The Christian belongs to Christ, and the knowledge of that relationship should produce gratitude and holiness rather than careless rebellion.** Security establishes responsibility.

The earthly marriage illustration should likewise confront husbands and wives with the seriousness of their biblical responsibilities. Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it, establishing a pattern of sacrificial concern for husbands. Wives are instructed concerning their responsibilities within marriage, and both spouses remain accountable to Almighty God. The illustration must not be distorted into a claim that husbands possess the saving authority or sinless perfection of Jesus Christ. Nor may biblical headship become an excuse for selfishness, cruelty, or manipulation. **A husband who demands the privileges of authority while refusing the responsibilities of sacrificial love has understood the language of the passage without submitting to its commands.** The mystery should produce obedience.

The future presentation of the Church also gives the believer reason to look beyond present earthly failures toward the completed purpose of Jesus Christ. Ephesians 5:27 declares that the Lord intends to present His Church glorious, without spot or wrinkle, holy and without blemish. Second Corinthians 11:2 employs the language of espousal, while Revelation 19:7 announces the marriage of the Lamb. These passages establish glorious promises without requiring imaginative descriptions of every detail of that future relationship. The redeemed should believe what Scripture declares and resist the temptation to supply what it has not revealed. **Heaven's glory does not require embellishment from an earthly imagination. The promises of God are magnificent enough without attaching invented details to them.**

Finally, Ephesians 5:32 should leave every Christian with a greater appreciation for the Saviour and a deeper responsibility toward His people. The Church belongs to Jesus Christ, and individual believers should not treat other members as spiritually disposable. First Corinthians 12 teaches that the members of one body possess different functions while sharing a common relationship. Pride, unnecessary division, dishonesty, and indifference toward fellow believers contradict the unity established through the Spirit. The Christian should therefore study Scripture, preserve sound doctrine, practice genuine charity, and serve faithfully within the body. **Do not reduce the Church to a building, Christ to a religious figurehead, or marriage to a contest for personal authority.** Remember the apostle's declaration: **"This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church."**

Ephesians 5:33 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 5:33

"Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband."

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself"

Paul concludes his instructions concerning Christian marriage with a statement that ought to settle a great deal of foolishness among husbands who spend their time studying their wives' responsibilities while conveniently forgetting their own: **"Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself."** Notice the opening word, **"Nevertheless."** The apostle has just revealed the great mystery concerning Christ and the Church in Ephesians 5:32. He has explained the spiritual union between the risen Saviour and His redeemed body, reaching back to Genesis 2:24 to illustrate that relationship through the original marriage institution. Now he returns from that magnificent doctrinal revelation to the practical responsibilities of an ordinary Christian household. In effect, Paul refuses to allow profound theology to become an excuse for neglecting obvious obedience. A man may understand the spiritual body of Christ, explain the difference between Israel and the Church, defend eternal security, and preach an impressive message concerning the marriage of the Lamb. **But if he cannot treat his own wife with biblical love, he has managed to climb the mountain of doctrinal knowledge while**

tripping over the commandments lying at his own front door. The Holy Spirit brings the discussion back to everyday life because doctrine is supposed to govern conduct.

The expression **“every one of you in particular”** deserves careful attention because Paul places individual responsibility squarely upon each husband. He is not merely describing the ideal conduct of Christian men as a collective group. He addresses every husband personally, without providing an exception for difficult personalities, disappointing circumstances, financial troubles, or the failure of other people to appreciate his efforts. The command is not suspended because a wife has an imperfect temperament or because married life has turned out differently from what her husband expected. Colossians 3:19 declares, **“Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.”** Ephesians 5:25 establishes Christ's sacrificial love as the standard, while verse 28 commands husbands to love their wives as their own bodies. A Christian husband must therefore examine his own responsibilities before constructing a detailed indictment of his wife's shortcomings. **The fellow who can identify seventeen ways his wife has failed while remaining unable to name one responsibility he has neglected is not conducting a Bible study. He is preparing a defense for himself, and unfortunately for his argument, the Judge has already written the instructions.** Personal accountability begins with obedience to the commandments addressed to the individual.

The words **“so love his wife even as himself”** establish the nature of that responsibility. Paul has already explained in Ephesians 5:28–29 that a man ordinarily cares for his own flesh, nourishing and cherishing it. Marriage joins husband and wife in the one-flesh relationship established by Almighty God, and the husband must therefore recognize his wife's welfare as a genuine responsibility rather than an inconvenience competing with his personal ambitions. He should demonstrate faithful provision, patient consideration, honesty, practical assistance, and affectionate care. Such love does not require abandoning biblical truth or pretending that every decision must satisfy his wife's immediate preferences. It does require rejecting the selfishness that treats her concerns as insignificant. First Corinthians 13:5 declares that charity **“seeketh not her own,”** while Philippians 2:4 directs believers to consider the things of others. **The man who feeds himself, clothes himself, protects himself, comforts himself, and then announces that his wife is entirely responsible for managing her own difficulties has misunderstood what the Bible means by loving her as himself.** Marriage is not a competition in which the husband wins by making sure his wife carries every burden he manages to avoid.

“and the wife see that she reverence her husband”

The second expression completes Paul's instructions by establishing the wife's responsibility: **“and the wife see that she reverence her husband.”** Notice that the

apostle does not command the wife to worship her husband, treat him as infallible, or surrender her conscience to another human being. The word **“reverence”** concerns proper respect and regard for the position and relationship God has established. Ephesians 5:22 declares, **“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.”** Verse 23 identifies the husband's headship, while verse 24 compares the relationship with the Church's submission to Christ. Those instructions establish an order of responsibility within marriage, but they must be understood alongside the husband's repeated obligation to demonstrate sacrificial love. The wife is not commanded to become contemptuous or deliberately undermine her husband whenever she disagrees with his judgment. **A household cannot function properly when the husband is determined to rule without love and the wife is determined to answer every decision with contempt. One has confused leadership with domination, and the other has confused independence with rebellion. Neither has submitted to the Scriptures.**

The expression **“the wife see that she reverence her husband”** also establishes an active responsibility rather than a command dependent upon the husband's flawless performance. A wife should speak honestly without making humiliation her preferred method of communication. She should recognize the importance of faithful cooperation, thoughtful counsel, and the responsibilities belonging to her husband within the marriage relationship. First Peter 3:1–6 addresses the conduct of wives, emphasizing godly conversation rather than merely outward appearance. Proverbs 31 describes a capable woman who works diligently, exercises wisdom, makes significant decisions, and contributes substantially to her household. Biblical reverence therefore cannot reasonably be interpreted as intellectual helplessness or the disappearance of a woman's abilities. The virtuous woman is not portrayed as an ornamental piece of furniture awaiting permission to possess a thought. **A wife may be wise, capable, educated, industrious, and spiritually discerning while still honoring her husband. Respect does not require stupidity, and biblical submission does not demand the destruction of the very gifts God has given her.**

Nevertheless, reverence must never be twisted into an obligation to participate in sin, conceal serious wrongdoing, or remain defenseless against cruelty. The highest authority in the Christian life is Jesus Christ, and Acts 5:29 establishes the principle, **“We ought to obey God rather than men.”** A husband's headship is not equal to Christ's divine authority, and the marriage illustration must not erase that distinction. A wife may respectfully disagree, seek appropriate counsel, require accountability, or pursue protection when genuine harm exists. Nor does biblical reverence excuse dishonesty, manipulation, or contempt on her part. Both husband and wife remain individually accountable before Almighty God. **The husband who demands reverence while behaving wickedly should**

remember that Scripture commands him to love his wife as Christ loved the Church. The wife who demands sacrificial love while deliberately dishonoring her husband should remember that the same apostle also addressed her responsibilities. God did not write the closing verse of Ephesians 5 so that either spouse could use one half of it as a weapon while ignoring the other.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 5:33 establishes **two distinct but complementary responsibilities within Christian marriage: the husband's obligation to love his wife as himself and the wife's obligation to reverence her husband**. These instructions conclude Paul's extended teaching concerning marriage in Ephesians 5:22–32. The husband must demonstrate sacrificial concern, faithful provision, and practical care rather than merely claim the privileges of headship. The wife must demonstrate appropriate respect for her husband rather than deliberately undermine the marital relationship through contempt or persistent dishonor. Neither responsibility is conditioned upon the other spouse first achieving perfection, although both must remain subject to God's commandments and the requirements of righteousness.

The verse also brings the great mystery concerning Christ and the Church back into the ordinary responsibilities of married life. The husband is not the saviour of his wife, and the wife's reverence must not become worship or obedience to wickedness. Salvation remains entirely dependent upon Jesus Christ, while faithful marital conduct belongs to Christian discipleship. **The central lesson is that biblical marriage requires each spouse to obey the responsibilities God has personally assigned rather than spending a lifetime demanding that the other fulfill theirs first. A husband must love, a wife must reverence, and both must remember that Jesus Christ remains Lord over the entire household.**

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. The Husband's Command To Love

Ephesians 5:25 — **“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;”**

Ephesians 5:28 — **“So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies.”**

Colossians 3:19 — **“Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.”**

1 John 3:18 — **“let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.”**

2. The One-Flesh Responsibility

Genesis 2:24 — **“and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.”**

Ephesians 5:29 — **“but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:”**

Ephesians 5:31 — **“and they two shall be one flesh.”**

1 Corinthians 13:5 — **“seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked”**

3. The Wife's Responsibility To Reverence

Ephesians 5:33 — **“and the wife see that she reverence her husband.”**

Ephesians 5:22 — **“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.”**

1 Peter 3:1 — **“Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands;”**

1 Peter 3:6 — **“Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord:”**

4. Biblical Headship Under Christ's Authority

Ephesians 5:23 — **“For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church:”**

Ephesians 5:21 — **“Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.”**

1 Corinthians 11:3 — **“and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.”**

1 Peter 3:7 — **“giving honour unto the wife”**

5. Faithfulness Within The Marriage Covenant

Proverbs 31:11 — **“The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her”**

Hebrews 13:4 — **“Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled:”**

1 Corinthians 7:3 — **“Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband.”**

Malachi 2:14 — **“yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant.”**

6. God's Authority Over Every Marriage

Acts 5:29 — **“We ought to obey God rather than men.”**

Romans 12:9 — **“Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.”**

Ephesians 5:11 — **“And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.”**

Colossians 3:17 — **“And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus”**

7. Christ And The Church Remain The Greater Mystery

Ephesians 5:25 — **“Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;”**

Ephesians 5:30 — **“For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.”**

Ephesians 5:32 — **“This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.”**

Ephesians 1:23 — **“Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 5:33 brings the Christian marriage relationship to a conclusion that leaves very little room for the excuses so commonly defended in religious households. Paul commands the husband to love his wife as himself and the wife to reverence her husband. Notice that both responsibilities appear in the same verse, under the authority of the same Holy Spirit, and within the same biblical instruction. The husband does not receive permission to become selfish because his wife has been disrespectful, and the wife does not receive permission to cultivate contempt because her husband has disappointed her. Each remains responsible for personal obedience before Jesus Christ. **The Christian who spends more time examining the commandments addressed to his spouse than obeying the commandments addressed to himself has turned Bible study into an investigation of somebody else's failures.** Scripture demands personal accountability.

The husband's responsibility to love his wife as himself reaches into the ordinary circumstances of married life. Love must survive financial difficulties, physical exhaustion, disagreements, sickness, and the frustrations that accompany two imperfect people sharing a household. A man cannot satisfy the command merely by providing an income while neglecting kindness, honest communication, and faithful concern. Neither does biblical headship authorize intimidation, humiliation, or the refusal to accept correction. Christ's sacrificial love establishes a pattern of service rather than selfish domination. **A husband who proudly announces that he is the head while expecting his wife to carry every difficult responsibility has misunderstood the position he claims. The head is supposed to care for the body, not spend its time issuing orders while refusing to lift a finger.** Love requires sacrifice.

The wife's responsibility to reverence her husband likewise requires more than performing outward acts of cooperation while privately cultivating bitterness and contempt. Biblical respect should influence speech, personal conduct, the handling of disagreements, and the manner in which a husband is treated before other people. A wife may possess excellent judgment, considerable ability, and valuable spiritual understanding without violating the responsibilities Scripture establishes. Proverbs 31 portrays a woman whose diligence and wisdom contribute substantially to her household. Reverence does not require abandoning those abilities or pretending that her husband possesses perfect judgment. **The wife who believes that honoring her husband requires surrendering her intelligence has misunderstood the command, while the wife who uses her intelligence as permission to humiliate him has also missed the mark.** God requires respect governed by truth.

The passage must also be protected against religious misuse. Biblical headship does not make the husband equal to Jesus Christ, and reverence does not make his wife a worshipper of another human being. Both remain accountable to the Lord who redeemed them. Acts 5:29 establishes the necessity of obeying God rather than men, and no earthly marital authority can cancel that principle. Serious cruelty, coercion, or dangerous wrongdoing must not be concealed beneath an appeal to submission. Likewise, the reality of human imperfection does not excuse ordinary selfishness or unnecessary rebellion. **The Bible does not authorize a husband to become a domestic tyrant or a wife to become a permanent adversary. Marriage is not strengthened when one person rules through fear and the other responds through contempt.** Righteousness must govern both.

The greater spiritual mystery concerning Christ and His Church remains essential to understanding the command. Ephesians 5:32 identifies that relationship as the central doctrinal reality illustrated through marriage. Jesus Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it, demonstrating a sacrifice no earthly husband can duplicate in its saving power. The Church belongs to Him through redemption, and believers are spiritually united to their risen Saviour. An earthly marriage illustrates that relationship without replacing the gospel or establishing salvation through successful marital conduct. **A husband cannot redeem his wife, and a wife cannot obtain eternal life through reverencing her husband. Salvation belongs to Jesus Christ alone, while marriage supplies an opportunity for redeemed people to demonstrate obedience to Him.** The distinction must remain clear.

Finally, Ephesians 5:33 should move husbands and wives away from religious arguments and toward the obedience plainly required by Scripture. The husband should examine whether his conduct demonstrates sacrificial love, patient concern, and faithfulness. The

wife should examine whether her conduct demonstrates proper respect, honesty, and cooperation within the boundaries of God's commandments. Both should reject pride, acknowledge personal wrongdoing, and receive correction when the word of God exposes their failures. The marriage relationship will never be strengthened through a competition over which spouse can quote the greater number of verses against the other. **The husband does not need another sermon proving that his wife has responsibilities, and the wife does not need another argument proving that her husband has faults. Both need to obey the Book.** Paul concludes the matter plainly: **"Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband."**

Chapter 6

Ephesians 6:1 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 6:1

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right."

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"Children, obey your parents"

Paul opens the sixth chapter of Ephesians with a command so plain that it requires considerable assistance from modern rebellion to misunderstand it: **"Children, obey your parents."** Notice that the apostle has not abandoned his instructions concerning the Christian household. Ephesians 5:22–33 established the responsibilities of husbands and wives, and now the Holy Spirit addresses the children living under parental authority. The family is not an accidental collection of individuals temporarily sharing the same address. God has established an order of responsibility within the household, and children have a duty to recognize the legitimate authority of their parents. The word **"obey"** does not mean merely hearing instructions, considering whether they sound attractive, and then making an independent decision based upon personal convenience. It means responding to proper authority with submission and action. **A child who hears an instruction, argues for**

twenty minutes, and finally does what he was told after exhausting everybody in the house has not demonstrated an impressive understanding of obedience. He has demonstrated that rebellion can sometimes wear the clothing of a lengthy discussion.

The command addresses **"children,"** not every adult son or daughter throughout the remainder of earthly life. Genesis 2:24 establishes that a man leaves his father and mother and cleaves unto his wife, thereby forming a new household with its own responsibilities. That distinction matters because parental authority over dependent children must not be confused with the continuing duty of adults to honor their parents. Ephesians 6:2 commands honor, and First Timothy 5:4 addresses the responsibility of providing appropriate care within the family. A grown man does not remain perpetually subject to his mother's household instructions simply because she remembers changing his diapers. Likewise, an adult married woman is not required to permit her parents to govern her household against the responsibilities established by Scripture. **The Bible commands children to obey their parents, but it does not establish a permanent system of parental ownership over grown sons and daughters. Childhood requires obedience; adulthood requires responsible independence without surrendering proper honor.**

The command also places a serious responsibility upon parents because authority is never separated from accountability before Almighty God. Children must learn obedience, but parents must provide righteous instruction rather than merely demand compliance with personal whims. Ephesians 6:4 declares, "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Colossians 3:21 warns fathers against provoking their children to anger lest they become discouraged. Therefore, the household is not intended to become a place where the parent exercises unlimited power while the child has no legitimate protection from cruelty or wrongdoing. Discipline should be consistent, proportionate, and directed toward correction rather than humiliation. **The parent who demands obedience while refusing to obey the commandments addressed to parents has managed to discover only half of God's instructions. The Bible does not command children to become rebellious little dictators, and it does not authorize parents to become unreasonable ones either.** Both generations answer to the Lord.

"in the Lord"

The expression **"in the Lord"** establishes the spiritual setting and governing authority of the command. Paul is writing to believers concerning conduct consistent with their relationship to Jesus Christ. The child's obedience is not presented merely as a convenient arrangement for maintaining domestic peace. It belongs to the Christian walk and should be rendered with recognition that Almighty God has established legitimate parental

responsibility. Colossians 3:20 declares, “Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.” The statement identifies obedience as pleasing to God, not simply satisfying to the parent. A Christian child should understand that honoring proper household instructions is part of learning obedience to divine authority. **A young person who can sing enthusiastically about loving Jesus Christ while treating every reasonable instruction from his parents as an insult has a rather interesting definition of devotion. The Lord who commands worship also commands obedience, and genuine spirituality does not disappear when the family returns home from church.**

Nevertheless, the words **“in the Lord”** must never be twisted into a doctrine of unlimited parental authority. God does not require children to participate in wickedness simply because a parent issues the instruction. Acts 5:29 establishes the governing principle, “We ought to obey God rather than men.” Although spoken in a different immediate setting, the principle demonstrates that human authority remains subordinate to divine authority. Parents do not possess permission to command lying, stealing, sexual wrongdoing, the concealment of abuse, or participation in practices contrary to Scripture. Nor should a child be taught that seeking protection from genuine harm constitutes rebellion against God. Biblical obedience concerns legitimate authority exercised within the boundaries of righteousness. **The Lord never commanded children to treat their parents as substitute gods. A father's authority is real, but it is not divine; a mother's instructions deserve proper obedience, but they do not outrank the written word of Almighty God.** Submission to human authority must never become disobedience to Christ.

The expression also makes clear that Christian obedience is not dependent upon parents being spiritually perfect. Some children grow up under believing parents who sincerely attempt to teach Scripture, while others live with parents who do not profess salvation or who disagree with their children's biblical convictions. The ordinary responsibilities of respect, honesty, and cooperation remain important even when spiritual differences exist. A child should not use personal religious convictions as an excuse for arrogance, needless argument, or deliberate contempt. Yet where a parent demands actual disobedience to God, the higher authority must be obeyed with appropriate wisdom and respect. Matthew 10:37 establishes that love for father or mother must not exceed devotion to Jesus Christ. **The Christian child should never manufacture a religious argument merely to avoid cleaning a room, completing schoolwork, or fulfilling an ordinary responsibility. But neither must genuine obedience to Christ be surrendered because somebody in authority dislikes the commandments of God.** The distinction requires biblical judgment rather than selfish convenience.

“for this is right”

The final expression supplies the foundation of the command: **"for this is right."** Notice that Paul does not say obedience is right only when society approves, when parental instructions are enjoyable, or when the child understands every reason behind a decision. He identifies obedience to legitimate parental authority as morally right before Almighty God. The command therefore rests upon divine revelation rather than public opinion. Proverbs 1:8 declares, "My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother:" Proverbs 6:20 repeats the importance of parental instruction. The Lord recognizes that children require training, correction, and the experience of those responsible for their care. **A child who believes superior confidence proves superior wisdom may discover that possessing a loud opinion is considerably easier than possessing mature judgment. The Bible does not establish parental authority because parents know everything. It establishes that authority because children require guidance while growing toward responsible adulthood.**

The declaration **"this is right"** also connects the Christian household with moral instruction previously revealed under the law given to Israel. Exodus 20:12 commands, "Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee." Paul quotes that commandment in Ephesians 6:2–3, applying its moral instruction and promise in his teaching to Christians. Here the doctrine must be rightly divided. The Church is not placed under the Mosaic law as a means of justification, and the land promise originally addressed Israel within its covenant setting. Romans 6:14 declares, "for ye are not under the law, but under grace." Nevertheless, salvation by grace does not mean that stealing, lying, murder, or dishonoring parents suddenly becomes righteous. **Some people have divided the dispensations so recklessly that they appear to believe a commandment becomes wicked merely because Moses wrote it before Paul repeated it. Rightly dividing the word means recognizing the distinctions God establishes without throwing away the moral instructions He expressly gives Christians.**

Finally, the words **"for this is right"** confront both youthful rebellion and parental hypocrisy. Children must learn that personal desires do not determine righteousness. A command may be inconvenient without being unjust, and correction may be unpleasant without being abusive. Likewise, parents must remember that their authority should serve the righteousness God commands rather than their own pride. A father who lies, mistreats his household, and refuses correction cannot make his conduct righteous by demanding that his children honor him. A mother who manipulates her children through fear or guilt cannot justify wrongdoing merely by appealing to motherhood. Parents should model the obedience they require, while children should fulfill their responsibilities without demanding perfect examples as a condition of doing right. **The standard is not what**

makes the household most convenient for whoever possesses the strongest personality. The standard is what Almighty God declares to be right. And when the Lord has settled the matter, neither childish rebellion nor parental arrogance possesses authority to rewrite the verse.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 6:1 establishes **the God-given responsibility of children to obey their parents within the boundaries of the Lord's authority**. Paul continues his instructions concerning the Christian household by addressing children directly, demonstrating that obedience is not merely a parental preference but a responsibility recognized by Almighty God. The command requires more than outward compliance accompanied by continual defiance. It calls for a willing response to legitimate instruction, respect for parental responsibility, and a recognition that Christian conduct must agree with the word of God. The phrase "in the Lord" governs the relationship, reminding both parents and children that human authority remains subordinate to Jesus Christ.

The verse also establishes **the continuing importance of moral instruction under grace without confusing Christian obedience with salvation through the Mosaic law**. The Church is saved by grace through faith, not by keeping commandments, yet Paul explicitly repeats the responsibility to honor parents in the following verses. This distinction prevents both law-keeping religion and the misuse of grace to excuse rebellion. Childhood obedience must also be distinguished from the responsibilities of adults who have established independent households. Parents remain accountable for exercising authority righteously, while children are responsible for honoring legitimate instruction. **The central lesson is that obedience to parents is right because God commands it, but parental authority must always remain subject to the greater authority of Jesus Christ.**

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. The Command For Children To Obey

Ephesians 6:1 — **"Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right."**

Colossians 3:20 — **"Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord."**

Exodus 20:12 — **"Honour thy father and thy mother:"**

Ephesians 6:2 — **"Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;)"**

2. Wisdom Begins With Receiving Instruction

Proverbs 1:8 — **“My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother:”**

Proverbs 6:20 — **“My son, keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother:”**

Proverbs 13:1 — **“A wise son heareth his father's instruction: but a scorner heareth not rebuke.”**

Proverbs 23:22 — **“Hearken unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old.”**

3. Parents Must Exercise Authority Righteously

Ephesians 6:4 — **“And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath:”**

Colossians 3:21 — **“Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.”**

Deuteronomy 6:7 — **“And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children”**

Proverbs 22:6 — **“Train up a child in the way he should go:”**

4. Obedience Remains Subject To God's Authority

Acts 5:29 — **“We ought to obey God rather than men.”**

Matthew 10:37 — **“He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me:”**

Ephesians 5:21 — **“Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.”**

Colossians 3:17 — **“And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus”**

5. Grace Does Not Cancel Christian Obedience

Romans 6:14 — **“for ye are not under the law, but under grace.”**

Ephesians 2:8 — **“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:”**

Galatians 2:16 — **“for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.”**

Ephesians 6:2 — **“Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;)”**

6. Obedience And Disobedience Contrasted

Luke 2:51 — **“And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them:”**

1 Samuel 15:22 — **“Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice”**

2 Timothy 3:2 — **“disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,”**

James 1:22 — **“But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.”**

7. Adult Independence And Continuing Parental Honor

Genesis 2:24 — **“Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife:”**

1 Timothy 5:4 — **“let them learn first to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents:”**

Mark 7:10 — **“Honour thy father and thy mother;”**

Ephesians 6:3 — **“That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 6:1 establishes a responsibility that modern society has become remarkably skilled at explaining away. Children are commanded to obey their parents in the Lord because God declares that obedience is right. The instruction is not dependent upon whether a child enjoys the command, understands every reason behind it, or considers parental judgment superior to his own. Childhood is a season of instruction, discipline, and preparation for responsible adulthood. Parents possess legitimate authority to provide that training, while children must learn to respond appropriately. **A child who believes every instruction requires a debate has confused the family household with a courtroom where he serves simultaneously as defendant, attorney, and judge.** Scripture establishes obedience rather than endless negotiation.

The responsibility also confronts the modern assumption that children possess sufficient wisdom to govern themselves merely because they possess strong opinions. Young people may acquire information rapidly, master technology, and demonstrate considerable intelligence without possessing mature judgment concerning life's responsibilities. Proverbs repeatedly emphasizes the importance of receiving instruction and accepting correction. A child may understand a subject more thoroughly than his parents while still needing guidance concerning conduct, discipline, and personal responsibility. Intelligence does not automatically produce wisdom, and confidence does not establish

righteousness. **The youngster who can operate every electronic device in the house but cannot obey a reasonable instruction without an argument has demonstrated that technical ability and moral maturity are two very different accomplishments.** God commands both instruction and obedience.

Nevertheless, the words **"in the Lord"** protect the command from becoming an excuse for parental tyranny. Parents remain responsible for governing their households according to Scripture rather than personal anger, selfishness, or intimidation. Ephesians 6:4 specifically warns fathers against provoking their children to wrath and commands instruction in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. No parent possesses divine authority to demand participation in wickedness, conceal abuse, or prevent a child from seeking necessary protection. The command to obey must be understood within God's righteous order. **A father who demands obedience while repeatedly disregarding God's commandments has forgotten that he also occupies a position beneath authority.** Parental responsibility is sacred, but it is not unlimited.

The passage must also be rightly divided concerning law and grace. The command to honor parents originally appears within the law given to Israel, yet Paul repeats that moral responsibility in his instructions to the Church. Salvation remains the gift of God through faith in Jesus Christ, not the reward for successfully keeping the commandments. Nevertheless, grace does not transform disobedience into righteousness or eliminate responsibilities plainly commanded in the New Testament. The believer is not required to observe Israel's covenant obligations as a means of justification, but he remains responsible for obeying Christ's instructions. **The man who uses grace to excuse rebellion has not escaped legalism through superior Bible knowledge. He has merely discovered a different way to disobey the Book.** Right division preserves doctrine.

The distinction between childhood obedience and adult responsibility also deserves careful attention. A dependent child normally remains under parental direction, while an adult who establishes a new household assumes responsibilities that cannot remain permanently controlled by father and mother. Genesis 2:24 establishes leaving and cleaving within marriage, and Ephesians 6:2 preserves the continuing duty of honor. Adult children may respectfully disagree with parents, establish appropriate boundaries, and make independent decisions without necessarily violating Scripture. Likewise, honoring parents should include appropriate concern when they become elderly or vulnerable. **The Bible does not command a grown man to remain a permanent child, and it does not permit him to treat the parents who raised him as disposable strangers.** Independence and honor belong together.

Finally, Ephesians 6:1 should challenge Christian families to pursue obedience grounded in Scripture rather than household pride. Parents must teach patiently, discipline wisely, demonstrate godly conduct, and recognize their accountability before Jesus Christ. Children must receive legitimate instruction, reject deliberate rebellion, and understand that obedience belongs to their Christian responsibilities. Neither generation should use the other's imperfections as an excuse for personal disobedience. The home should become a place where God's authority is honored rather than merely discussed during family devotions. **A household does not become biblical because somebody hangs a Scripture verse above the doorway while everybody inside ignores what the verse commands.** The Lord has spoken plainly: **"Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right."**

Ephesians 6:2 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 6:2

"Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;)"

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"Honour thy father and mother"

Paul continues his instructions concerning the Christian household by bringing forward a commandment that Almighty God originally delivered to Israel at Mount Sinai: **"Honour thy father and mother."** Notice that the apostle does not invent a new moral principle for Christians living under grace. He reaches directly into the commandments recorded in Exodus 20:12 and applies their instruction to believers in the present dispensation. Ephesians 6:1 has already commanded children to obey their parents in the Lord, but verse 2 goes further by commanding honor. Obedience concerns the proper response to legitimate parental instructions, while honor concerns the respect, regard, gratitude, and appropriate care that parents should receive. A child may obey outwardly while inwardly cultivating contempt, but God does not merely command children to complete assigned tasks while despising the people responsible for raising them. **A youngster who obeys after twenty minutes of arguing, slamming doors, and delivering a speech about the injustice of taking out the garbage has accomplished the task without necessarily demonstrating honor.** Biblical obedience is not improved by accompanying it with a performance of personal rebellion.

The command also places father and mother together, establishing that both deserve proper honor. Scripture does not permit a child to recognize a father's authority while treating his mother as a household servant whose instructions may be ignored. Nor does it authorize affection toward the mother while cultivating contempt for the father. Proverbs 1:8 declares, “My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother:” Both parents appear in the instruction because both possess responsibilities within the family. Certainly, parents are imperfect, and some fail grievously in their obligations. Nevertheless, the ordinary duties of gratitude, truthful speech, consideration, and respect should not disappear merely because a child becomes aware that his parents possess weaknesses. **The teenager who discovers that his parents are imperfect has not uncovered a great theological mystery. He has simply discovered that he was born into a family of sinners, and a little honest examination would reveal that he has contributed to the collection.** Recognition of parental faults must not become permission for habitual dishonor.

There is another important distinction in the word **“honour.”** Unlike childhood obedience, appropriate parental honor continues after a son or daughter becomes an adult. Genesis 2:24 establishes that a man leaves his father and mother and cleaves unto his wife, forming a new household with its own responsibilities. A married adult is not required to surrender the decisions of that household to parental supervision. Nevertheless, becoming independent does not erase the duty to treat parents with proper regard. First Timothy 5:4 instructs children and nephews to demonstrate piety at home and requite their parents, while First Timothy 5:8 condemns the failure to provide for one's own household. The Lord Jesus Christ also exposed religious hypocrisy when men used tradition to escape their obligations toward parents in Mark 7:9–13. **A grown man is not required to ask his mother for permission to lead his household, but neither may he use independence as an excuse to abandon her when age, illness, or genuine need requires responsible assistance.** The Bible recognizes the difference between freedom from childhood control and freedom from moral responsibility.

“which is the first commandment with promise”

The second expression introduces a significant doctrinal observation: **“which is the first commandment with promise.”** Paul is identifying the commandment concerning parental honor by its attached promise. Exodus 20:12 declares, “Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.” Notice that the original commandment was delivered to Israel within the Mosaic covenant, and its promise specifically mentioned the land God had given that nation. That historical setting must not be ignored. Israel possessed covenant responsibilities and promises connected

with its national life in the land, while the Church receives salvation through the finished work of Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, Paul quotes the commandment in Ephesians and repeats its promise in the following verse. The moral obligation is therefore explicitly carried into Christian instruction. **Some people divide the Bible so carelessly that they imagine a commandment becomes obsolete the moment they discover Moses wrote it. Others drag Christians back beneath the entire Mosaic covenant because Paul repeats one moral command. Both errors arise from failing to read what the apostle actually says.**

The designation **“first commandment with promise”** emphasizes the special place of this instruction within the commandments. Paul directs the reader toward the promise attached to honoring father and mother, which he develops in Ephesians 6:3: “That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.” Notice the distinction between the wording in Exodus and the wording in Ephesians. Exodus refers specifically to the land given to Israel, while Ephesians speaks of life upon the earth. The apostle applies the instruction and its associated blessing to Christians without making the Church the national possessor of Israel's territorial covenant. Nor does the verse guarantee that every obedient Christian child will reach a particular age or escape sickness, accidents, persecution, and death. Scripture contains faithful servants of God who suffered and died without reaching extraordinary old age. The promise establishes the favor and benefit associated with honoring God's ordained family order, but it must not be converted into a mathematical formula for predicting how long an individual will live. **A preacher who promises that every obedient youngster will reach ninety years of age has supplied a guarantee considerably more specific than the apostle's words. The Bible should be believed exactly as written, not stretched until it begins making promises God never stated.**

Finally, this phrase demonstrates why rightly dividing the word of truth requires more than separating the Bible into convenient historical compartments and refusing to recognize any instruction appearing in more than one dispensation. Romans 6:14 declares, “for ye are not under the law, but under grace.” Galatians 2:16 explains that no flesh is justified by the works of the law. Those statements establish that the Mosaic law is not the means of obtaining salvation for the Church. Yet Paul commands Christians to put away lying in Ephesians 4:25, forbids stealing in Ephesians 4:28, and instructs children to honor their parents in Ephesians 6:2. Grace does not transform moral disobedience into righteousness. Nor does obedience to these commands become the purchase price of eternal life. **The Christian is not saved because he honored his mother, and he is not excused from honoring his mother because he has been saved. The blood of Jesus Christ accomplishes redemption, while the word of Jesus Christ instructs the**

redeemed concerning their responsibilities. A man who understands that distinction will neither preach salvation by law-keeping nor use grace as a convenient excuse for rebellion.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 6:2 establishes **the continuing obligation to honor both father and mother as part of God's righteous order for the family**. Parental honor includes respectful speech, proper regard, gratitude, and appropriate practical care. It goes beyond the obedience required of dependent children, because adults remain responsible for honoring parents even after establishing independent households. The command applies to both parents without making either one spiritually insignificant. However, honor must not be confused with surrendering an adult's lawful independence or permitting parents to exercise unlimited authority. Scripture distinguishes parental responsibilities, childhood obedience, adult independence, and the continuing moral duty of honor.

The verse also demonstrates **the proper relationship between Old Testament moral commandments and Christian instruction under grace**. Paul quotes a commandment originally delivered to Israel through Moses and expressly applies it to the Church, identifying its attached promise. That does not place Christians under the Mosaic law as a means of justification or transfer Israel's national land covenant to the Church. Rather, the apostle confirms that honoring parents remains right for believers who have received salvation through Jesus Christ. **The central lesson is that salvation by grace does not abolish the responsibilities God commands His redeemed people to fulfill. A Christian should honor his parents because the Lord commands it, while remembering that obedience is the fruit of a proper Christian walk, not the price of eternal life.**

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. The Command To Honor Both Parents

Exodus 20:12 — **“Honour thy father and thy mother:”**

Deuteronomy 5:16 — **“Honour thy father and thy mother, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee;”**

Ephesians 6:2 — **“Honour thy father and mother;”**

Proverbs 1:8 — **“My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother:”**

2. Childhood Obedience And Lifelong Honor

Ephesians 6:1 — **“Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.”**

Colossians 3:20 — **“Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.”**

Genesis 2:24 — **“Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife:”**

Proverbs 23:22 — **“Hearken unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old.”**

3. The Promise Attached To Parental Honor

Exodus 20:12 — **“that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.”**

Deuteronomy 5:16 — **“that thy days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with thee”**

Ephesians 6:2 — **“which is the first commandment with promise;”**

Ephesians 6:3 — **“That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.”**

4. Genuine Honor Requires Practical Care

1 Timothy 5:4 — **“let them learn first to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents:”**

1 Timothy 5:8 — **“But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith”**

Mark 7:10 — **“For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother;”**

John 19:27 — **“And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.”**

5. Parents Must Fulfill Their Own Responsibilities

Ephesians 6:4 — **“And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath:”**

Colossians 3:21 — **“Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.”**

Proverbs 22:6 — **“Train up a child in the way he should go:”**

Deuteronomy 6:7 — **“And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children”**

6. God's Authority Governs Family Relationships

Acts 5:29 — **“We ought to obey God rather than men.”**

Matthew 10:37 — **“He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me:”**

Ephesians 6:1 — **“Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.”**

Colossians 3:17 — **“And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus”**

7. Moral Obedience Distinguished From Salvation

Romans 6:14 — **“for ye are not under the law, but under grace.”**

Galatians 2:16 — **“for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.”**

Ephesians 2:8 — **“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:”**

Ephesians 4:28 — **“Let him that stole steal no more:”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 6:2 establishes a responsibility that cannot be dismissed as an outdated custom simply because modern society prefers a different arrangement. Almighty God commands children to honor their father and mother, and Paul repeats that commandment in his instructions to Christians. Honor involves more than reluctantly performing an assigned task while maintaining an attitude of contempt. It requires appropriate regard for the people responsible for bringing children into the world and providing their early care. A child should learn that personal convenience does not determine whether parental instructions deserve respect. **The youngster who can recite every grievance against his parents while refusing the simplest responsibility may possess an excellent memory, but he has not yet demonstrated an excellent understanding of biblical honor.** God requires proper conduct, not merely impressive arguments.

The command also exposes the foolishness of honoring one parent while deliberately dishonoring the other. Scripture mentions father and mother together because both deserve proper regard within the responsibilities God has established. A child may feel naturally closer to one parent or recognize differences in their personalities and judgment. Those realities do not authorize contempt toward the other parent. Likewise, parents should not encourage children to take sides in personal disagreements or use them as instruments against a spouse. A mother who teaches her children to despise their father and a father who encourages contempt toward their mother are undermining the commandment they should be teaching. **The home does not become more biblical when one parent receives all the praise while the other becomes the household's permanent target.** Honor should not be manipulated into a competition for loyalty.

The duty of honor becomes especially important when children reach adulthood and establish homes of their own. Genesis 2:24 teaches leaving father and mother within marriage, which means parental authority must not be confused with permanent ownership of adult children. A grown son or daughter may respectfully make independent decisions without committing rebellion against God. Parents should recognize that their children must eventually assume responsibility for their own households. Nevertheless, adult independence does not excuse cruelty, deliberate contempt, or unnecessary abandonment of family relationships. **A man does not honor his parents by allowing them to govern his marriage, and he does not demonstrate maturity by treating them as inconvenient strangers.** Biblical adulthood requires independence joined with continuing responsibility.

The practical demands of parental honor become particularly visible when parents grow old, experience illness, or require assistance. First Timothy 5:4 directs families toward appropriate care for their own, while Mark 7 exposes religious traditions used to avoid legitimate obligations toward parents. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself demonstrated concern for His mother while suffering upon the cross, as recorded in John 19:26–27. Such passages establish that honor should involve action rather than affectionate speeches unsupported by conduct. Circumstances may require professional assistance, boundaries, or arrangements suited to a parent's needs and the family's abilities. **The Christian who praises his parents publicly while deliberately neglecting their genuine needs should remember that gratitude becomes rather inexpensive when it never requires personal sacrifice.** Honor must survive beyond words.

This verse also provides an important demonstration of rightly dividing the word of truth. Paul brings an Old Testament commandment into his instructions to the Church without placing believers back under the Mosaic law for justification. The original promise in Exodus concerned Israel and the land God had given that nation, while Paul repeats the principle of blessing in Ephesians 6:3. The Christian must therefore recognize both the historical distinction and the continuing moral instruction. Salvation remains entirely dependent upon Jesus Christ and His finished work, not upon successful obedience to the commandments. Yet grace does not make parental dishonor acceptable. **The fellow who believes Christians must keep the Mosaic law to remain saved has misunderstood grace, while the fellow who believes grace excuses dishonoring parents has misunderstood Christian obedience.** Both errors disappear when Scripture is carefully examined.

Finally, the commandment must be understood alongside the responsibilities God places upon parents themselves. Ephesians 6:4 forbids fathers to provoke their children to wrath

and requires their instruction in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Parental honor does not mean approving wickedness, concealing abuse, or surrendering obedience to Jesus Christ when human demands contradict His word. Children deserve righteous instruction, and adults should exercise parental authority with wisdom, patience, and accountability. The promise associated with honor should encourage obedience rather than become a formula guaranteeing a particular lifespan to every individual. **A Christian home is not established by parents demanding honor while refusing responsibility, nor by children demanding freedom while rejecting correction. It is established when the family recognizes that Almighty God has authority over every member of the household.** The instruction remains unmistakable: **"Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;)"**

Ephesians 6:3 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 6:3

"That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth."

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"That it may be well with thee"

Paul continues the command concerning parental honor by identifying the blessing associated with obedience: **"That it may be well with thee."** Notice the opening word **"That."** The apostle is not beginning an unrelated subject or introducing a promise detached from the preceding verses. Ephesians 6:1 commands, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right." Verse 2 continues, "Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;)" Now verse 3 explains that promise. The expression **"well with thee"** deserves particular attention because it concerns more than the mere continuation of physical existence. A person may remain alive for many years while enduring the consequences of foolish decisions, broken relationships, rebellion, and unnecessary suffering. The Lord establishes parental honor as a righteous principle connected with the welfare of those who practice it. Children who learn obedience, receive proper correction, and respect legitimate authority acquire important habits for responsible living. **A young person who refuses every instruction because he considers himself the smartest individual in the household may eventually discover that life possesses considerably less patience with his foolishness than his parents did.** The

blessing concerns a life directed by righteous instruction rather than unnecessary rebellion.

The expression must not be converted into a prosperity formula promising uninterrupted happiness, financial wealth, excellent health, or the absence of disappointment. Scripture never teaches that every obedient child will become rich or that parental honor guarantees freedom from earthly suffering. Philippians 1:29 establishes that believers may suffer for Christ, while Second Timothy 3:12 declares, “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” The Christian walk includes trials, and the favor of God cannot be measured merely by outward comfort. Nevertheless, obedience to righteous instruction often protects a person from consequences that foolish independence would otherwise invite. A child taught honesty, diligence, restraint, respect, and responsible judgment possesses advantages that cannot always be purchased after years of destructive habits. Proverbs 3:1–2 connects the keeping of wise instruction with length of days, long life, and peace. **The Bible does not promise that righteousness will remove every storm from the road, but it certainly does not recommend driving into every ditch to demonstrate personal independence.** There is a difference between suffering because one obeyed God and suffering because one stubbornly refused sound instruction.

The phrase **“with thee”** also makes the promise personal without removing the responsibilities of parents. Paul is addressing the conduct of children, but the following verse commands fathers not to provoke their children to wrath. Therefore, the benefits of parental honor must never be used as an excuse for parental cruelty or manipulation. A child should obey legitimate instructions and maintain proper respect, but he is not commanded to participate in wickedness or endure abuse without seeking protection. Acts 5:29 establishes the principle, “We ought to obey God rather than men.” Likewise, adulthood changes the nature of parental authority. Genesis 2:24 establishes leaving father and mother within marriage, while First Timothy 5:4 preserves the continuing responsibility to care appropriately for one's parents. The command concerning honor remains, but it does not grant parents permanent ownership of their grown children. **The father who believes his forty-year-old married son must still obtain permission for every household decision has confused parental honor with lifetime supervision. The mother who uses guilt to control an adult daughter's marriage has confused affection with authority.** Biblical honor should promote righteous relationships rather than perpetual dependence.

“and thou mayest live long on the earth”

The second expression identifies the promise's connection with the length of earthly life: **“and thou mayest live long on the earth.”** Here the apostle reaches back to the fifth

commandment in Exodus 20:12, where the Lord declared, “Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.” Notice the important distinction between the two passages. Exodus addressed Israel within the covenant God had established with that nation, and the original promise specifically concerned the land the Lord had given them. Ephesians addresses believers in the present dispensation and states the promise in terms of living long **“on the earth.”** Paul has not accidentally forgotten the wording of Exodus. He is applying the commandment and its associated promise within his instructions to the Church. **The Christian who reads the Bible carefully should notice what the Holy Spirit repeated, what He emphasized, and how the wording relates to the audience being addressed. Rightly dividing the word requires more than merely knowing that Genesis appears before Ephesians. It requires understanding why God gave particular instructions to particular people.**

This distinction also prevents the serious doctrinal mistake of placing Christians under the Mosaic law as a means of obtaining salvation. Romans 6:14 declares, “for ye are not under the law, but under grace.” Galatians 2:16 establishes that no flesh is justified by the works of the law. Salvation rests upon the finished work of Jesus Christ and is received through faith in the gospel, not earned through successful obedience to the commandments. Nevertheless, Paul explicitly repeats the command to honor parents and associates it with blessing. The fact that Christians are not under the Mosaic law for justification does not mean that lying, stealing, murder, or parental dishonor suddenly becomes righteous. Ephesians 4:25 commands believers to put away lying, while Ephesians 4:28 forbids stealing. The same apostle who teaches justification by grace commands moral obedience throughout his epistles. **The man who puts Christians back under Moses to obtain salvation has misunderstood Calvary. The man who uses Calvary as permission to disobey the commandments Paul expressly gives Christians has misunderstood grace.** One confuses the basis of salvation with obedience, while the other attempts to separate salvation from every practical obligation.

The promise of long life must also be handled according to what Scripture actually establishes rather than turned into an infallible calculation of individual lifespan. Some faithful believers die young, and some openly wicked people live for many years. Ecclesiastes 7:15 acknowledges this reality, describing a just man who perishes in his righteousness and a wicked man who prolongs his life in wickedness. Stephen was a faithful witness who suffered death in Acts 7, while the apostle Paul experienced repeated dangers and eventually anticipated his departure in Second Timothy 4:6–8. Such passages prevent the interpreter from declaring that every early death must result from dishonoring parents. The promise establishes a genuine connection between parental honor and God's blessing, but it does not authorize anyone to determine the spiritual condition of the

deceased by examining the age recorded on a tombstone. **A preacher who tells grieving parents that their faithful child died young because somebody must have dishonored father and mother has gone considerably beyond the words Almighty God wrote. The Book promises blessing for obedience; it does not give religious busybodies permission to manufacture accusations against the grieving.** Long life is a blessing, but faithfulness to Christ remains the greater responsibility.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 6:3 establishes **the blessing associated with honoring father and mother, emphasizing both the quality and the length of earthly life**. The expression "that it may be well with thee" concerns the welfare associated with walking according to God's righteous instruction, while "thou mayest live long on the earth" connects obedience with the blessing of continued life. These promises should encourage children to receive correction, respect legitimate authority, and cultivate habits of righteousness. They must not, however, be transformed into guarantees of wealth, freedom from suffering, or a particular lifespan for every obedient individual. Scripture recognizes that faithful believers may suffer persecution and that righteous people sometimes die young.

The passage also demonstrates **the importance of distinguishing Israel's original covenant setting from the instruction Paul gives the Church under grace**. Exodus 20:12 connected parental honor with long life in the land God gave Israel, while Ephesians 6:3 applies the promise to Christians in terms of life upon the earth. This does not place believers under the Mosaic law for justification, nor does it transfer Israel's national land promises to the Church. Rather, it establishes that parental honor remains a moral responsibility under the present dispensation. Childhood obedience and lifelong parental honor must likewise be distinguished, and human authority must remain subject to Jesus Christ. **The central lesson is that honoring parents is connected with God's blessing upon earthly life, but neither the promise nor the commandment should be separated from its biblical context or used to excuse unrighteous authority.**

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. The Original Commandment And Its Promise

Exodus 20:12 — **"Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee."**

Deuteronomy 5:16 — **"that thy days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with thee"**

Ephesians 6:2 — **“Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;)”**

Ephesians 6:3 — **“That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.”**

2. Wisdom And The Blessings Of Obedience

Proverbs 3:1 — **“My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments:”**

Proverbs 3:2 — **“For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee.”**

Proverbs 10:27 — **“The fear of the LORD prolongeth days: but the years of the wicked shall be shortened.”**

Psalm 128:2 — **“happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee.”**

3. Children Must Receive Righteous Instruction

Ephesians 6:1 — **“Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.”**

Colossians 3:20 — **“Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.”**

Proverbs 1:8 — **“My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother:”**

Proverbs 13:1 — **“A wise son heareth his father's instruction: but a scorner heareth not rebuke.”**

4. Parents Are Accountable For Their Conduct

Ephesians 6:4 — **“And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath:”**

Colossians 3:21 — **“Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.”**

Proverbs 22:6 — **“Train up a child in the way he should go:”**

Deuteronomy 6:7 — **“And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children”**

5. Christians Are Saved By Grace, Not Law-Keeping

Romans 6:14 — **“for ye are not under the law, but under grace.”**

Galatians 2:16 — **“for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.”**

Ephesians 2:8 — **“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:”**

Ephesians 2:10 — **“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works”**

6. Long Life Does Not Mean Freedom From Trials

Ecclesiastes 7:15 — **“there is a just man that perisheth in his righteousness”**

Psalm 34:19 — **“Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all.”**

2 Timothy 3:12 — **“Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.”**

Philippians 1:21 — **“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”**

7. Parental Honor And Adult Responsibility

Genesis 2:24 — **“Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife:”**

Proverbs 23:22 — **“Hearken unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old.”**

1 Timothy 5:4 — **“let them learn first to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents:”**

Acts 5:29 — **“We ought to obey God rather than men.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 6:3 establishes a principle that ought to confront the rebellious spirit so frequently excused as independence: **God has connected parental honor with blessing upon earthly life.** The apostle does not describe obedience as a meaningless religious exercise intended merely to make life convenient for parents. He identifies consequences reaching into the child's future welfare. Young people who receive proper instruction and learn self-control, honesty, diligence, and respect are being prepared for responsibilities extending far beyond their childhood homes. A child may imagine parental correction exists only to interfere with personal enjoyment, but the Lord recognizes its legitimate purpose. **The youngster who considers every reasonable instruction an attack upon his freedom may discover that freedom without wisdom is an expensive education.** God's commandments deserve attention before the consequences arrive.

The words **“that it may be well with thee”** deserve consideration because a long life filled with needless misery is hardly the greatest achievement a person can pursue. A man may possess wealth, reach an advanced age, and enjoy public recognition while living with the consequences of destroyed relationships, dishonesty, and persistent rebellion. Conversely, a faithful Christian may encounter hardship while possessing peace, contentment, and a good conscience before God. The promise should therefore encourage the cultivation of righteous habits rather than a selfish pursuit of worldly prosperity. Parental honor can foster gratitude, wise judgment, and responsibility throughout life. **God did not promise that obedience would turn every Christian into a wealthy celebrity enjoying uninterrupted comfort. The Bible offers something better than religious advertising dressed up as a guarantee of earthly success.**

The promise concerning long life must also be protected against careless interpretations that turn it into an accusation against those who die young. Scripture records faithful servants who suffered persecution and premature death without suggesting that their suffering proved parental dishonor. Stephen did not die because he lacked respect for his family; he died while bearing witness to Jesus Christ. Likewise, a Christian child may experience illness or tragedy without being guilty of some hidden rebellion. The verse establishes a blessing associated with parental honor, but the timing of death remains under God's knowledge and authority. **A preacher should be extremely careful before turning a promise intended to encourage obedience into a weapon against grieving families.** The Bible does not authorize judgments it never makes.

Rightly dividing the Scriptures is equally important because Paul repeats a commandment originally given to Israel under the Mosaic covenant. Exodus connected parental honor with prolonged life in the land God gave that nation, while Ephesians applies the instruction to Christians under grace. The Church is not justified through keeping the Ten Commandments, and Israel's national promises should not be casually transferred into unrelated doctrines concerning the Church. Nevertheless, grace does not abolish moral responsibilities expressly repeated in the New Testament. A Christian remains responsible for honesty, faithfulness, parental honor, and godly conduct. **The man who teaches salvation through Moses has misunderstood the finished work of Christ, while the man who uses grace to excuse rebellion has misunderstood the Christian life.** The gospel establishes salvation apart from works and instructs the redeemed toward obedience.

The distinction between childhood obedience and adult honor also requires careful application. Children living under legitimate parental authority should receive proper instruction, while adults who establish independent households must assume their own

responsibilities. Parental honor continues, but childhood control does not necessarily continue with it. A married son may lovingly assist his parents without permitting them to govern his marriage, and an adult daughter may maintain respectful contact without surrendering her conscience to unreasonable demands. Parents must likewise recognize that their authority remains subordinate to Jesus Christ. **A mother who believes her grown child's independence constitutes rebellion may have confused honor with personal control. A father who demands obedience while disregarding God's commandments has forgotten that authority always carries accountability.** The Lord's design requires maturity from both generations.

Finally, Ephesians 6:3 should encourage Christian families to recognize the spiritual importance of ordinary household responsibilities. Parents must instruct their children faithfully, demonstrate righteous conduct, and correct wrongdoing without provoking unnecessary wrath. Children must receive legitimate instruction rather than treating every parental command as an invitation to argument. Adult sons and daughters should preserve appropriate honor and provide practical assistance when genuine needs arise. All these responsibilities remain beneath the authority of Jesus Christ, whose commandments must govern every member of the household. **The blessing of obedience should never become an excuse for parental tyranny, and the imperfections of parents should never become an excuse for childish rebellion.** The Holy Spirit has given a clear promise worthy of serious attention: **“That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.”**

Ephesians 6:4 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 6:4

“And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

“And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath”

Paul now turns the spotlight upon the very people who have been enjoying the commandments addressed to their children: **“And, ye fathers, provoke not your children**

to wrath." Notice the progression. Ephesians 6:1 commands children to obey their parents in the Lord. Verses 2–3 command parental honor and identify the promise associated with that responsibility. But before some father can close the Bible, congratulate himself, and announce that the family has received everything it needs to hear, the Holy Spirit addresses him directly. The word **"fathers"** identifies the primary responsibility of paternal leadership and instruction within the household. The apostle does not permit a man to demand obedience from his children while remaining indifferent to the manner in which he exercises his own authority. **A father who can quote Ephesians 6:1 with the enthusiasm of a military commander but develops sudden difficulty reading when he reaches verse 4 has not discovered a complicated biblical mystery. He has discovered a commandment that interferes with his pride.** God's instructions govern both generations.

The expression **"provoke not your children to wrath"** establishes a prohibition against parental conduct that unnecessarily produces bitterness, resentment, and angry rebellion. Colossians 3:21 declares, **"Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged."** The companion passage reveals that parental conduct can damage a child's spirit rather than properly instruct it. A father may accomplish this through unreasonable demands, constant criticism, humiliation, favoritism, unpredictable punishment, broken promises, or angry outbursts. Such behavior must not be confused with legitimate correction. Children sometimes become angry when confronted with their own wrongdoing, and a parent's responsibility does not disappear merely because discipline produces an unpleasant reaction. Nevertheless, the father must examine whether his methods are righteous or whether personal irritation has replaced deliberate instruction. **There is a difference between correcting rebellion and manufacturing it. The parent who continually humiliates a child and then complains that the child has become bitter ought to consider whether he has been watering the very weed he now wishes to uproot.**

The command becomes especially searching when applied to fathers who confuse authority with personal infallibility. A father may possess legitimate responsibility for making decisions, establishing household standards, and correcting misconduct without possessing perfect knowledge or judgment. James 1:19 commands believers to be **"swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:"** James 1:20 adds, **"For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God."** Those passages apply to fathers as surely as they apply to anyone else. A parent who loses his temper, exaggerates an offense, refuses to listen, or administers correction to satisfy personal anger is not demonstrating godly leadership. He is allowing his own flesh to govern the household. Genuine authority should be firm enough to maintain righteous standards and humble enough to acknowledge wrongdoing. **A father**

who demands that his children confess every fault while he refuses to admit a single mistake has established a peculiar household arrangement: everybody must repent except the man holding the rulebook. The Bible does not authorize that arrangement.

“but bring them up”

The second expression provides the positive command that follows the prohibition: **“but bring them up.”** Notice that Paul does not merely instruct fathers to stop provoking their children. He commands them to undertake the sustained responsibility of raising them. The words describe a process, not a single religious ceremony or an occasional moment of parental enthusiasm. Children require instruction throughout their development, including the formation of character, judgment, habits, and spiritual understanding. A father cannot satisfy the command by providing food and shelter while abandoning every other responsibility to his wife, the school, the church, or whatever influences happen to capture the child's attention. First Timothy 5:8 establishes the seriousness of household provision, but material provision is not the complete responsibility of biblical fatherhood. **A man may provide a comfortable house, expensive clothing, and every modern convenience while leaving his children spiritually starving. A furnished bedroom is not the same as a properly instructed soul, and paying the bills does not relieve a father of the responsibility to raise his children.**

The expression also establishes the importance of personal involvement rather than delegated indifference. A father may receive valuable assistance from his wife, teachers, pastors, and other responsible adults, but those influences do not erase his accountability. Children learn from the conduct they observe as well as the instructions they receive. A father who commands honesty while practicing deception has undermined his own lesson. One who demands respectful speech while continually insulting his family has supplied a contradictory example. Proverbs 20:11 declares, **“Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right.”** Children must therefore be taught that conduct matters, and parents should remember that their own conduct teaches as well. **The father who gives a magnificent lecture about Christian character and then spends the evening demonstrating the opposite has produced two lessons. Unfortunately, the child may remember the demonstration more clearly than the lecture.** Raising children requires consistency between instruction and example.

The words **“bring them up”** also imply that childhood is a season of preparation rather than permanent dependence. Children are not meant to remain under the same level of parental direction throughout their entire lives. A young child requires immediate supervision, while an older child should progressively learn judgment, responsibility, and self-control appropriate to growing maturity. First Corinthians 13:11 declares, **“When I was**

a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things." Although Paul's immediate subject concerns the contrast between partial and mature understanding, the statement accurately recognizes the transition from childhood to adulthood. Genesis 2:24 establishes the formation of a new household through marriage. **The purpose of raising a child is not to manufacture a permanently dependent adult who cannot make a decision without parental approval. It is to prepare a young person to exercise responsible judgment under Almighty God.** Successful parenting equips children for adulthood rather than preserving childhood indefinitely.

"in the nurture and admonition of the Lord"

The final expression explains the manner and authority governing the father's responsibility: **"in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."** The word **"nurture"** includes the training, cultivation, and disciplined care necessary for proper development. It is not simply a pleasant feeling of affection, nor is it limited to correction after wrongdoing occurs. The father must actively teach what is right, establish reasonable boundaries, encourage sound judgment, and provide consistent instruction. Proverbs 22:6 declares, **"Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it."** The proverb establishes the importance of purposeful training, not a mechanical guarantee that every child receiving godly instruction will exercise no independent moral responsibility. Hebrews 12:10 describes the Lord's chastening as directed toward spiritual profit and holiness. That comparison supports the purpose of corrective discipline without authorizing violence or cruelty. **Godly nurture is not neglect disguised as kindness, and it is not angry punishment disguised as righteousness. Its purpose is to cultivate wisdom and holiness rather than produce fear, humiliation, or helpless dependence.**

The word **"admonition"** emphasizes warning, correction, instruction, and the serious communication of divine truth. A child must be taught not only what conduct is expected but why particular actions are righteous or sinful according to Scripture. Second Timothy 3:15 reminds Timothy that from childhood he had known the holy Scriptures, which were able to make him wise unto salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. Verse 16 identifies Scripture as profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness. Those functions should characterize biblical parental instruction. A child needs to understand the holiness of God, the reality of sin, the gospel of Jesus Christ, and the responsibilities that accompany obedience to His word. **A father who teaches his children how to succeed financially but never explains how a sinner receives eternal life has addressed an important earthly matter while neglecting an infinitely greater**

one. The world can teach a child how to make money. It cannot replace the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Most importantly, the phrase concludes with **“of the Lord.”** That expression identifies the authority and character governing the entire process of child-rearing. The father is not commanded to raise children according to personal vanity, family pride, changing cultural expectations, or whatever disciplinary practices he remembers from his own childhood. He must measure his instruction against the word of God. Deuteronomy 6:6–7 establishes the importance of diligent instruction in God's commandments within Israel's covenant setting, while Ephesians 6:4 directly addresses Christian fathers under grace. The moral principle of teaching divine truth remains, although Israel's national covenant must not be confused with the Church's standing in Christ. Nor can a father regenerate his children through strict discipline, force a genuine profession of faith, or manufacture salvation through religious pressure. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes salvation by grace through faith, not through works. **A father is responsible for teaching his children the gospel, but he cannot believe it for them. He may establish rules for his household, but he cannot install the new birth through parental authority. Only Jesus Christ saves sinners, and the father's responsibility is to faithfully direct his children toward Him.**

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 6:4 establishes **the father's responsibility to exercise parental authority without provoking his children to wrath, while actively raising them according to the Lord's instruction**. The verse contains both a prohibition and a positive command. Fathers must reject unreasonable anger, humiliation, destructive criticism, and other conduct that needlessly discourages their children. Nevertheless, avoiding provocation does not eliminate the need for firm, consistent correction. Nurture requires sustained care and training, while admonition requires truthful instruction, warning, and correction. Both must be governed by Scripture rather than parental temper or personal ambition.

The passage also distinguishes **parental responsibility from the saving work of Jesus Christ**. Fathers are commanded to teach their children the truth, but they cannot regenerate them through discipline or guarantee their salvation through religious upbringing. Children remain responsible for their own response to the gospel. Likewise, parental authority is not unlimited, and childhood training should prepare children for responsible adulthood. **The central lesson is that a godly father must do more than demand obedience. He must demonstrate righteousness, provide faithful instruction, exercise wise correction, and lead his children toward the Lord without becoming the very source of bitterness Scripture commands him to avoid.**

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. Fathers Must Not Provoke Their Children

Ephesians 6:4 — **“And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath:”**

Colossians 3:21 — **“Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.”**

James 1:20 — **“For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.”**

Proverbs 15:1 — **“A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.”**

2. Children Must Obey And Honor Parents

Ephesians 6:1 — **“Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.”**

Ephesians 6:2 — **“Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;)”**

Colossians 3:20 — **“Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.”**

Proverbs 1:8 — **“My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother:”**

3. Nurture Requires Purposeful Training

Proverbs 22:6 — **“Train up a child in the way he should go:”**

Proverbs 29:17 — **“Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul.”**

Proverbs 20:11 — **“Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right.”**

Hebrews 12:11 — **“nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.”**

4. Admonition Must Be Grounded In Scripture

2 Timothy 3:15 — **“And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures”**

2 Timothy 3:16 — **“profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:”**

Colossians 3:16 — **“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom;”**

Psalm 119:11 — **“Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.”**

5. Godly Parenting Requires A Godly Example

James 1:19 — **“let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:”**

Ephesians 4:32 — **“And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another”**

1 Corinthians 13:4 — **“Charity suffereth long, and is kind;”**

Philippians 2:4 — **“Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.”**

6. Religious Upbringing Cannot Replace Salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — **“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:”**

Ephesians 2:10 — **“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works”**

John 3:7 — **“Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.”**

1 Corinthians 3:6 — **“I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.”**

7. Parenting Must Prepare Children For Adulthood

1 Corinthians 13:11 — **“but when I became a man, I put away childish things.”**

Genesis 2:24 — **“Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife:”**

1 Timothy 5:4 — **“let them learn first to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents:”**

Ephesians 6:2 — **“Honour thy father and mother;”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 6:4 confronts a serious problem in Christian households: fathers who demand obedience while refusing to examine their own conduct. The Bible commands children to obey their parents, but the very next instruction places fathers beneath the authority of Almighty God. A man cannot demand biblical submission while treating his household as a private kingdom where his temper determines righteousness. His responsibility includes providing instruction, exercising correction, and demonstrating the conduct he expects his children to practice. **A father who demands respect while continually behaving**

disrespectfully has established a lesson his children may remember better than his sermons. The Lord requires authority governed by righteousness rather than pride.

The warning against provoking children to wrath must not be misunderstood as permission for rebellion. Children sometimes resent correction because they prefer their own desires, and parents must not abandon necessary instruction whenever a youngster becomes angry. Nevertheless, the father should examine whether his correction is consistent, appropriate, and genuinely directed toward the child's welfare. Constant humiliation, threatening behavior, uncontrolled anger, and unreasonable expectations can create discouragement instead of spiritual maturity. Colossians 3:21 specifically warns fathers against provoking their children to anger lest they become discouraged. **There is a difference between disciplining a child and using a child as the convenient target of an adult's frustrations.** Scripture authorizes correction, not cruelty.

The positive command to bring children up in the Lord's nurture requires deliberate involvement throughout childhood. A father cannot simply provide financial support and assume that his responsibilities have been completed. Children require instruction concerning honesty, responsibility, self-control, relationships, work, and the consequences of their decisions. They also need opportunities to ask questions and develop judgment rather than merely memorize rules they do not understand. Such instruction should change appropriately as children mature and assume greater responsibilities. **The objective of Christian parenting is not to produce an adult who remains frightened of making an independent decision. It is to prepare someone capable of exercising wisdom before Almighty God.** Faithful nurture prepares for maturity.

The admonition of the Lord places Scripture at the center of Christian upbringing. Fathers should teach their children what the Bible declares concerning sin, salvation, holiness, and responsible living. Yet religious instruction must never become a substitute for the gospel itself. A child may memorize verses, attend church, participate in religious activities, and demonstrate respectable conduct without having personally trusted Jesus Christ for salvation. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes salvation by grace through faith rather than works. Parents must therefore distinguish teaching biblical behavior from producing the new birth, which belongs to God's saving work. **You can teach a child to behave like a Christian without making him one.** Only Christ saves.

This command also exposes parental hypocrisy that can undermine years of faithful instruction. A father may condemn dishonesty while manipulating facts, demand humility while refusing correction, or teach kindness while treating his family harshly. Children notice these contradictions even when they lack the maturity to explain them properly. The

answer is not to pretend that parents must possess sinless perfection before exercising authority. It is to acknowledge wrongdoing honestly, seek appropriate forgiveness, and demonstrate a willingness to obey Scripture personally. **A father who admits a genuine fault has not surrendered biblical authority. He has demonstrated that the authority of God's word applies to him as surely as it applies to his children.** Repentance teaches by example.

Finally, Ephesians 6:4 should encourage Christian fathers to consider the lasting influence of their ordinary conduct. Children will eventually grow older, establish responsibilities of their own, and make decisions their parents cannot control. The years available for instruction should therefore be used wisely rather than wasted through neglect or constant conflict. A father should teach biblical truth, demonstrate affection, establish appropriate boundaries, and correct wrongdoing without making anger the defining characteristic of his household. His ultimate responsibility is faithfulness to the Lord, not controlling every future decision his children make. **The measure of biblical fatherhood is not how loudly a man can demand obedience, but how faithfully he can lead under the authority of Jesus Christ.** Paul commands: **"And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."**

Ephesians 6:5 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 6:5

"Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ;"

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh"

Paul now moves from the Christian household into another relationship involving earthly authority and responsibility. Having addressed husbands, wives, children, and fathers, he turns toward **"Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh."** The first matter requiring attention is the actual relationship being addressed. These servants included people living under the master-servant system of the ancient Roman world, including those who were enslaved. They were not simply modern employees who had voluntarily accepted positions and could resign whenever they pleased. First Timothy

6:1 speaks of servants **“under the yoke,”** while First Corinthians 7:21 recognizes the possibility of obtaining freedom. The historical distinction must not be erased merely because the passage contains principles relevant to modern employment. **A man who turns an ancient bondservant into a modern office employee without explaining the difference may produce an interesting sermon about workplace manners, but he has not accurately identified the original relationship.** Rightly dividing the word requires understanding whom God is addressing before applying the instruction to somebody else.

The command to obey must also be understood within the circumstances in which these believers lived. The Roman world contained severe inequalities of status, wealth, power, and personal freedom. Some servants possessed substantial responsibilities, while others endured harsh conditions and exploitation. Paul addresses Christians within that existing society and instructs them concerning conduct consistent with their profession of faith. He does not declare that involuntary servitude originated as God's ideal arrangement for mankind or that owning another person establishes unlimited moral authority. Indeed, First Timothy 1:10 places **“menstealers”** among those acting contrary to sound doctrine. First Corinthians 7:21 tells a servant that if he may be made free, he should use that opportunity. The Scriptures can direct a believer concerning conduct under an existing arrangement without granting divine approval to every feature of that arrangement. **A command addressed to a man living under oppression is not automatically a certificate of righteousness for the person exercising power over him.** The interpreter must read the instructions given to masters as carefully as those given to servants.

The phrase **“according to the flesh”** is especially important because it limits the authority under discussion to an earthly relationship. The master may possess authority concerning the servant's bodily labor and ordinary responsibilities, but he does not become the ruler of the believer's soul. Jesus Christ remains the ultimate Lord of every redeemed person. Ephesians 6:9 establishes that earthly masters themselves have a Master in heaven. Acts 5:29 declares, **“We ought to obey God rather than men.”** Human authority must therefore remain subject to divine authority. A Christian cannot use this passage to justify participation in wickedness merely because someone in power has issued an instruction. By reasonable application, Christians working under lawful employment arrangements should be honest, diligent, and respectful, but they are not required to obey commands involving fraud, abuse, or other wrongdoing. **An earthly authority may assign a task, but he cannot rewrite the commandments of Almighty God. A man's position may give him authority over another person's work; it does not give him ownership of that person's conscience.**

“with fear and trembling”

The second expression describes the seriousness with which the servant should approach his responsibilities: **"with fear and trembling."** These words must not be interpreted carelessly as a command for Christians to live in perpetual terror of those possessing earthly authority. Paul uses similar language elsewhere concerning solemnity, humility, and the recognition of serious responsibility. First Corinthians 2:3 records his acknowledgment, **"And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling."** Philippians 2:12 commands believers to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling, emphasizing serious responsibility in their Christian walk rather than purchasing salvation through anxiety. In Ephesians 6:5, the expression calls for conscientious conduct rather than insolence, laziness, or deliberate contempt. **The Christian who imagines that salvation gives him permission to become dishonest, argumentative, and irresponsible has confused spiritual liberty with the right to behave like a fool.** Grace should produce integrity rather than arrogance.

The instruction also exposes the hypocrisy of people who behave properly only when they believe consequences are approaching. Some individuals demonstrate remarkable diligence whenever an authority figure enters the room and an equally remarkable disappearance of effort when that person leaves. Others obey instructions outwardly while privately cultivating deceit, resentment, and deliberate negligence. Paul addresses the servant's attitude because the believer's conduct must reflect a greater responsibility than merely avoiding punishment. The following verse condemns eyeservice and menpleasing. Nevertheless, the language must not be twisted into permission for threatening or intimidating people. Ephesians 6:9 expressly commands masters to forbear threatening. **If somebody uses "fear and trembling" to demand that another person remain frightened while ignoring the prohibition against threats, he has managed to preach half a paragraph against the other fellow and skip the commandment addressed to himself.** Scripture does not authorize that selective reading.

There is also a necessary distinction between legitimate respect for authority and the fear of man that produces sinful compromise. Proverbs 29:25 declares, **"The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe."** A Christian should carry out lawful responsibilities seriously without allowing the desire to escape human displeasure to become greater than obedience to God. The servant addressed by Paul could be placed in difficult circumstances, but even there his conduct was to be governed by the Lord. The modern believer may likewise face pressure from an employer, supervisor, institution, or influential person to violate his conscience. In such circumstances, respect does not require dishonesty, nor does faithfulness require surrendering biblical convictions. **The Christian should be conscientious enough that nobody can reasonably accuse him of habitual negligence, and faithful enough that**

nobody can purchase his obedience to wickedness. Respect for human authority must operate beneath reverence for Jesus Christ.

“in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ”

The final expression reveals the spiritual center of Paul's instruction: **“in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ.”** The word **“singleness”** emphasizes sincerity, honesty of purpose, and an undivided intention. Paul is confronting the kind of outward obedience that disguises an entirely different inward attitude. A servant may appear diligent while deliberately wasting time, concealing dishonesty, or working only when observation makes deception difficult. The apostle demands something better from the Christian. Ephesians 6:6 continues, **“Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart;”** Notice that the believer's heart becomes central to the instruction. The Christian should not require constant surveillance before deciding whether honesty is worthwhile. **A man who works faithfully only when the supervisor is watching does not possess integrity; he possesses an impressive ability to detect when supervision is taking place.** Biblical sincerity continues when the audience disappears.

The words **“as unto Christ”** elevate the believer's responsibilities by identifying the Lord Jesus Christ as the ultimate object of faithful service. Paul is not teaching that an earthly master becomes Christ or acquires His divine authority. He is commanding redeemed servants to conduct themselves with recognition that their actions occur before the Lord. Colossians 3:23 declares, **“And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;”** That principle extends naturally to the Christian's employment and other legitimate responsibilities today. A believer should not imagine that his service to Christ begins only when he enters a church building or opens a Bible. Honesty in ordinary labor, faithfulness to legitimate commitments, and refusal to deceive others are all matters of Christian conduct. **The man who sings about serving Jesus on Sunday while stealing time, falsifying records, and deliberately neglecting his work on Monday has misunderstood the location of Christian obedience.** The Lord's authority does not end at the church doorway.

Finally, the expression establishes a distinction between working to obtain human approval and serving faithfully because one belongs to Christ. An earthly master might be unjust, unreasonable, ungrateful, or incapable of recognizing honest effort. The believer's responsibility to act righteously does not depend entirely upon that person's character. Nevertheless, serving Christ does not require remaining indefinitely within avoidable exploitation, accepting unlawful demands, or refusing legitimate opportunities for freedom and better circumstances. First Corinthians 7:21 recognizes freedom as something a

servant may properly obtain. Ephesians 6:8 explains that the Lord recognizes faithful service whether a person is bond or free. The Christian should therefore exercise wisdom concerning earthly circumstances while preserving integrity before God. **A bad master does not make dishonesty righteous, and a faithful servant does not make a bad master righteous. Each must answer to the Lord for his own conduct.** The believer's highest loyalty belongs to Jesus Christ, who sees what human authority may overlook and judges without respect of persons.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 6:5 establishes **the Christian servant's responsibility to demonstrate obedience, seriousness, and sincerity within an earthly relationship of authority**. The immediate historical setting concerns masters and servants, including enslaved people, rather than the voluntary employment arrangements familiar today. The phrase “according to the flesh” identifies the earthly limits of the master's authority, while “with fear and trembling” emphasizes conscientious responsibility. The expression “in singleness of your heart” requires genuine integrity rather than outward compliance designed merely to escape punishment. These principles have legitimate applications to modern work, but the historical distinction must not be erased.

The verse also establishes **Jesus Christ as the believer's supreme Master**, whose authority governs every lesser obligation. Service performed unto Christ must agree with His righteousness and cannot be used to justify exploitation, manstealing, dishonesty, or participation in wickedness. Ephesians 6:9 holds earthly masters accountable to the same heavenly Lord, while verse 8 establishes that God recognizes faithful conduct whether a person is bond or free. **The central lesson is that Christian integrity must not depend upon human supervision or favorable circumstances. The believer should fulfill legitimate responsibilities faithfully because he ultimately serves Jesus Christ, whose authority is greater than every earthly position.**

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. The Historical Master And Servant Relationship

Ephesians 6:5 — **“Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh”**

1 Timothy 6:1 — **“Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour”**

1 Corinthians 7:21 — **“but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather.”**

Titus 2:9 — **“Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters”**

2. Earthly Authority Remains Beneath God's Authority

Ephesians 6:5 — **“according to the flesh”**

Ephesians 6:9 — **“knowing that your Master also is in heaven”**

Acts 5:29 — **“We ought to obey God rather than men.”**

1 Corinthians 7:23 — **“Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men.”**

3. Fear And Trembling Require Seriousness

1 Corinthians 2:3 — **“And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling.”**

2 Corinthians 7:15 — **“with fear and trembling ye received him.”**

Philippians 2:12 — **“work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.”**

Proverbs 29:25 — **“The fear of man bringeth a snare:”**

4. Singleness Of Heart Rejects Hypocrisy

Ephesians 6:6 — **“Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ”**

Colossians 3:22 — **“not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God:”**

2 Corinthians 1:12 — **“in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom”**

2 Corinthians 8:21 — **“Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.”**

5. Ordinary Labor Can Be Service Unto Christ

Ephesians 6:7 — **“With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men:”**

Colossians 3:23 — **“And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;”**

Romans 12:11 — **“Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;”**

1 Corinthians 10:31 — **“Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.”**

6. Masters And Those In Authority Face Judgment

Ephesians 6:9 — **“And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening:”**

Colossians 4:1 — **“Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal;”**

James 5:4 — **“the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth:”**

1 Timothy 1:10 — **“for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons”**

7. Spiritual Equality And The Opportunity For Freedom

Galatians 3:28 — **“there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.”**

Philemon 1:16 — **“Not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved”**

1 Corinthians 12:13 — **“whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free;”**

Ephesians 6:8 — **“whether he be bond or free.”**

8. Salvation By Grace And Faithfulness In Service

Ephesians 2:8 — **“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:”**

Galatians 2:16 — **“for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.”**

Ephesians 2:10 — **“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works”**

Ephesians 6:6 — **“doing the will of God from the heart;”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 6:5 confronts the Christian with a responsibility that reaches far beyond religious appearances: the obligation to act faithfully when placed under legitimate earthly authority. Paul originally addresses servants living under masters, including people who did not possess the freedom enjoyed by modern employees. That historical reality must be recognized rather than quietly replaced with a comfortable illustration about ordinary employment. Nevertheless, the spiritual principles concerning integrity, seriousness, and service unto Christ remain important. A Christian should not become dishonest merely because his circumstances are unpleasant or because someone in authority behaves foolishly. **The believer's responsibility to do right does not disappear whenever another person does wrong.** The Lord measures conduct according to His righteousness rather than the convenience of the situation.

The words **“according to the flesh”** establish a distinction that must never be overlooked. Earthly masters possessed authority within an existing human relationship, but they did not

become the spiritual owners of those who belonged to Jesus Christ. The same principle limits every earthly authority today. An employer may establish legitimate responsibilities, a supervisor may direct assigned work, and institutions may maintain appropriate standards. None possesses permission to command sin or demand unquestioning loyalty contrary to Scripture. Acts 5:29 establishes the superiority of obedience to God over obedience to men. **The Christian who treats his employer as an infallible authority has merely exchanged one form of religious confusion for another.** A paycheck does not purchase a man's conscience.

The instruction concerning **"fear and trembling"** should produce seriousness rather than servile terror. Paul expects conscientious conduct, not deliberate negligence disguised beneath the language of Christian liberty. A believer should demonstrate honesty, diligence, and respect even when a human supervisor is absent. But that instruction must be read alongside Ephesians 6:9, where earthly masters are commanded to forbear threatening. The Bible does not authorize intimidation merely because it commands responsible obedience. An employer who manipulates workers through fear while quoting verses about submission has overlooked the judgment awaiting those who misuse authority. **The Lord who sees the servant's dishonesty also sees the master's injustice.** No earthly position places a sinner beyond divine accountability.

The phrase **"in singleness of your heart"** confronts hypocrisy that can flourish beneath an impressive religious profession. Some Christians appear extraordinarily devoted to righteousness during public worship while practicing dishonesty throughout the ordinary workweek. They may falsify information, waste time deliberately, conceal mistakes, or perform duties only when someone is watching. Such conduct contradicts the sincere service Paul commands. Colossians 3:23 directs believers to work heartily as unto the Lord rather than merely unto men. Genuine integrity does not require applause, constant supervision, or an audience. **A Christian who steals from his employer throughout the week and then boasts about serving God on Sunday has confused church attendance with obedience.** The Lord sees both.

This passage also exposes the serious error of using Scripture to defend exploitation or human ownership. Paul addresses believers living within an existing master-servant system, but his instructions do not declare every practice of that system righteous. First Timothy 1:10 condemns menstealers, Colossians 4:1 demands justice and equity from masters, and First Corinthians 7:21 recognizes the legitimate pursuit of freedom. Philemon 16 speaks of receiving a servant as a beloved brother. These passages must be considered together rather than selecting only the instructions convenient for those possessing power. **A man who quotes obedience to servants while ignoring justice for masters is not**

rightly dividing the Bible. He is selecting the commandments that benefit himself. God's authority governs both parties.

Finally, Ephesians 6:5 should encourage Christians to recognize that ordinary responsibilities provide opportunities for faithful service to Jesus Christ. A believer need not occupy a pulpit, travel as a missionary, or possess an impressive ministry title before his conduct matters to the Lord. Honest labor, conscientious service, truthful communication, and responsible fulfillment of legitimate duties all belong to the Christian walk. Yet none of these works purchases salvation, for eternal life remains the gift of God through faith in Jesus Christ. The redeemed serve because they belong to the Saviour, not because they are attempting to earn redemption. **The Christian's Master is in heaven, and His authority does not disappear when the believer reports for earthly duty.** The command remains: **"Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ;"**

Ephesians 6:6 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 6:6

"Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart;"

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers"

Paul begins this verse by exposing a form of hypocrisy that has survived every century, every political system, and every arrangement of human labor: **"Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers."** Notice that the apostle is continuing the instructions given to servants in Ephesians 6:5. The original audience included Christians living under earthly masters, some of whom were enslaved within the Roman world. These were not merely modern employees working under voluntary employment contracts. Some possessed little control over their circumstances, yet Paul addressed them as believers responsible for their conduct before Jesus Christ. The word **"eyeservice"** describes work performed principally because somebody is watching. It is outward diligence arranged for the benefit of an observer rather than genuine faithfulness arising from the heart. **The eyeservant works like a champion when the master enters the room and becomes remarkably**

exhausted the moment the master leaves. His diligence is not governed by duty but by the location of another man's eyeballs. Paul condemns this divided conduct because Christian obedience must be more than a performance designed to escape unpleasant consequences.

The expression **"as menpleasers"** exposes the motive behind eyeservice. The hypocritical servant is primarily concerned with managing another person's opinion rather than acting honestly. He performs the necessary duties when recognition is possible, conceals negligence when inspection is unlikely, and measures his conduct by whatever will satisfy the person possessing authority. Colossians 3:22 repeats the warning against eyeservice and menpleasing while commanding singleness of heart and the fear of God. Galatians 1:10 establishes the incompatibility of making human approval the supreme object of service to Christ. Certainly, ordinary courtesy and legitimate efforts to satisfy an employer or supervisor are not sinful. A Christian should fulfill reasonable expectations and seek to perform assigned responsibilities properly. The problem begins when appearing faithful becomes more important than actually being faithful. **There is a considerable difference between doing good work that pleases another person and doing only enough work to manufacture the appearance of goodness. The first demonstrates integrity; the second merely demonstrates that hypocrisy has acquired practical experience.**

The application reaches directly into the Christian's ordinary responsibilities today, although the historical distinction between ancient bondage and modern employment must remain intact. A believer may falsify records, conceal mistakes, deliberately waste time, exaggerate accomplishments, or claim credit for another person's labor while maintaining an impressive religious reputation. Another may work diligently whenever the supervisor appears and spend the remainder of the day avoiding the duties for which he receives payment. Still another may bring the same hypocrisy into church ministry, becoming extraordinarily energetic whenever the pastor is watching while neglecting responsibilities performed without public recognition. Second Corinthians 8:21 declares, **"Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men."** The Christian's conduct should withstand honest examination rather than depend upon carefully managing appearances. **If a man's character changes every time the person supervising him leaves the room, the problem is not insufficient supervision. The problem is that his integrity apparently requires an audience before it begins working.**

"but as the servants of Christ"

The second expression establishes the magnificent contrast: **"but as the servants of Christ."** Paul has already acknowledged that these believers possess earthly masters

according to the flesh. Now he identifies the greater relationship governing their conduct. A Christian servant may be subject to human authority in an earthly arrangement, but he belongs spiritually to Jesus Christ. That distinction is essential. An earthly master does not become the Saviour, acquire divine authority, or possess ownership of the believer's conscience merely because he exercises control over the servant's labor. First Corinthians 6:20 declares, **“For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.”** Redemption establishes the Christian's ultimate allegiance. Ephesians 6:9 confirms that masters themselves possess a Master in heaven. **The man who thinks his earthly position makes him the final authority has forgotten that his own name appears on the list of people accountable to Almighty God. The servant has a Master in heaven, and so does the fellow giving the orders.** Neither earthly privilege nor earthly weakness changes that truth.

This relationship transforms the spiritual significance of ordinary responsibilities. The believer does not begin serving Jesus Christ only when he enters a church building, opens a Bible, or participates in organized ministry. The apostle connects service unto Christ with the faithful performance of responsibilities within everyday life. Ephesians 6:7 continues, **“With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men:”** Colossians 3:23 likewise declares, **“And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;”** Honest work, conscientious effort, truthful communication, and responsible conduct are therefore matters of Christian obedience. This does not mean that every occupation is automatically righteous or that a believer may honor Christ by performing wicked assignments. The work itself must remain consistent with God's commandments. **A man cannot become an obedient servant of Christ by committing fraud enthusiastically, even if he performs the fraud with remarkable punctuality. Serving Jesus does not sanctify the wrongdoing of an earthly master. It requires faithfulness within the boundaries of righteousness.**

The expression also corrects the religious mistake of measuring Christian service exclusively by public visibility. A faithful believer performing necessary but unnoticed duties may serve the Lord more sincerely than someone occupying a prominent position while seeking personal admiration. First Corinthians 4:5 warns against premature judgment and directs attention toward the Lord, who will reveal the counsels of hearts. The Saviour knows motives that human observers cannot accurately determine. This should encourage the believer who faithfully completes responsibilities without receiving praise, while warning the religious performer who mistakes applause for divine approval. Yet service unto Christ must never become an excuse for an earthly authority to demand unlimited labor, deny rightful compensation, or silence legitimate complaints. Colossians 4:1 commands masters to give their servants what is just and equal. **A supervisor who**

insists that workers should serve Jesus rather than expect fair treatment has discovered a convenient doctrine for somebody else's sacrifice. He ought to read the commandments addressed to masters before congratulating himself on his knowledge of servanthood.

“doing the will of God from the heart”

The final expression reaches beneath external behavior and exposes the spiritual center of the entire command: **“doing the will of God from the heart.”** Notice that Paul does not merely demand successful task completion. He addresses the motive from which the conduct proceeds. A man may complete an assignment outwardly while inwardly cultivating deceit, resentment, or a determination to avoid responsibility whenever possible. Another may perform difficult work honestly because he recognizes that his conduct belongs beneath the authority of Jesus Christ. The same visible action may therefore arise from different intentions. First Samuel 16:7 declares, **“for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.”** The Lord examines what human supervisors cannot see. **A time clock may record when a man arrived, a ledger may record what he produced, and a supervisor may record whether the assignment was completed. None of those instruments can measure whether the man acted honestly before Almighty God.** The outward record matters, but the heart remains accountable.

The expression **“the will of God”** must be understood within the context rather than converted into a discussion of mysterious signs, private revelations, or extraordinary personal callings. Paul has already identified the conduct required: faithful, sincere obedience within legitimate responsibilities, performed as service unto Christ rather than for eyeservice. The Christian does not need a supernatural announcement to discover whether dishonesty is permitted when nobody is watching. Ephesians 4:25 commands believers to put away lying, while Ephesians 4:28 instructs the former thief to steal no more and labor honestly. First Thessalonians 4:3 expressly identifies sanctification as God's will. The Scriptures reveal clear responsibilities that believers sometimes neglect while searching for more exciting instructions. **A man may spend months praying to discover God's will concerning his future while refusing to do God's revealed will concerning today's responsibilities. It is remarkable how fascinating the unknown will of God becomes to someone determined to ignore the parts already written in the Book.** Obedience begins with revealed truth.

Finally, the phrase **“from the heart”** distinguishes genuine Christian discipleship from religious performance without making sincere service the means of obtaining eternal life. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes salvation by grace through faith, apart from works. Ephesians

2:10 then declares that believers are created in Christ Jesus unto good works. That is the proper order. The Christian does not work sincerely to purchase redemption; he should work sincerely because he belongs to the Redeemer. Nor does sincerity alone make an evil action righteous. A person may sincerely believe that dishonest conduct is justified, but the word of God remains the standard by which conduct must be examined. The heart must be directed by revealed truth rather than merely by the strength of personal feeling. **God does not save sinners because they perform enough honest labor, and He does not excuse dishonesty because somebody claims to feel sincere about it. The redeemed are instructed to do what is right, for the right reason, before the Lord who already purchased their salvation.**

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 6:6 establishes **the difference between outward religious performance and genuine faithfulness before Jesus Christ**. The apostle condemns eyeservice and menpleasing because they substitute the appearance of diligence for sincere obedience. The historical instruction concerns Christian servants living under earthly masters, including those in bondage, but the principles of honesty, conscientious labor, and integrity possess legitimate applications throughout Christian life. The believer is not commanded merely to satisfy human observers. He is instructed to recognize that his conduct takes place before the Lord who sees both outward actions and inward motives.

The verse also reveals **the proper relationship between human responsibility, Christ's supreme authority, and salvation by grace**. Earthly authority never becomes divine authority, and sincere service does not justify wicked commands or excuse exploitation. Masters remain accountable to the Lord, just as servants do. The Christian's works cannot purchase salvation, yet salvation establishes responsibilities that should be fulfilled faithfully. **The central lesson is that genuine Christian service does not begin when somebody starts watching. It proceeds from a heart governed by God's word and continues because the believer serves Jesus Christ rather than merely seeking the approval of men.**

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. Eyeservice And Outward Hypocrisy

Ephesians 6:6 — **“Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers;”**

Colossians 3:22 — **“not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God:”**

Proverbs 15:3 — **“The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.”**

Hebrews 4:13 — **“Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight:”**

2. God Examines The Heart

1 Samuel 16:7 — **“for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.”**

Jeremiah 17:10 — **“I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins”**

Ephesians 6:6 — **“doing the will of God from the heart;”**

2 Corinthians 1:12 — **“in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom”**

3. Christ Is The Believer's True Master

Ephesians 6:5 — **“in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ;”**

Ephesians 6:6 — **“but as the servants of Christ”**

Ephesians 6:7 — **“With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men:”**

Colossians 3:23 — **“And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;”**

4. The Danger Of Pleasing Men

Galatians 1:10 — **“for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.”**

1 Thessalonians 2:4 — **“not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.”**

John 12:43 — **“For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.”**

1 Corinthians 4:5 — **“and then shall every man have praise of God.”**

5. God's Revealed Will Governs Conduct

Ephesians 2:10 — **“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works”**

Ephesians 4:25 — **“Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour:”**

Ephesians 4:28 — **“Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour”**

1 Thessalonians 4:3 — **“For this is the will of God, even your sanctification”**

6. Those In Authority Answer To God

Ephesians 6:9 — **“And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening:”**

Colossians 4:1 — **“Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal;”**

James 5:4 — **“the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth:”**

Philemon 1:16 — **“Not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved”**

7. Salvation By Grace And Faithful Service

Ephesians 2:8 — **“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:”**

Ephesians 2:10 — **“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works”**

1 Corinthians 15:58 — **“always abounding in the work of the Lord”**

Ephesians 6:8 — **“Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 6:6 confronts a form of dishonesty that has become so familiar that many people hardly recognize it as wrongdoing. Paul condemns eyeservice because the Christian's conduct must not depend upon whether another human being is watching. A man may appear conscientious under supervision while deliberately neglecting his responsibilities whenever the opportunity arises. He may maintain an excellent reputation among religious acquaintances while practicing dishonesty throughout the ordinary workweek. Yet the Lord sees what human observers overlook. **The Christian who possesses one standard of conduct for public inspection and another for private convenience has not developed superior wisdom. He has developed a respectable disguise for hypocrisy.** Genuine integrity continues when applause and supervision disappear.

The expression **“as menpleasers”** exposes the dangerous desire to make human approval the controlling object of one's conduct. A believer should demonstrate courtesy, respect legitimate authority, and fulfill responsibilities honestly. Nevertheless, satisfying another person's expectations must never become more important than obeying Jesus Christ. Galatians 1:10 establishes that serving Christ cannot be subordinated to pleasing men.

The Christian who lies to preserve his reputation, conceals wrongdoing to avoid embarrassment, or sacrifices biblical convictions to obtain approval has allowed human opinion to govern his conscience. **A man who requires everybody's approval before he can obey God has placed his spiritual life beneath a committee that never received authority from heaven.** The Lord's word remains the standard.

The instruction concerning service to Christ also establishes the spiritual significance of ordinary responsibilities. The believer does not serve God only while preaching, teaching, witnessing, or participating in organized church activities. Honest labor, faithful commitments, truthful communication, and conscientious conduct belong to the Christian walk. Colossians 3:23 commands service performed heartily as unto the Lord rather than merely unto men. This does not mean every occupation or instruction automatically becomes righteous because a Christian performs it. God's commandments still determine whether the work itself is acceptable. **A man cannot glorify Jesus Christ by committing fraud diligently, any more than he can sanctify a lie by delivering it with a religious smile.** Faithfulness requires righteous conduct.

The original setting must also remain clear because Paul addresses servants living under earthly masters, including those who lacked personal freedom. These instructions cannot honestly be reduced to the experience of a modern employee who may ordinarily seek different employment. Neither may they be used to justify slavery, exploitation, threatening, or the denial of legitimate compensation. Ephesians 6:9 places masters beneath the authority of their heavenly Master, while Colossians 4:1 requires justice and equity. The Lord examines both the servant's sincerity and the master's conduct. **The employer who quotes every commandment concerning obedience while conveniently overlooking every commandment concerning justice has not discovered sound doctrine. He has discovered selective reading.** God holds both accountable.

The words **“doing the will of God from the heart”** require Christians to examine their motives as well as their actions. A person may complete an assignment while privately cultivating deceit or resentment, but the Lord knows the difference between faithful obedience and religious performance. Sincerity, however, cannot replace the authority of Scripture. A man may sincerely believe his conduct is acceptable while practicing something God has plainly condemned. The heart must therefore submit to revealed truth rather than merely follow personal feelings. Ephesians 4 commands honesty, and First Thessalonians 4:3 identifies sanctification as God's will. **The Christian who ignores God's written commandments while searching for mysterious personal instructions has overlooked the revelation already lying open before him.** God's will requires obedience.

Finally, Ephesians 6:6 should remind every redeemed believer that faithful service follows salvation rather than purchasing it. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes redemption by grace through faith, while verse 10 identifies good works as the intended walk of those created in Christ Jesus. The Christian should therefore reject both works-based salvation and the careless attitude that treats obedience as unnecessary. He should fulfill legitimate responsibilities faithfully, refuse dishonesty, receive appropriate correction, and remember that Jesus Christ examines the heart. Human observers may fail to recognize sincere service, but their ignorance does not make faithfulness meaningless. **The greatest test of Christian integrity is not how impressive a man appears when everybody is watching. It is whether he remains faithful when nobody is watching but God.** Paul commands: **"Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart;"**

Ephesians 6:7 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 6:7

"With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men:"

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"With good will doing service"

Paul continues his instructions concerning Christian servants with a statement that reaches beyond outward obedience and exposes the attitude with which service is performed: **"With good will doing service."** Notice that the Holy Spirit does not merely command a particular action. He addresses the disposition of the person performing it. Ephesians 6:5 commands servants to obey their earthly masters with sincerity, while verse 6 condemns eyeservice and menpleasing, demanding obedience arising from the heart. Now verse 7 adds good will. The original audience included believers living under the master-servant arrangements of the Roman world, including those held in bondage. These were not simply modern employees who could resign their positions whenever a better opportunity became available. Nevertheless, Paul instructs them concerning their conduct as Christians within those circumstances. **The Lord is concerned not only with what a man does but with the spirit in which he does it. A fellow may perform the correct duty with an attitude so rotten that everybody around him wishes he had remained silent.** Outward compliance and genuine good will are not necessarily the same thing.

The expression **“good will”** describes a willingness to render service sincerely rather than through calculated hostility, deception, or a determination to do the least possible good. It must not be confused with pretending that unjust treatment is righteous or that someone suffering under oppression must feel affection for the system causing his suffering. The Lord does not command a believer to call evil good. Instead, the apostle directs the Christian's conduct toward faithfulness despite circumstances that may be unfavorable. First Peter 2:18–20 addresses servants who endure unjust treatment, distinguishing suffering for wrongdoing from suffering wrongfully. That passage acknowledges the reality of injustice rather than pretending every person exercising authority possesses good judgment. **The Christian is not required to congratulate a wicked master on his wickedness, but he is responsible for refusing to make wickedness the standard of his own conduct. Another man's sin does not grant the believer permission to abandon righteousness.** Good will concerns the Christian's faithful intention, not the moral approval of every earthly arrangement.

The practical application reaches into ordinary employment, household responsibilities, Christian ministry, and other legitimate obligations. A believer may complete an assignment while making everybody around him miserable through constant complaining, deliberate obstruction, or an attitude of personal resentment. Another may perform the same work responsibly, recognizing that honest service benefits others and reflects his profession of faith. Romans 12:11 declares, **“Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;”** Such conduct requires diligence without turning a person into an unquestioning instrument of somebody else's selfish ambition. A Christian employee should fulfill agreed responsibilities faithfully, while an employer should provide just compensation and reasonable treatment. **The man who complains about every duty, avoids every responsibility, and then announces that he is a tremendous servant of Christ ought to examine whether his Christianity extends beyond his vocabulary. Good will is demonstrated through conduct, not merely through a cheerful testimony delivered after somebody else has finished the work.**

“as to the Lord”

The second expression identifies the highest authority and ultimate purpose governing Christian service: **“as to the Lord.”** Here is the center of Paul's argument. The servant may be performing work under an earthly master, but the redeemed believer belongs to Jesus Christ. First Corinthians 6:20 declares, **“For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.”** Redemption establishes a relationship greater than any earthly arrangement of authority. The master might control the servant's assigned labor, but he could not purchase divine ownership of the believer's

soul or assume the position belonging exclusively to Jesus Christ. Ephesians 6:9 confirms that masters themselves have a Master in heaven. **The earthly master may occupy the superior position in society, but he does not occupy a throne above Almighty God. The man giving orders and the man receiving orders will both answer to the Lord who judges without respect of persons.** Human standing cannot cancel divine accountability.

The expression also destroys the mistaken division between religious activities and ordinary Christian responsibilities. Some believers imagine that serving the Lord begins only when they enter a church building, participate in organized ministry, or engage in a specifically religious occupation. Yet Paul connects service unto Christ with responsibilities carried out under ordinary earthly conditions. Colossians 3:23 declares, **“And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;”** The Christian who works honestly, fulfills legitimate commitments, assists others faithfully, and refuses dishonest gain demonstrates obedience beyond the church service. This does not mean every occupation becomes righteous merely because someone claims to perform it for Jesus. A Christian cannot honor the Lord through fraud, theft, exploitation, or deliberate corruption. **A man cannot turn dishonesty into ministry by declaring that he commits it for the glory of God. The Lord accepts faithful service governed by His word, not wickedness decorated with religious enthusiasm.**

There is also tremendous encouragement in the expression for believers whose faithful efforts receive little earthly recognition. A servant in the ancient world might perform difficult work without praise or meaningful personal advancement. A Christian today may likewise fulfill necessary responsibilities without receiving public appreciation. Yet the Lord's knowledge does not depend upon the attention of human supervisors. Ephesians 6:8 continues, **“Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.”** The apostle identifies a divine recognition extending beyond earthly rank. This is not a promise that every faithful worker will become wealthy or obtain an important position. It concerns the Lord's judgment and reward according to His righteousness. **An earthly master may overlook faithful service, but Almighty God does not suffer from poor eyesight. The believer's duty is not rendered meaningless because the people benefiting from it fail to applaud.** The Lord remains worthy of obedience when earthly appreciation is absent.

“and not to men”

The final expression completes the contrast: **“and not to men.”** Paul is not teaching that human beings should receive no assistance or that earthly responsibilities may be ignored. The servant is plainly instructed to perform service within an existing earthly relationship. The contrast concerns the ultimate object and governing motive of that service. The

believer should not make human approval the supreme authority directing his conduct. Galatians 1:10 declares, **“for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.”** The apostle is confronting the temptation to substitute public reputation for obedience to God. A man may work hard only when praise is available, speak honestly only when deception is likely to be discovered, or display religious devotion only when influential people are watching. **The Christian who changes his standards whenever the audience changes has not learned to serve the Lord. He has learned to perform for whichever man happens to be holding the applause.** Christ demands faithfulness deeper than public appearances.

The words also protect the believer from allowing human authority to become a substitute for the authority of Scripture. An earthly master might demand something unjust, and a modern employer may likewise issue instructions involving deception, unlawful conduct, or the mistreatment of another person. The Christian must distinguish lawful responsibilities from commands that contradict God's word. Acts 5:29 establishes the principle, **“We ought to obey God rather than men.”** First Corinthians 7:21 also recognizes the legitimacy of obtaining freedom when the opportunity exists. These passages prevent Ephesians 6:7 from being turned into a doctrine of unlimited submission to earthly power. At the same time, the existence of unjust authority does not excuse a believer from ordinary honesty or proper judgment. **The Christian should not become a thief because his employer is dishonest, nor should he become a liar because his supervisor encourages deception. Two people committing wickedness do not produce one righteous transaction.** The Lord's commandments remain authoritative regardless of the conduct of earthly superiors.

Finally, the phrase requires the instructions to masters in Ephesians 6:9 to remain firmly connected to the discussion. Paul commands them to treat their servants properly, forbearing threatening, while remembering that their Master is in heaven. Colossians 4:1 declares, **“Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.”** Therefore, the passage cannot honestly be used as a religious instrument for demanding endless labor, denying just treatment, or defending exploitation. The servant must answer for his conduct, and the master must answer for his. By application, a Christian employer should not preach about faithful work while practicing fraud, withholding rightful wages, or treating employees as personal property. **The man who quotes “not to men” whenever his workers request fair treatment has overlooked the astonishing fact that God addressed employers too. The Lord has commandments for the person receiving wages and commandments for the person signing the checks.** Both stand beneath the authority of Jesus Christ.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 6:7 establishes **the Christian's responsibility to perform legitimate service with good will, sincerity, and a conscious desire to please Jesus Christ**. The apostle's original instruction concerns servants living under earthly masters, including those in bondage. His words do not erase the difficulty of their circumstances or establish that every earthly arrangement of authority is righteous. Instead, Paul teaches that the redeemed must govern their conduct according to their relationship with Christ rather than merely the character of those possessing earthly power. Good will describes a faithful disposition, while service unto the Lord establishes the greater purpose behind the believer's actions. The contrast with serving men condemns the elevation of human approval above obedience to God.

The passage also distinguishes **faithful Christian conduct from salvation by works, earthly authority from divine authority, and human recognition from the Lord's reward**. The believer does not obtain eternal life through diligent labor, nor does service unto Christ require participation in wrongdoing or submission to exploitation. Earthly masters remain accountable for just treatment, while servants remain responsible for honest conduct. These principles legitimately inform modern employment without confusing voluntary labor with ancient bondage. **The central lesson is that the Christian should perform righteous service with good will because Jesus Christ is his ultimate Master. Human approval may disappear, earthly circumstances may change, and faithful work may go unnoticed, but the Lord remains worthy of wholehearted obedience.**

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. Good Will Must Govern Christian Service

Ephesians 6:7 — **“With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men:”**

Romans 12:11 — **“Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;”**

1 Peter 4:9 — **“Use hospitality one to another without grudging.”**

Philemon 1:14 — **“that thy benefit should not be as it were of necessity, but willingly.”**

2. The Lord Is The Ultimate Master

Ephesians 6:6 — **“but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart;”**

Colossians 3:23 — **“And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;”**

Colossians 3:24 — **“for ye serve the Lord Christ.”**

1 Corinthians 10:31 — **“whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.”**

3. Human Approval Cannot Replace Faithfulness

Ephesians 6:6 — **“Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers;”**

Colossians 3:22 — **“not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God:”**

Galatians 1:10 — **“for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.”**

1 Thessalonians 2:4 — **“not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.”**

4. The Historical Distinction Between Bond And Free

1 Timothy 6:1 — **“Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour”**

1 Corinthians 7:21 — **“but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather.”**

Ephesians 6:8 — **“whether he be bond or free.”**

Galatians 3:28 — **“there is neither bond nor free”**

5. Masters Must Answer For Their Conduct

Ephesians 6:9 — **“And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening:”**

Colossians 4:1 — **“Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal;”**

James 5:4 — **“the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth:”**

1 Timothy 1:10 — **“for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons”**

6. The Lord Recognizes Faithful Service

Ephesians 6:8 — **“Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord”**

Colossians 3:24 — **“Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance:”**

Colossians 3:25 — **“and there is no respect of persons.”**

1 Corinthians 15:58 — **“forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”**

7. Salvation And Christian Service Must Be Distinguished

Ephesians 2:8 — **“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:”**

Ephesians 2:10 — **“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works”**

Titus 3:5 — **“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us”**

2 Corinthians 5:10 — **“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ;”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 6:7 establishes a principle that confronts the believer's conduct wherever legitimate responsibilities must be fulfilled. Paul originally addresses Christian servants living under earthly masters, including people who lacked the freedom associated with modern employment. Their difficult circumstances did not remove the Lord's authority over their conduct, nor did their service make every action of an earthly master righteous. The apostle instructed them to serve with good will because their highest allegiance belonged to Jesus Christ. That same principle should govern Christians today without confusing ordinary employment with involuntary servitude. **The believer's faithfulness must rest upon the commandments of God rather than the changing character of the person exercising earthly authority.** Another man's wickedness is never a sufficient reason to abandon personal righteousness.

The words **“with good will”** should cause every Christian to examine the spirit accompanying his ordinary responsibilities. A man may perform technically acceptable work while deliberately making the experience miserable for everyone around him. He may complain constantly, conceal mistakes, obstruct reasonable requests, or treat every assignment as an insult against his personal importance. Such conduct hardly demonstrates the willing service Paul commands. A Christian should instead pursue honesty, diligence, appropriate cooperation, and genuine concern for those affected by his work. **The person who believes he deserves extraordinary recognition merely for doing what he already agreed to do has confused ordinary responsibility with exceptional heroism.** Good will should remain visible when applause is absent.

The expression **“as to the Lord”** also exposes the false division between religious activities and everyday Christian conduct. Serving Jesus Christ is not limited to preaching, teaching, evangelism, or participation in organized church programs. The mechanic who performs an honest repair, the caregiver who treats a vulnerable person with dignity, and the worker who

refuses to falsify a record are confronting questions of righteousness. Their conduct should agree with the Scriptures because they belong to Christ. Nevertheless, religious language cannot transform dishonest work into acceptable service. **A man who steals from his employer throughout the week and then announces that everything he does is for Jesus has developed a remarkable theology of convenience.** The Lord requires obedience rather than impressive religious explanations.

The contrast **“and not to men”** should also encourage believers whose faithful service receives little earthly recognition. Human supervisors may overlook honest effort, customers may fail to express gratitude, and necessary responsibilities may attract no public attention whatsoever. That does not make faithful conduct meaningless before Almighty God. Ephesians 6:8 establishes the Lord's recognition of good service, whether performed by one who is bond or free. Yet the promise should not be turned into a guarantee of financial prosperity, career advancement, or uninterrupted earthly comfort. **The Lord's reward is not measured by how quickly a man receives a promotion or how enthusiastically his employer praises him.** Faithfulness remains worthwhile because Christ Himself is worthy of service.

This verse must never become a religious instrument for exploiting those who possess less earthly power. The same passage that instructs servants to demonstrate good will commands masters to forbear threatening and remember their heavenly Master. Colossians 4:1 requires justice and equity, while James 5:4 condemns the fraudulent withholding of laborers' wages. Those commandments expose the hypocrisy of anyone who demands faithful service while deliberately mistreating the people performing it. A Christian employer should recognize his own accountability rather than imagine that possessing financial authority makes him superior before God. **The man signing the paychecks is not exempt from righteousness because he owns the company. Almighty God has commandments for the office upstairs as surely as He has commandments for the workers downstairs.** Neither position provides immunity from judgment.

Finally, Ephesians 6:7 should direct every redeemed believer toward service arising from gratitude rather than an attempt to purchase salvation. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes eternal life by grace through faith, while Ephesians 2:10 explains that believers are created in Christ Jesus unto good works. That order must remain unchanged. Faithful labor does not redeem the sinner, and salvation by grace does not excuse the believer from honest responsibilities. The Christian should therefore work diligently, reject deceit, treat others properly, and remember the Lord's authority whenever earthly circumstances become difficult. **Do not make human applause the fuel that keeps your obedience running. The man who works only when somebody watches has made an idol of the audience, but**

the believer who serves faithfully before Christ understands that the most important Witness never leaves the room. The apostle's command remains: **“With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men:”**

Ephesians 6:8 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 6:8

“Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.”

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

“Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth”

Paul begins this verse with a declaration that should encourage the faithful Christian and disturb the comfortable hypocrite: **“Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth.”** Notice the opening word **“Knowing.”** The apostle is not presenting a religious possibility or suggesting that Almighty God might occasionally notice faithful conduct if heaven happens to be paying attention. He establishes something the believer is expected to know. The preceding verses command servants to obey with sincerity, reject eyeservice, refuse menpleasing, and perform their duties as unto Christ. Now Paul explains why such conduct matters even when earthly recognition is absent. God knows what His people do, including responsibilities performed without public attention. **A man may receive no applause from his employer, no recognition from his neighbors, and no appreciation from the people benefiting from his labor, but the Lord has never misplaced the record of faithful service.** Heaven does not require a human supervisor to submit a performance review before Almighty God knows what occurred.

The expression **“whatsoever good thing”** also deserves careful examination because the apostle identifies the character of the work receiving divine recognition. He does not promise a reward for whatsoever profitable thing, whatsoever popular thing, or whatsoever impressive thing a person accomplishes. He says **“good thing.”** The distinction is essential. A person may demonstrate extraordinary diligence in a dishonest occupation, perform a wicked assignment with enthusiasm, or accomplish something that receives public praise while violating God's commandments. None of those actions becomes righteous merely because it required effort. Ephesians 4:28 commands the former thief to

stop stealing and labor honestly. Second Corinthians 8:21 speaks of providing honest things before God and men. **God is not handing out heavenly rewards for successful wickedness. A man cannot steal with exceptional efficiency, lie with professional excellence, and then expect the Lord to congratulate him for his remarkable work ethic.** The quality of the deed must be measured by the righteousness of Scripture.

The words **“any man”** broaden the principle beyond a particular earthly rank. Paul is writing within a passage addressing servants, including believers held in bondage under ancient masters, but the promise is not limited to people possessing a particular social position. It reaches any person doing what is good before God. Romans 12:11 commands believers to be **“Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;”** The Christian's opportunities for faithful conduct are not restricted to preaching, teaching, missionary travel, or public church ministry. Ordinary responsibilities can provide genuine opportunities for obedience. Nevertheless, faithful labor must not be confused with the purchase of salvation. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes eternal life by grace through faith, apart from works. **The sinner is saved by the finished work of Christ, not by earning enough points through honest labor. But once redeemed, he should understand that ordinary faithfulness is not ordinary in the sight of the God he serves.**

“the same shall he receive of the Lord”

The second expression establishes the certainty of divine recompense: **“the same shall he receive of the Lord.”** Notice the words **“shall”** and **“of the Lord.”** Paul directs attention away from the immediate earthly authority and toward the Saviour who knows the believer's conduct. The servant's master might be unjust, ungrateful, inattentive, or unwilling to recognize honest effort. That failure would not erase the Lord's knowledge of what had been done. Colossians 3:24 declares, **“Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.”** The language concerns divine recognition and reward, not a guarantee that every faithful deed will produce immediate earthly prosperity. **The fellow who performs a righteous service only when somebody is prepared to reward him has not yet understood service unto Christ. The Lord's accounting is not controlled by the generosity of the person receiving the benefit.** Human appreciation may fail, but divine judgment is not dependent upon human approval.

This promise must also be distinguished from the doctrine of salvation by grace. The believer's eternal life is not a paycheck earned through successful obedience. Ephesians 2:8 declares, **“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:”** Yet believers will give account of their service before Jesus Christ. Second Corinthians 5:10 declares, **“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ;**

that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." First Corinthians 3:14 describes reward for work that abides, while verse 15 distinguishes the loss of reward from the salvation of the individual. These passages must not be mixed into a works-based gospel. **The judgment seat of Christ concerns the accountability of the redeemed, not another opportunity for a saved sinner to purchase the salvation Christ already bought with His blood.** A reward for faithful service and the free gift of eternal life are not identical doctrines.

The promise also confronts the dangerous habit of measuring spiritual success by earthly recognition. A believer may perform difficult responsibilities for years without gaining wealth, influence, or public appreciation. Another may occupy an impressive position while accomplishing little that is genuinely pleasing to the Lord. First Corinthians 4:5 reminds believers that the Lord will bring hidden things to light and make manifest the counsels of hearts. First Corinthians 3:13 establishes that every man's work shall be made manifest and tested according to its character. Therefore, divine recompense cannot be measured merely by visible accomplishments or social importance. **A large audience does not automatically produce a large reward, and an unnoticed servant does not automatically receive a small one. Almighty God evaluates what human beings cannot see, and His judgment will not require correction by a committee of religious celebrities.** The Christian should labor faithfully without confusing public reputation with the Lord's approval.

"whether he be bond or free"

The final expression completes the promise by removing earthly rank as a condition of divine recognition: **"whether he be bond or free."** This distinction must be understood in its original setting. Paul is addressing believers living within the master-servant arrangements of the ancient world, including people who were enslaved. A bondservant lacked freedoms that a free person possessed, and those differences could profoundly affect earthly opportunities and circumstances. The apostle does not pretend that the two conditions were identical. Instead, he declares that God recognizes good service regardless of that earthly distinction. First Corinthians 7:21 acknowledges the condition of bondage and expressly recognizes the opportunity to become free. The verse therefore cannot honestly be reduced to a modern discussion about an employee deciding whether to change jobs. **The bondservant and the free man did not possess equal power in earthly society, but neither man's social standing gave him greater authority over the judgment of Almighty God.** Earthly rank does not establish heavenly superiority.

This declaration must also be read alongside Ephesians 6:9, where Paul addresses masters and commands them to forbear threatening, remembering that their Master is in heaven

and that there is no respect of persons with Him. Colossians 4:1 requires masters to give their servants what is just and equal. Those commands expose the error of using this passage to justify exploitation, human trafficking, or the denial of rightful treatment. First Timothy 1:10 specifically condemns menstealers among those acting contrary to sound doctrine. The Bible can instruct a believer living within an unjust earthly arrangement without declaring that the injustice itself is righteous. **The master who reads every command addressed to the servant and conveniently skips the commands addressed to himself has not discovered a divine endorsement of his authority. He has simply demonstrated how easily a selfish man can turn selective Bible reading into a defense of his own interests.** Both parties remain accountable to the same Lord.

Finally, the distinction between bond and free reveals the dignity of believers who possess very different earthly circumstances. Galatians 3:28 declares, **"for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."** First Corinthians 12:13 identifies believing Jews and Gentiles, bond and free, as members of one spiritual body through the Holy Spirit. The believer's standing in Christ therefore cannot be determined by wealth, education, social privilege, or occupational status. This spiritual equality does not mean that all earthly circumstances become identical or that differences in responsibilities disappear. It means that those distinctions cannot purchase a superior position in Christ or secure a greater measure of divine fairness. **The Lord does not require a wealthy man's permission before recognizing a poor man's faithfulness. He does not consult earthly titles before rewarding righteousness, and He does not confuse the position a person occupies with the condition of that person's heart.** Before Almighty God, bond and free alike must answer to the same righteous standard.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 6:8 establishes **the certainty that Almighty God recognizes and recompenses faithful service regardless of earthly position or human appreciation**. The apostle continues his instructions concerning servants who must reject eyeservice, perform their responsibilities sincerely, and serve as unto Christ. The promise concerns whatsoever good thing a person does, emphasizing conduct that agrees with God's righteousness rather than merely profitable or impressive activity. The Lord's recognition is not dependent upon human supervisors, financial success, public reputation, or social rank. His judgment reaches beyond outward appearances to the genuine character of a believer's service.

The verse also establishes **the distinction between salvation by grace and reward for faithful Christian conduct**. Eternal life is received through faith in Jesus Christ, while the redeemed remain accountable for their works before Him. The promise applies without favoritism to bond and free, demonstrating that earthly inequality cannot establish

superiority before God. It does not justify slavery or exploitation, and the following verse expressly holds masters accountable to their heavenly Master. **The central lesson is that the Lord neither overlooks faithful service nor favors those possessing earthly authority. What is genuinely good in His sight will receive His righteous recognition, whether the believer performs it before an audience or in circumstances where no human being expresses appreciation.**

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. God Recognizes Faithful Service

Ephesians 6:8 — **"Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord"**

Colossians 3:24 — **"Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ."**

Hebrews 6:10 — **"For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love"**

1 Corinthians 15:58 — **"forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."**

2. Good Works Must Come From A Faithful Heart

Ephesians 6:6 — **"Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart;"**

Ephesians 6:7 — **"With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men:"**

Colossians 3:23 — **"And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;"**

Ephesians 4:28 — **"Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour"**

3. The Judgment Seat And Christian Rewards

2 Corinthians 5:10 — **"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ;"**

1 Corinthians 3:13 — **"Every man's work shall be made manifest:"**

1 Corinthians 3:14 — **"If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward."**

1 Corinthians 3:15 — **"but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire."**

4. Salvation Is A Gift, Not Earned Wages

Ephesians 2:8 — **“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:”**

Ephesians 2:9 — **“Not of works, lest any man should boast.”**

Ephesians 2:10 — **“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works”**

Titus 3:5 — **“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us”**

5. Bond And Free Are One In Christ

Ephesians 6:8 — **“whether he be bond or free.”**

Galatians 3:28 — **“there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.”**

1 Corinthians 12:13 — **“whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free;”**

Philemon 1:16 — **“Not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved”**

6. Earthly Masters Are Accountable To God

Ephesians 6:9 — **“knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him.”**

Colossians 4:1 — **“Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal;”**

James 5:4 — **“the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth:”**

Romans 2:11 — **“For there is no respect of persons with God.”**

7. Human Authority Cannot Replace God's Authority

1 Corinthians 7:21 — **“but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather.”**

Acts 5:29 — **“We ought to obey God rather than men.”**

1 Timothy 1:10 — **“for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons”**

1 Corinthians 7:23 — **“Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 6:8 establishes a promise that ought to encourage every Christian who has faithfully labored without receiving the recognition he expected. The apostle declares that

whatsoever good thing a man does, he shall receive of the Lord, whether bond or free. That statement places the believer's service before a Judge whose knowledge is never limited by human supervision. Earthly people may overlook sacrifice, forget kindness, or take advantage of another person's faithfulness. Nevertheless, the Lord remains aware of what has been done. **A man may work his entire life without receiving a trophy, a promotion, or a public expression of gratitude, but heaven does not operate according to the popularity contests of earthly society.** The Lord knows His own.

The expression **"whatsoever good thing"** also reminds Christians that divine reward concerns the character of their conduct rather than merely the amount of activity they perform. A person may be extremely busy while accomplishing little that agrees with Scripture. Another may achieve financial success through dishonesty and persuade himself that prosperity proves God's approval. Yet the word of God does not identify profitable wickedness as righteous service. Ephesians 4:28 commands honest labor, while Ephesians 6:6 requires sincerity from the heart. **The Lord is not impressed by the efficiency of a liar or the productivity of a thief.** The Christian must first determine whether his conduct is right before congratulating himself upon how successfully he performs it.

This promise must never be confused with obtaining eternal life through personal works. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes salvation by grace through faith, apart from human merit. The judgment seat of Christ concerns the believer's accountability and service rather than another attempt to purchase redemption. First Corinthians 3 distinguishes reward for faithful work from the salvation of a person who suffers loss. That distinction protects both the security of the redeemed and the seriousness of their responsibilities. **The sinner does not work his way into heaven, and the Christian does not receive permission to waste his life because heaven was purchased by Christ.** Grace establishes salvation, while faithful service remains worthy of the Lord's recognition.

The phrase **"whether he be bond or free"** also exposes the foolishness of measuring a person's spiritual importance by earthly circumstances. The original audience included believers held in bondage, whose opportunities and freedoms differed greatly from those possessing higher positions. Yet Paul declares that the Lord recognizes good service without favoritism toward worldly rank. The same chapter requires masters to remember their own accountability before God. No person possesses authority to use Scripture as an excuse for exploitation, threats, or the denial of justice. **The man who thinks his wealth or position gives him superior standing before Almighty God has forgotten that earthly titles do not appear on the scales of divine righteousness.** Bond and free alike answer to Christ.

The promise also provides a necessary correction for Christians who become discouraged when faithful work produces little visible appreciation. A parent may perform years of difficult responsibilities without public recognition, while a caregiver may faithfully assist someone unable to offer meaningful gratitude. A laborer may perform honest work while receiving less praise than those who contribute far less. The Lord's knowledge should encourage perseverance without requiring believers to tolerate unlawful treatment or surrender appropriate opportunities for improvement. Galatians 6:9 commands believers not to become weary in well doing. **Human ingratitude cannot erase divine recognition, but divine recognition does not require Christians to pretend that injustice is acceptable.** Faithfulness and righteous judgment belong together.

Finally, Ephesians 6:8 should cause every redeemed believer to examine the motives governing ordinary Christian service. Does he work faithfully because he belongs to Jesus Christ, or only because another person is watching? Does he perform good deeds for the Lord's glory, or because he expects public admiration? Does he recognize the dignity of believers who possess fewer earthly advantages, or does he measure people according to wealth and influence? The answers reveal much about his understanding of service unto Christ. **Do not make the applause of men the measure of obedience to God. The Lord sees the work, knows the motive, and recognizes what is truly good.** His promise remains: **"Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free."**

Ephesians 6:9 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 6:9

"And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him."

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"And, ye masters, do the same things unto them"

Paul now turns his attention toward the men who possess earthly authority over the servants addressed in the preceding verses: **"And, ye masters, do the same things unto them."** Notice that the apostle does not finish his instructions after commanding servants to obey their masters. Ephesians 6:5–8 requires servants to demonstrate obedience,

sincerity, good will, and faithful service unto Jesus Christ. But before somebody in authority can close the Bible and congratulate himself upon discovering four verses that appear to strengthen his position, the Holy Spirit turns directly toward him. The same God who commands faithfulness from the servant demands righteousness from the master. The master is not exempt from honesty, sincerity, and good will simply because he happens to occupy the position of authority. **A man who can quote every commandment addressed to those beneath him while remaining unable to locate the commandments addressed to himself has not mastered the Scriptures. He has merely discovered how to use half a passage to defend his own interests.** The word of God does not recognize earthly authority as permission for personal wickedness.

The expression **"do the same things unto them"** must be understood within the original relationship Paul is addressing. These were masters and servants within the ancient Roman world, including people held in bondage. The passage cannot be reduced to an ordinary modern employer-employee contract without explaining that historical distinction. Nor does Paul command masters to abandon their particular responsibilities and perform precisely the same daily tasks assigned to servants. He requires the governing principles of sincerity, righteousness, and good will to operate in both directions. Colossians 4:1 declares, **"Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven."** There is the standard governing the man who possesses power. **The servant must not deceive the master, and the master must not exploit the servant. The servant must act faithfully, and the master must act justly. God has not established one standard of righteousness for the man receiving instructions and another for the man issuing them.**

"forbearing threatening"

The second expression establishes an unmistakable limitation upon the exercise of earthly power: **"forbearing threatening."** Notice that Paul does not merely advise masters to become slightly more agreeable whenever circumstances permit. He commands them to refrain from threatening. In the immediate setting, masters possessed considerable practical power over people who could not necessarily escape their authority. Such arrangements created opportunities for intimidation, coercion, and mistreatment. Paul addresses that conduct directly. The master must not use threats as his preferred instrument of control. This does not eliminate legitimate responsibility, appropriate correction, or the necessity of establishing orderly expectations. It does prohibit the assumption that possessing authority gives a man permission to govern through fear. **The fellow who cannot obtain faithful service without constantly threatening somebody has revealed a serious weakness in his leadership. His position may be impressive,**

but his methods demonstrate that he has mistaken intimidation for righteousness. Authority is no substitute for character.

The principle has obvious applications to modern business owners, supervisors, ministry leaders, and others who exercise legitimate authority, although the original passage concerns the ancient master-servant relationship. A Christian employer should not habitually intimidate workers, threaten unlawful consequences, withhold rightful compensation, or use personal humiliation to obtain compliance. James 5:4 condemns the fraudulent withholding of wages, while Proverbs 15:1 declares, **"A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger."** A leader may need to confront dishonesty, correct poor performance, or make difficult decisions. Those responsibilities should be exercised truthfully and without cruelty. Likewise, workers remain accountable for their own misconduct and cannot label every reasonable correction oppression. **There is a difference between saying that an employee must fulfill legitimate responsibilities and threatening to destroy him because he refused an unrighteous demand. The first concerns accountability; the second concerns the misuse of power.** Scripture requires justice rather than intimidation disguised as firmness.

"knowing that your Master also is in heaven"

The third expression supplies the reason earthly masters must exercise authority righteously: **"knowing that your Master also is in heaven."** The man accustomed to giving instructions is suddenly reminded that he also stands beneath authority. He may possess servants, property, wealth, influence, and the ability to direct substantial earthly affairs, but none of those privileges makes him supreme. The apostle places the earthly master beneath the authority of the heavenly Master. Jesus Christ is not merely the Lord of those who happen to occupy subordinate positions. He is Lord over the people who possess authority as well. Romans 14:12 declares, **"So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God."** That statement should remove considerable arrogance from anyone exercising responsibility over others. **The man sitting in the largest office may be accustomed to hearing everybody answer to him, but there is an appointment before Almighty God for which his secretary cannot provide an excuse and his money cannot purchase an exemption.** The final authority does not occupy an earthly office.

The words **"your Master also"** further expose the folly of treating human beings as personal possessions beyond God's concern. An earthly master might possess legal authority under the society in which he lived, but he could not acquire the divine right to determine another person's eternal standing or cancel the commandments of God. First Corinthians 7:21 recognizes the legitimacy of obtaining freedom when possible, while First Timothy 1:10 identifies menstealers among those acting contrary to sound doctrine. The

apostle's instructions concerning conduct within an existing social arrangement do not establish every feature of that arrangement as righteous. Modern Christians likewise must distinguish legitimate authority from the unlawful domination of another person. **The Lord never issued a certificate declaring that anyone who possesses wealth, property, employees, or institutional authority may therefore treat other people as merchandise. Earthly authority is temporary, accountable, and subordinate to Jesus Christ.** The master in the world must remember the Master in heaven.

“neither is there respect of persons with him”

The final expression brings the entire matter before the impartial judgment of Almighty God: **“neither is there respect of persons with him.”** Notice how completely this statement destroys the assumption that earthly rank establishes spiritual superiority. The master may occupy a privileged position in society, while the servant may possess little freedom or recognition. Yet God does not evaluate righteousness according to those distinctions. Romans 2:11 declares, **“For there is no respect of persons with God.”** Colossians 3:25 repeats the principle while addressing the consequences of wrongdoing. The Lord recognizes good and evil according to His own righteousness rather than the wealth, influence, nationality, or social standing of the individual. **A man may impress earthly judges with his reputation, persuade powerful acquaintances to overlook his conduct, or surround himself with people who are afraid to disagree. None of those advantages will persuade Almighty God to amend His commandments.** Heaven does not operate according to the privileges of an earthly social club.

The declaration also establishes the spiritual dignity of believers who occupy different earthly positions. Galatians 3:28 declares concerning those who belong to Christ, **“for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.”** First Corinthians 12:13 identifies believing Jews and Gentiles, bond and free, as members of one spiritual body through the Holy Spirit. This union does not mean every person possesses identical earthly responsibilities or that distinctions in authority disappear from ordinary life. It means that social position cannot purchase superior standing before God. Salvation remains available through faith in Jesus Christ, not through wealth or rank. The same impartial Lord recognizes faithful service from those who lack public recognition and condemns wrongdoing from those possessing power. **The man who thinks his earthly title places him closer to God's approval has misunderstood the gospel. A wealthy sinner still needs the blood of Christ, and a poor believer does not need a wealthy man's permission before the Lord will recognize his faithfulness.** The heavenly Master judges without favoritism.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 6:9 establishes **the accountability of earthly masters before Jesus Christ and the obligation to exercise authority with righteousness, fairness, and good will**. Paul has instructed servants concerning faithful obedience, but he immediately makes clear that masters must also fulfill responsibilities before God. The command to do the same things unto servants requires reciprocal sincerity and righteous treatment, while the prohibition against threatening condemns intimidation as an instrument of personal domination. The original setting concerns ancient masters and servants, including those held in bondage. Its moral principles apply to modern leadership and employment without making those relationships historically identical.

The verse also establishes **the supreme authority and impartial judgment of the heavenly Master**. No position of earthly power removes a person from divine accountability. Wealth, social standing, religious titles, and personal influence cannot purchase righteousness or excuse exploitation. The distinction between salvation and practical conduct must remain clear: eternal life is received through faith in Jesus Christ, while the redeemed remain accountable for their treatment of others. **The central lesson is that every earthly master has a Master in heaven. The man giving instructions answers to the same righteous Lord as the man receiving them, and God neither overlooks faithful service nor excuses wickedness because somebody possesses authority.**

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. Masters Must Exercise Righteous Authority

Ephesians 6:9 — **“And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening:”**

Colossians 4:1 — **“Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal;”**

Ephesians 6:7 — **“With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men:”**

Proverbs 22:16 — **“He that oppresseth the poor to increase his riches, and he that giveth to the rich, shall surely come to want.”**

2. Threatening And Cruelty Are Forbidden

Ephesians 6:9 — **“forbearing threatening:”**

Proverbs 15:1 — **“A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.”**

James 1:20 — **“For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.”**

1 Peter 5:3 — **“Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.”**

3. Every Earthly Master Has A Heavenly Master

Ephesians 6:9 — **“knowing that your Master also is in heaven;”**

Colossians 4:1 — **“knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.”**

Romans 14:12 — **“So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.”**

1 Corinthians 6:20 — **“For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.”**

4. God Judges Without Respect Of Persons

Ephesians 6:9 — **“neither is there respect of persons with him.”**

Romans 2:11 — **“For there is no respect of persons with God.”**

Colossians 3:25 — **“But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.”**

Acts 10:34 — **“Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:”**

5. Bond And Free Are One In Christ

Galatians 3:28 — **“there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.”**

1 Corinthians 12:13 — **“whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free;”**

Philemon 1:16 — **“Not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved”**

1 Corinthians 7:21 — **“but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather.”**

6. God Condemns Exploitation And Dishonesty

James 5:4 — **“the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth:”**

Leviticus 19:13 — **“Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour, neither rob him:”**

1 Timothy 1:10 — **“For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers”**

2 Corinthians 8:21 — **“Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.”**

7. Salvation And Christian Accountability Distinguished

Ephesians 2:8 — **"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:"**

Ephesians 2:10 — **"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works"**

2 Corinthians 5:10 — **"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ;"**

Ephesians 6:8 — **"Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord"**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 6:9 confronts a spiritual problem that becomes especially dangerous when a person acquires earthly authority. A man may begin with ordinary responsibilities and gradually become convinced that his position entitles him to special treatment. He expects honesty from those beneath him while excusing dishonesty in his own conduct. He demands punctuality, diligence, and respect while imagining that his personal importance places him beyond ordinary accountability. But Paul turns directly toward the masters and commands them to do the same things unto their servants. **The man giving instructions is not exempt from the commandments he expects others to obey.** Authority establishes responsibility rather than personal exemption from righteousness.

The prohibition against threatening should also confront those who confuse leadership with intimidation. A man may possess legitimate authority to establish expectations, correct wrongdoing, and make difficult decisions without possessing permission to humiliate others. The Lord does not command employers, supervisors, or ministry leaders to maintain control through cruelty. Ephesians 6:9 expressly forbids threatening, while Colossians 4:1 demands justice and equity. These instructions do not remove the need for appropriate correction or accountability, but they govern how authority must be exercised. **The leader who can obtain cooperation only by frightening people has mistaken fear for respect.** Biblical leadership requires righteousness.

The original master-servant setting must also be preserved rather than transformed into a convenient justification for modern exploitation. Paul addressed a society in which some people possessed ownership claims over other human beings. His instructions concerning faithful Christian conduct within that setting do not establish human trafficking, cruelty, or oppression as righteous institutions. First Timothy 1:10 condemns menstealers, while First Corinthians 7:21 recognizes the opportunity to obtain freedom. The same passage addressing servants also commands masters to act justly. **A man who quotes the**

servant's responsibilities while ignoring the master's accountability has not rightly divided the Scriptures. He has simply selected the portion most profitable to himself. God commands justice.

The declaration concerning the heavenly Master should humble every individual exercising earthly authority. A Christian business owner may direct employees, a pastor may oversee congregational responsibilities, and a supervisor may establish legitimate workplace expectations. Nevertheless, each remains accountable before Almighty God. No position provides authority to commit fraud, conceal serious wrongdoing, exploit vulnerable people, or demand participation in sin. Romans 14:12 declares that every person shall give account of himself to God. The Lord's knowledge cannot be manipulated through wealth, influence, or personal reputation. **The man who is accustomed to having everybody answer to him should remember that he also has an appointment before a higher Authority.** Christ remains Lord.

The statement that God shows no respect of persons also destroys the arrogance of measuring human worth according to earthly position. The wealthy man does not possess a superior opportunity to purchase salvation, and the poor believer does not occupy an inferior place within Christ's spiritual body. Galatians 3:28 establishes the unity of those who belong to Jesus Christ. Earthly responsibilities may differ, but divine righteousness does not change according to social standing. The Lord recognizes faithful conduct and judges wrongdoing without favoritism. **A man may purchase an impressive office, an expensive suit, and the admiration of influential acquaintances, but he cannot purchase an exception to the commandments of God.** Heaven recognizes no such privilege.

Finally, Ephesians 6:9 should move every Christian exercising authority toward an examination of his own conduct. Does he treat others honestly, compensate them fairly, listen to legitimate concerns, and refuse intimidation? Does he recognize that his position remains subordinate to Jesus Christ, or has he begun treating personal authority as though it were divine? Salvation rests upon the finished work of Christ rather than successful leadership, yet the redeemed remain accountable for how they treat others. **The Lord who sees the servant's faithfulness also sees the master's injustice.** Remember Paul's warning: **“And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him.”**

Ephesians 6:10 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 6:10

"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might."

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"Finally, my brethren"

Paul now brings the Epistle to the Ephesians toward its conclusion with a statement that announces a tremendous change in emphasis: **"Finally, my brethren."** Notice that this is not the language of a man who has run out of subjects and is searching for something convenient to say before ending his letter. The Holy Spirit has brought the reader through extraordinary doctrines concerning salvation by grace, the spiritual body of Jesus Christ, the mystery of the Church, the believer's position in heavenly places, and the responsibilities accompanying the Christian walk. Paul has addressed unity, holiness, honesty, forgiveness, marriage, parenthood, and the conduct of servants and masters. Now he prepares the believer for spiritual warfare. The order is significant because the Christian who has been taught how to walk must also understand how to stand. **A man may know how to behave properly in the household and still be completely unprepared when the enemy begins attacking his faith, his convictions, and his determination to obey God.** The Christian life involves more than good manners and respectable conduct. There is a real spiritual conflict, and Paul is preparing the redeemed to recognize it.

The expression **"my brethren"** identifies the people being addressed. Paul is writing to believers, not instructing lost sinners to defeat the devil through personal determination before they can receive eternal life. Ephesians 1:13 establishes that those who believed the gospel were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. Ephesians 2:8–9 declares salvation to be by grace through faith, not of works, while Ephesians 2:10 identifies the good works in which the redeemed should walk. The spiritual warfare described in the following verses therefore belongs to the Christian's responsibilities after salvation. The apostle does not command an unregenerate man to obtain eternal life by putting on enough spiritual equipment. He addresses people who already belong to Jesus Christ. **The sinner's first need is not to learn how to march against the devil. His first need is to trust the Saviour who died for his sins and rose again. A man cannot become a soldier of Jesus Christ by polishing armor while remaining outside the Lord's redeemed company.** Salvation must be distinguished from the spiritual responsibilities of those who have already been saved.

The word **“brethren”** also establishes the shared responsibility of believers rather than an exclusive assignment reserved for professional ministers or unusually prominent Christians. The apostle does not say that only pastors, missionaries, or experienced Bible teachers should concern themselves with spiritual strength. The exhortation reaches the redeemed people of God. Ephesians 4:4 declares, **“There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;”** Every member of Christ's spiritual body possesses responsibilities within the Christian walk. Some believers may have greater experience, knowledge, or opportunities for public service, but none possesses an exemption from dependence upon the Lord. Nor does the passage teach that the Church becomes Israel or inherits every national military promise given to that nation under the Old Testament. The battle described here belongs to believers in the present dispensation and must be understood through Paul's own explanation. **The Church is not assembling a physical army to conquer territory for a religious government. It consists of redeemed people commanded to stand faithfully against spiritual opposition.** The battlefield is real, but its nature must be learned from Scripture rather than human imagination.

“be strong in the Lord”

The next expression establishes the foundation of the entire passage: **“be strong in the Lord.”** Notice what Paul does not say. He does not command believers to be strong in their education, financial resources, personal reputation, natural courage, religious accomplishments, or ability to deliver an impressive sermon. He directs them toward Jesus Christ. This distinction strikes directly against the pride of fallen human nature. Man naturally wants something within himself upon which he can depend. One boasts about intelligence, another about experience, another about discipline, and still another about having read the Bible more often than everybody around him. Yet Philippians 3:3 describes believers who **“rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.”** That statement destroys the illusion that spiritual victory is obtained through superior natural ability. **The Christian who imagines that the devil will tremble because he possesses an impressive religious résumé has mistaken paper qualifications for spiritual power. The enemy is not overcome by the believer's reputation. Strength must come from the Lord.**

The command is particularly important because human weakness does not disappear at salvation. Romans 7:18 declares, **“For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing:”** Paul understood the corruption of the flesh and the continuing conflict between sinful desires and the righteous commandments of God. Galatians 5:17 likewise identifies the opposition between flesh and Spirit. The solution is not to pretend the flesh has become trustworthy or to manufacture spiritual confidence through emotional

excitement. The Christian must learn dependence upon the Lord while refusing the practices of the old man. Philippians 4:13 declares, **“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”** In its immediate context, Paul is describing contentment and endurance through changing circumstances, not guaranteeing unlimited success in any enterprise a believer happens to imagine. Nevertheless, the declaration establishes the sufficiency of Christ's strengthening power. **The Lord did not save sinners so they could spend the remainder of their lives congratulating the flesh for becoming spiritually impressive. He saved them so that their confidence would rest upon the One whose strength does not fail.** The believer's weakness exposes the need for divine strength.

Being strong in the Lord also requires a practical response rather than merely repeating religious expressions about dependence. A Christian cannot announce that he trusts Jesus Christ while continually neglecting the Scriptures, refusing prayer, defending known sin, and exposing himself unnecessarily to temptation. Ephesians 6:11 immediately commands believers to put on the whole armour of God. The Lord's strength does not remove the believer's responsibility to obey what He has revealed. Second Timothy 2:1 commands, **“Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.”** The same chapter proceeds to describe endurance and faithful service. Strength in Christ is therefore not passive indifference dressed in spiritual language. The believer must stand upon God's word, resist the devil, walk in the Spirit, and continue in the responsibilities assigned to him. **A man who refuses the armor while declaring that God will protect him has not demonstrated superior faith. He has ignored the instructions of the very Lord whose protection he claims to trust.** Genuine dependence obeys the source of its strength.

“and in the power of his might”

The final expression intensifies the command by identifying the source of the power upon which believers must depend: **“and in the power of his might.”** Notice the emphasis upon **“his.”** Paul does not command the believer to discover some hidden reservoir of personal greatness or develop enough emotional enthusiasm to manufacture supernatural ability. The power belongs to Jesus Christ. Earlier in Ephesians, the apostle prayed that believers might understand **“what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,”** as recorded in Ephesians 1:19. The following verse connects that power with the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus Christ. The God who raised the Saviour from the dead is not lacking the power necessary to sustain His redeemed people. **The Christian is not being sent into spiritual warfare with a flashlight and instructed to pretend it is a cannon. He is commanded to depend upon the power of the risen Lord.** Human strength is insufficient, but the power of Christ is not.

This expression also distinguishes divine strengthening from the popular religious error of confusing emotional intensity with spiritual authority. A man may shout loudly, speak confidently, become excited during preaching, or make dramatic declarations concerning victory over the devil without possessing the spiritual maturity necessary to stand faithfully. Such outward behavior is not automatically sinful, but neither does it prove that the power of God is operating through the individual. Second Corinthians 12:9 records the Lord declaring to Paul, **“My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.”** The apostle learned that divine power could sustain him amid circumstances that exposed his personal limitations. Spiritual strength therefore cannot be measured solely by physical energy, public enthusiasm, or outward success. **The fellow who believes shouting more loudly automatically makes him more powerful has confused spiritual authority with the volume of his own voice. A thunderous sermon may awaken a sleeping congregation, but noise cannot substitute for obedience to the word of God.** The Lord's power operates according to His righteousness, not the believer's theatrical ability.

Finally, the expression prepares the reader for the conflict described in Ephesians 6:11–18. The believer must stand against the wiles of the devil, recognizing that the struggle is not fundamentally against flesh and blood. Paul identifies principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness of this world, and spiritual wickedness in high places. Those statements establish the reality of spiritual opposition without authorizing the Christian to manufacture elaborate doctrines about unseen personalities, secret territorial arrangements, or supposed revelations concerning demons. The Lord has revealed what believers need to know concerning the conflict and has identified the armor they must use. Truth, righteousness, the gospel of peace, faith, salvation, the word of God, and prayer all belong within the instructions that follow. **The Christian does not need to become an expert in imaginary details concerning the devil's organization. He needs to become obedient to the Lord whose word explains how to stand.** The power of His might is sufficient, but it must be trusted according to the instructions He has given.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 6:10 establishes **the believer's absolute dependence upon Jesus Christ for strength in spiritual warfare**. The command follows Paul's extensive teaching concerning salvation, the Church, Christian conduct, and the responsibilities of the household. The words **“my brethren”** identify redeemed believers as the audience, while **“be strong in the Lord”** directs their confidence away from natural ability and toward the Saviour. The final expression identifies the power of Christ rather than the strength of fallen flesh as the believer's sufficient resource. Spiritual strength must not be confused with emotional

excitement, religious reputation, personal determination, or confidence in human accomplishments.

The verse also introduces **the spiritual conflict and divine armor described in Ephesians 6:11–18**. Believers must recognize the reality of satanic opposition without inventing doctrines beyond Scripture or treating other human beings as the ultimate enemy. The Lord provides the necessary spiritual resources, but Christians remain responsible for obedience, prayer, vigilance, and faithful endurance. Salvation by grace must remain distinct from the practical responsibilities of Christian discipleship. **The central lesson is that the believer cannot stand against spiritual opposition through confidence in the flesh. Jesus Christ supplies the strength, His word reveals the equipment, and the redeemed must obey the Lord whose power makes faithful resistance possible.**

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. The Command To Be Strong In Christ

Ephesians 6:10 — **"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might."**

Philippians 4:13 — **"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."**

2 Timothy 2:1 — **"Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus."**

1 Corinthians 16:13 — **"Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong."**

2. The Flesh Cannot Supply Spiritual Strength

Romans 7:18 — **"For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing:"**

Philippians 3:3 — **"and have no confidence in the flesh."**

2 Corinthians 3:5 — **"but our sufficiency is of God;"**

John 15:5 — **"for without me ye can do nothing."**

3. The Exceeding Greatness Of God's Power

Ephesians 1:19 — **"And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,"**

Ephesians 1:20 — **"Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead,"**

Ephesians 3:16 — **"to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;"**

Ephesians 3:20 — **"according to the power that worketh in us,"**

4. The Whole Armour Of God

Ephesians 6:11 — **“Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.”**

Ephesians 6:12 — **“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers,”**

Ephesians 6:13 — **“Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day,”**

Ephesians 6:17 — **“And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:”**

5. Prayer And Vigilance In Spiritual Warfare

Ephesians 6:18 — **“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit,”**

1 Thessalonians 5:17 — **“Pray without ceasing.”**

1 Peter 5:8 — **“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:”**

James 4:7 — **“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”**

6. Divine Strength In Weakness And Hardship

2 Corinthians 12:9 — **“My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.”**

2 Corinthians 12:10 — **“for when I am weak, then am I strong.”**

2 Timothy 2:3 — **“Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.”**

Galatians 6:9 — **“And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.”**

7. The Brethren Must Walk Worthy Of Their Calling

Ephesians 4:1 — **“walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,”**

Ephesians 4:3 — **“Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”**

Ephesians 4:15 — **“But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:”**

Ephesians 6:19 — **“And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel,”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 6:10 establishes a truth that every Christian needs to remember before attempting to confront spiritual opposition: **the believer's strength must come from Jesus Christ rather than the flesh.** Paul has explained the doctrines of salvation, the responsibilities of Christian conduct, and the order of the household, but he now directs attention toward spiritual warfare. The Christian cannot afford to imagine that personal intelligence, physical courage, or extensive religious experience makes him sufficient for the conflict. The enemy is not impressed by the believer's reputation or academic accomplishments. **A man may possess enough theological degrees to decorate an entire wall and still fall before a temptation that an obedient child of God resists through dependence upon Christ.** Spiritual strength requires more than religious credentials.

The expression **“be strong in the Lord”** also destroys the fashionable religious notion that victory begins with convincing ourselves of our own greatness. Scripture does not command believers to place confidence in the flesh. Philippians 3:3 expressly rejects such confidence, while Romans 7:18 acknowledges the corruption of fallen human nature. A Christian should exercise discipline, learn Scripture, and develop responsible habits, but none of those practices makes personal strength the source of spiritual victory. The Lord remains the source of strength. **The man who begins his spiritual warfare by announcing that he is powerful enough to defeat anything has already begun trusting the wrong soldier.** Christ must receive the confidence.

The words **“in the power of his might”** provide genuine encouragement to believers who recognize their weaknesses. Some Christians struggle with temptation, discouragement, opposition, or circumstances that expose the limitations of personal determination. Others encounter difficulties that cannot be solved merely by working harder or adopting a more positive attitude. Second Corinthians 12:9 reveals that the Lord's grace is sufficient and His strength is made perfect in weakness. That promise does not guarantee freedom from suffering or immediate deliverance from every hardship. It establishes divine sufficiency amid human limitation. **A weak Christian depending upon a strong Saviour possesses a better foundation than a confident Christian depending upon himself.** The power belongs to Christ.

The command also introduces spiritual warfare without granting permission for speculative teaching about the devil. Ephesians 6:12 identifies the conflict as something greater than

flesh and blood, while the following verses reveal the armor believers must use. The Christian should therefore recognize spiritual opposition without blaming every personal disagreement, financial difficulty, or ordinary frustration upon demonic activity. Human beings remain accountable for their conduct, and practical problems sometimes require practical solutions. The Lord has supplied sufficient instruction through His word. **A believer who spends more time inventing details about Satan's activities than studying God's commandments has become fascinated with the enemy while neglecting the Captain.** The Book identifies the battle and the equipment.

The spiritual armor described in the following verses also demonstrates that dependence upon Christ requires obedience rather than passivity. The believer must stand in truth, righteousness, faith, salvation, and the word of God while continuing in prayer. He cannot deliberately cultivate sin and then expect a religious declaration of victory to replace submission to Scripture. Nor should he imagine that spiritual warfare consists primarily of shouting at unseen enemies or claiming extraordinary personal authority. James 4:7 begins with the command to submit to God before commanding resistance against the devil. **The man who refuses submission to Christ while demanding victory over Satan has overlooked the order of operations.** Divine strength must be approached through faith and obedience.

Finally, Ephesians 6:10 should produce confidence in the Saviour rather than arrogance in the believer. Salvation remains the gift of God through faith, while spiritual growth and faithful resistance belong to the responsibilities of the redeemed. The Christian should study the Scriptures, pray faithfully, reject known sin, and stand upon the promises of Jesus Christ. He should neither underestimate the reality of spiritual opposition nor exaggerate the devil's power until the enemy appears greater than the Lord. **The Christian is not commanded to become strong enough to replace his Saviour. He is commanded to become strong in the Saviour who cannot be replaced.** Remember the words of the apostle: **“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.”**

Ephesians 6:11 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 6:11

“Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.”

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

“Put on the whole armour of God”

Paul begins with a command that ought to awaken every Christian who imagines the spiritual life is nothing more than attending church, behaving respectably, and waiting for heaven: **“Put on the whole armour of God.”** Notice that the apostle does not suggest the armor as an optional religious accessory for unusually enthusiastic believers. He commands the brethren to put it on. The preceding verse declares, “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.” Now Paul explains that dependence upon divine strength must be accompanied by the spiritual equipment God has provided. The believer is not commanded to invent his own defenses, develop a private system of supernatural warfare, or defeat the devil through personal determination. The armor belongs to God. **A soldier who announces his confidence in the commander while refusing the equipment the commander has issued is not demonstrating superior courage. He is demonstrating that his confidence has become an excuse for disobedience.** The Christian must depend upon the Lord according to the instructions the Lord has actually given.

The word **“whole”** deserves particular emphasis because Paul is commanding complete preparation rather than selective obedience. Ephesians 6:14–17 identifies the girding of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the preparation of the gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Verse 18 continues with prayer and supplication in the Spirit. These are not decorative expressions intended to make an attractive religious illustration. They identify the spiritual resources and responsibilities necessary for faithful resistance. A Christian may possess extensive knowledge of doctrine while remaining dishonest in personal conduct. Another may speak constantly about faith while neglecting Scripture and prayer. A third may enthusiastically discuss salvation while refusing the correction necessary for practical holiness. **The man who carefully polishes one piece of armor while leaving the remainder unused has misunderstood the word “whole.” God did not command the believer to select whichever spiritual responsibility happens to agree with his personality.** The armor must be considered according to the complete passage.

The expression **“of God”** also establishes an essential doctrinal distinction. This armor is spiritual, not physical, and its power cannot be manufactured through religious objects, ceremonies, or dramatic performances. Second Corinthians 10:4 declares, **“(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)”** The believer is not being instructed to wage a literal military campaign against human opponents or purchase specially blessed equipment for protection against

invisible enemies. Nor should the armor be treated as a secret formula requiring the Christian to perform imaginative rituals every morning. Truth must be believed and practiced, righteousness must govern conduct, faith must rest upon the Lord, and the word of God must be received and obeyed. The armor belongs to Christian discipleship, not the purchase of salvation. Ephesians 2:8–9 has already established that eternal life is received by grace through faith. **The sinner is not saved by putting on enough armor to impress Almighty God. The redeemed believer is commanded to stand in the strength of the Saviour who has already purchased his redemption.** Confusing salvation with spiritual preparation turns the Christian walk into another attempt to earn what Christ freely gives.

"that ye may be able to stand"

The second expression reveals the purpose for which the armor is supplied: **"that ye may be able to stand."** Notice carefully that Paul does not command believers to conquer the world through personal ambition, become spiritual celebrities, or demonstrate their strength by challenging every person who disagrees with them. He commands them to stand. Ephesians 6:13 repeats the objective: **"and having done all, to stand."** Verse 14 continues, **"Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth,"** making the emphasis unmistakable. Standing involves remaining faithful when temptation, deception, pressure, discouragement, and spiritual opposition threaten the believer's obedience. A Christian who abandons sound doctrine whenever somebody becomes offended has failed to stand. Likewise, a believer who permits bitterness, dishonesty, or fear to govern his conduct has yielded ground that Scripture commands him to defend. **The Lord did not issue spiritual armor so the Christian could spend his life boasting about how dangerous he is to the devil. The armor is provided so that he can remain faithful when the enemy attempts to move him away from the truth.**

The phrase **"be able"** identifies the necessity of divine provision. The apostle does not assume that every believer possesses sufficient natural strength to withstand spiritual opposition. Indeed, the preceding verse directs the brethren toward the Lord's might rather than the flesh. Philippians 3:3 describes Christians who rejoice in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh. The believer's intelligence, religious experience, courage, and determination may possess legitimate practical value, but none can replace dependence upon Jesus Christ. The man who places ultimate confidence in his own abilities may be especially vulnerable because pride blinds him to weaknesses he refuses to acknowledge. First Corinthians 10:12 warns, **"Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."** The spiritual danger is not limited to the inexperienced Christian. **Some believers fall because they know too little Scripture; others fall because they know enough Scripture to become impressed with themselves. The flesh is entirely capable**

of turning Bible knowledge into a monument to its own importance. True spiritual strength depends upon the Lord rather than self-congratulation.

The instruction also distinguishes the believer's secure position in Christ from his responsibility to stand faithfully in daily conduct. Ephesians 1:13 establishes the sealing of those who believed the gospel, while Ephesians 4:30 identifies that sealing as continuing unto the day of redemption. The command to stand does not imply that eternal life must be continually purchased through successful resistance against temptation. Rather, it addresses the conduct of people who already belong to Christ. Their spiritual standing must not become an excuse for carelessness, however. A Christian may grieve the Holy Spirit, damage his testimony, neglect his responsibilities, and suffer the consequences of disobedience without thereby proving that Christ's finished redemption has failed. **Eternal security is not permission to fall asleep at the spiritual guard post. The Saviour secures His redeemed people, and His word commands those people to remain faithful in the responsibilities He has assigned.** Standing is a matter of discipleship, not another purchase price for salvation.

“against the wiles of the devil”

The final expression identifies the adversary and explains why the believer requires the whole armor: **“against the wiles of the devil.”** Notice that Paul does not describe the devil as an imaginary symbol representing human ignorance or an outdated religious explanation for ordinary difficulties. Scripture identifies Satan as a real spiritual adversary who employs deception, temptation, and opposition against the purposes of God. First Peter 5:8 declares, **“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:”** The word **“wiles”** directs attention toward cunning methods rather than merely obvious assaults. Satan's opposition is not limited to openly wicked invitations. Deception may arrive through apparently respectable arguments, distorted Scripture, religious pride, or suggestions that encourage the believer to distrust God's revealed truth. **The devil does not need to persuade every Christian to announce that he hates the Bible. Sometimes he accomplishes more by persuading a man that his private interpretation is wiser than the words God actually wrote.** Deception becomes especially dangerous when the victim mistakes it for spiritual understanding.

The Scriptures demonstrate these methods without requiring invented accounts of invisible activity. Second Corinthians 11:3 recalls how the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty. Genesis 3 records the serpent questioning God's command and contradicting the warning concerning disobedience. Matthew 4:1–11 records the temptation of Jesus Christ, including the devil's use of Scripture in an attempt to influence the Saviour. The Lord

answered through the written word, demonstrating that biblical truth must be understood and obeyed rather than merely repeated. Second Corinthians 2:11 warns, **"Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices."** The believer must therefore be alert to teachings that twist grace into permission for sin, turn religious experience into authority over Scripture, or substitute human traditions for the commandments of God. **The danger is not merely that the devil can quote Scripture. The danger is that careless Christians may accept a twisted quotation because it agrees with something their flesh already wanted to believe.** Sound doctrine is indispensable protection against spiritual deception.

Finally, the expression must remain connected to Ephesians 6:12, which declares that believers wrestle not against flesh and blood. The Christian must not turn every personal disagreement into an accusation that another human being is operating as a direct agent of Satan. Nor should every illness, disappointment, marital difficulty, or financial problem automatically be classified as a demonic attack. Scripture acknowledges the devil's activity, the corruption of the flesh, the influence of the world, and the ordinary consequences of human decisions. These distinctions must remain intact. Ephesians 4:27 commands, **"Neither give place to the devil."** James 4:7 instructs believers to submit themselves to God and resist the devil. Those commands establish a practical course of obedience rather than an invitation to speculate endlessly about unseen forces. **The Christian who spends his life identifying demons behind every inconvenience while neglecting truth, righteousness, faith, Scripture, and prayer has become fascinated with the enemy and careless about the armor.** The Lord commands vigilance, not superstition.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 6:11 establishes **the necessity of complete spiritual preparation through the resources Almighty God has provided**. The believer is commanded to put on the whole armor rather than depend upon personal strength, religious experience, or selective obedience. The armor is spiritual and must be understood through the specific provisions identified in the following verses. The Christian's objective is to stand faithfully against spiritual opposition, preserving sound doctrine, righteous conduct, and steadfast confidence in Jesus Christ. This command belongs to those already redeemed and must not be confused with obtaining salvation through personal performance.

The verse also establishes **the reality of the devil's deceptive methods and the importance of biblical discernment**. Satan employs wiles and devices, including deception that can appear religious or respectable. Nevertheless, the believer must not invent doctrines concerning unseen activity or treat other human beings as the ultimate

enemy. Ephesians 6:12 explains the spiritual nature of the conflict, while the armor passages reveal how Christians are to respond. **The central lesson is that victory against spiritual deception requires the whole armor of God, not confidence in the flesh, religious theatrics, or imaginary authority over unseen enemies. The Christian must stand upon the truth supplied by the Lord.**

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. The Command To Put On God's Armour

Ephesians 6:11 — **"Put on the whole armour of God"**

Ephesians 6:13 — **"Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God"**

Romans 13:12 — **"let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light."**

2 Corinthians 10:4 — **"For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God"**

2. The Christian Must Stand Firm

Ephesians 6:11 — **"that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."**

Ephesians 6:13 — **"and having done all, to stand."**

Ephesians 6:14 — **"Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth"**

1 Corinthians 16:13 — **"Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong."**

3. The Devil's Deceptive Methods

2 Corinthians 2:11 — **"Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices."**

2 Corinthians 11:3 — **"as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty"**

1 Peter 5:8 — **"your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:"**

Ephesians 4:27 — **"Neither give place to the devil."**

4. The Battle Is Spiritual, Not Against People

Ephesians 6:12 — **"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers"**

2 Corinthians 10:3 — **"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh:"**

Romans 12:18 — **“If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.”**

Romans 12:21 — **“Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.”**

5. Every Piece Of Armour Matters

Ephesians 6:14 — **“having on the breastplate of righteousness;”**

Ephesians 6:15 — **“And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;”**

Ephesians 6:16 — **“Above all, taking the shield of faith”**

Ephesians 6:17 — **“And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:”**

6. Scripture, Prayer, And Resistance

John 17:17 — **“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.”**

2 Timothy 3:16 — **“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:”**

Ephesians 6:18 — **“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit”**

James 4:7 — **“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”**

7. Divine Strength Instead Of Fleshly Confidence

Ephesians 6:10 — **“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.”**

Philippians 3:3 — **“and have no confidence in the flesh.”**

2 Corinthians 12:9 — **“My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.”**

1 Corinthians 10:12 — **“Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 6:11 should awaken every Christian who has begun treating spiritual warfare as an interesting subject rather than a serious responsibility. Paul commands believers to put on the whole armor of God because spiritual opposition is real and the strength of fallen flesh is insufficient. The Christian cannot depend upon intelligence, personal experience,

religious enthusiasm, or the reputation he has developed among other believers. The Lord has identified the equipment necessary for standing faithfully. **A soldier who refuses the issued armor while boasting about his courage has confused confidence with foolishness.** The believer must receive the protection and instruction Almighty God has supplied.

The command also confronts the dangerous habit of selecting only those portions of Christian obedience that happen to be personally attractive. Some believers enjoy discussing faith while neglecting righteousness, while others defend sound doctrine but refuse the correction of Scripture. A Christian may speak passionately about salvation and remain careless concerning prayer, honesty, or gospel witness. Yet Paul commands the whole armor rather than whichever pieces a person finds convenient. Every provision belongs within the spiritual responsibilities described in the passage. **The fellow who wants protection from the devil while refusing the truth of God has misunderstood the nature of the battle.** Spiritual preparation requires obedience.

The expression **"that ye may be able to stand"** establishes the purpose of this preparation. The Christian is not commanded to become a religious celebrity or demonstrate personal superiority over everybody who disagrees with him. He must remain faithful when temptation, deception, persecution, and discouragement threaten his obedience. Standing requires conviction grounded in Scripture rather than pride grounded in personality. First Corinthians 10:12 warns those who think they stand to take heed lest they fall. The believer should therefore examine his weaknesses honestly while trusting the strength of Jesus Christ. **Spiritual confidence does not mean believing the flesh has become trustworthy. It means trusting the Saviour while refusing the flesh's invitations to disobedience.**

The warning concerning the devil's wiles also demands biblical discernment. Satan's methods include deception, and Scripture demonstrates how truth may be questioned, distorted, or presented out of context. Christians should therefore examine religious teaching carefully rather than accept every impressive argument carrying biblical language. Nevertheless, recognizing spiritual opposition does not justify inventing unseen explanations for every earthly difficulty. Human weakness, ordinary consequences, and personal wrongdoing remain genuine realities. Ephesians 6:12 identifies the battle as spiritual rather than fundamentally against flesh and blood. **The believer who blames the devil for every disagreement while refusing responsibility for his own conduct has found a convenient excuse, not biblical discernment.** The word of God must govern his judgment.

The armor also demonstrates that Christian resistance is not accomplished through violence, intimidation, or dramatic religious performances. The Lord supplies truth, righteousness, the gospel of peace, faith, salvation, His word, and instruction concerning prayer. None of those resources authorizes a Christian to mistreat another person or replace Scripture with imaginative rituals. The believer must oppose false doctrine without turning human opponents into enemies to be destroyed. James 4:7 begins by commanding submission to God before commanding resistance against the devil. **A Christian who refuses to submit to Christ while announcing his authority over Satan has reversed the order established by Scripture.** Spiritual strength begins with obedience to God.

Finally, Ephesians 6:11 should produce steadfast dependence upon Jesus Christ rather than fear or fascination with the enemy. The devil is a genuine adversary, but the believer's attention must remain fixed upon the Lord who provides strength and spiritual protection. Salvation rests upon Christ's finished work, while faithful resistance belongs to Christian discipleship. A saved person should therefore study Scripture, pray, reject known sin, and walk according to the truth. There is no need to manufacture secret knowledge about spiritual warfare when God has already revealed the necessary instructions. **The Christian does not need to impress the devil with his courage. He needs to obey the Lord who supplies his strength.** Remember the command: **"Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."**

Ephesians 6:12 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 6:12

"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood"

Paul now pulls back the curtain on a conflict that most Christians recognize far too slowly: **"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood."** Notice the opening word **"For."** The apostle is explaining why believers must put on the whole armour of God. Ephesians 6:10 commands the brethren to be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Verse 11

commands them to put on the whole armour of God so they can stand against the wiles of the devil. Now verse 12 reveals the nature of the opposition. The Christian's fundamental spiritual conflict is not against another human being. It is against spiritual adversaries operating beyond the ordinary reach of physical strength. The word **“wrestle”** describes a struggle rather than a casual disagreement. A wrestler does not defeat his opponent by admiring his equipment from a comfortable distance. The contest requires resistance, endurance, and preparation. **The Christian who imagines that spiritual warfare consists of winning arguments against people has mistaken the visible disturbance for the greater conflict. He may defeat a man in debate while losing ground to bitterness, pride, and deception.**

The expression **“not against flesh and blood”** does not mean human beings never oppose the truth or that every disagreement is secretly caused by an evil spirit. Scripture plainly identifies human sin, unbelief, envy, persecution, and false teaching as genuine problems for which people remain accountable. Paul himself encountered opposition from individuals who resisted his ministry. Nevertheless, the Christian must distinguish the people involved in a conflict from the spiritual battle described in this passage. Second Corinthians 10:3 declares, **“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh:”** The believer's warfare does not authorize personal hatred, violence, cruelty, or the treatment of every theological opponent as a demon wearing human clothing. Romans 12:21 commands, **“Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.” A man may spend years fighting his neighbors, condemning everyone who disagrees with him, and congratulating himself upon being a fearless soldier of Christ. Meanwhile, the devil may be perfectly content to let him continue, especially if anger and self-righteousness are doing most of the fighting.** The Christian must oppose wickedness without making hatred his principal weapon.

A third consideration concerns the importance of prayer and spiritual discernment in this wrestling. Ephesians 6:18 continues the passage with the command to pray always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit. That connection is essential because the believer cannot overcome spiritual opposition through bodily strength alone. The account of Daniel 10 demonstrates that events involving prayer can possess a spiritual dimension beyond what human eyes perceive. Daniel received a revelation concerning opposition involving the prince of Persia, and Michael appeared within that account. Yet Daniel's prophetic circumstances must not be transformed into a claim that every delayed prayer today has been intercepted by a named territorial spirit. **The Bible reveals spiritual realities without granting Christians permission to invent the unseen details. Prayer is commanded; imaginative explanations of invisible activity are not.** The believer's responsibility is to

approach Almighty God according to His word, not construct an entire supernatural military organization from speculation.

“but against principalities, against powers”

The second expression introduces the first two categories of spiritual opposition: **“but against principalities, against powers.”** Notice the repeated word **“against.”** Paul deliberately emphasizes the reality of the adversaries involved rather than describing one vague atmosphere of unpleasant spiritual influence. Principalities and powers identify forms of authority within the unseen order. Ephesians 3:10 refers to principalities and powers in heavenly places, while Ephesians 1:21 describes Jesus Christ exalted **“Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion.”** These passages must be read together. The Bible establishes the existence of spiritual authorities, but it does not teach that every principality or power is evil merely because those words appear in a passage. Context determines whether the reference concerns hostile spiritual opposition or authority considered more broadly. **A Bible teacher who assumes every occurrence of “powers” refers to the same group of wicked spirits has demonstrated that owning a concordance is not the same as understanding context.** Words must be interpreted according to the passage in which God placed them.

The plural expressions also reveal that spiritual opposition is more extensive than the activity of one individual adversary. Scripture identifies Satan as the devil, while other passages reveal wicked spiritual beings and their activity. Daniel 10 describes opposition involving the prince of Persia, while Revelation 12:7 records conflict involving Michael and his angels against the dragon and his angels. Those passages establish that the unseen realm contains realities beyond ordinary human observation. Nevertheless, Ephesians 6:12 does not provide a complete chart of ranks, names, territories, or responsibilities among hostile powers. The Christian should not pretend that he can identify the invisible ruler assigned to every government, neighborhood, household, or personal difficulty. **The Lord has revealed enough to establish that the enemy is real, organized opposition exists, and spiritual preparation is necessary. He has not provided the believer with an invisible census and commanded him to become an expert in the devil's administrative arrangements.** Sound doctrine must stop where the written revelation stops.

Most importantly, the mention of principalities and powers must be considered in light of the supremacy of Jesus Christ. Colossians 2:10 declares that Christ is **“the head of all principality and power:”** Colossians 2:15 describes His triumph over principalities and powers through the accomplishment of His redemptive work. The believer does not enter spiritual warfare as though the outcome of Christ's victory remains uncertain. The Lord

Jesus Christ has risen from the dead and is exalted above every opposing authority. Yet that victory does not eliminate the Christian's present responsibility to stand. Ephesians 6 would not command the armor if believers were incapable of experiencing spiritual opposition. **The Christian is not commanded to challenge the devil through confidence in personal greatness. He is commanded to stand in the strength of the victorious Saviour. The enemy may possess power, but he does not possess the throne of Almighty God.** Recognizing spiritual opposition should increase dependence upon Christ rather than produce fascination with the adversary.

“against the rulers of the darkness of this world”

The third expression identifies another aspect of the spiritual opposition: **“against the rulers of the darkness of this world.”** Notice that Paul does not simply say the rulers of this world. He specifically identifies rulers associated with its darkness. The distinction matters because the Bible recognizes legitimate earthly authorities while also revealing wicked spiritual influence operating within this present world. Second Corinthians 4:4 identifies **“the god of this world”** as the one who blinds the minds of unbelievers. Ephesians 2:2 describes the former walk of unbelievers according to the course of this world and the prince of the power of the air. These passages establish that spiritual darkness involves more than ignorance arising from insufficient education. Satanic deception opposes the truth of God and blinds sinners concerning the gospel of Jesus Christ. **A man may possess an impressive education, a respectable public reputation, and enough earthly knowledge to fill a library while remaining spiritually blind to the gospel that could save his soul.** Intellectual accomplishment cannot replace spiritual illumination through the truth of God.

The expression also prevents the Christian from interpreting every struggle entirely through visible circumstances. The world contains false religion, moral corruption, deliberate deception, and systems of thought that resist divine revelation. Yet Ephesians 6:12 does not authorize the believer to identify every earthly ruler or religious opponent as a particular demonic being. Human authorities remain responsible for their own conduct, and Romans 13 addresses earthly government within its proper context. The spiritual darkness described by Paul must therefore be understood according to the distinctions Scripture establishes. Ephesians 5:8 declares, **“For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light:”** The believer's responsibility is to reject darkness and walk according to the truth. **The Christian who spends his life accusing every human opponent of being secretly controlled by Satan may overlook the darkness operating through his own bitterness, dishonesty, or pride.** Exposing evil

begins with submission to God's word, not with speculative accusations against everybody else.

There is an important practical application concerning the deception of the lost. Second Corinthians 4:4 explains that the minds of unbelievers are blinded lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine unto them. The Christian must therefore recognize that evangelism involves spiritual opposition without imagining that clever arguments alone can regenerate the sinner. Romans 10:17 declares, **"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."** The gospel remains the message God has appointed, and its saving power must not be replaced by emotional manipulation or religious entertainment. The believer should preach Christ faithfully, pray, answer sincere questions, and trust the Lord rather than attempting to overpower another person's will. **The answer to spiritual darkness is not a brighter spotlight upon the preacher's personality. It is the truth of Jesus Christ. The lost man needs the gospel, not a performance designed to make the messenger appear spiritually impressive.** God's word must remain central.

"against spiritual wickedness in high places"

The final expression completes Paul's description with words that should end any attempt to reduce the passage to ordinary human conflict: **"against spiritual wickedness in high places."** Notice that the wickedness is expressly called **"spiritual."** Paul is describing opposition that belongs to the unseen realm rather than merely the ordinary sinful conduct of human society. Isaiah 24:21 distinguishes the host of the high ones that are on high from the kings of the earth upon the earth. That prophetic passage establishes a distinction between heavenly and earthly objects of divine judgment, although its particular prophetic setting must not be confused with the Church's present warfare. Similarly, Daniel 10 reveals opposition beyond ordinary earthly perception. The Bible therefore provides grounds for believing that hostile spiritual activity exists beyond what human eyes can observe. **The Christian need not see a spiritual adversary with his physical eyes before accepting the testimony of Scripture. But he certainly does not receive permission to describe invisible beings and their activities in greater detail than the Bible itself provides.**

The words **"high places"** must also be handled carefully. They do not mean that evil spirits have conquered the throne of God or that the Lord has surrendered His authority over the heavenly realm. Ephesians 1:20–21 describes Christ exalted at God's right hand, far above every principality and power. The Lord remains supreme over all creation. Nor should the expression be confused automatically with the high places associated with idolatrous worship in various Old Testament historical accounts. The immediate context identifies

spiritual wickedness, not Israel's earthly altars. The interpreter must resist the temptation to combine unrelated passages merely because they contain similar expressions. **A man who discovers the words "high places" in two different chapters and immediately declares that both describe precisely the same thing has performed a word search, not necessarily an act of rightly dividing Scripture.** The Bible must interpret its own language according to context.

Finally, the expression brings the Christian back to the practical purpose of the entire passage. Paul does not reveal spiritual wickedness in high places to produce fear, obsession, or endless speculation. He reveals the reality of the opposition so that believers will understand why they must put on the whole armour of God. Ephesians 6:13 commands Christians to withstand in the evil day, while verses 14–17 describe truth, righteousness, the gospel of peace, faith, salvation, and the word of God. Verse 18 adds prayer and supplication in the Spirit. These are the provisions the Lord has commanded His people to use. **The Christian who spends more time investigating imaginary details about demonic geography than studying the Scriptures has become interested in the battlefield while neglecting the weapons God actually supplied.** The Lord did not command believers to become experts in spiritual wickedness. He commanded them to stand faithfully against it.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 6:12 establishes **the reality of organized spiritual opposition against the believer and the fundamental distinction between that opposition and ordinary conflict with human beings**. Paul's description includes principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness of this world, and spiritual wickedness in high places. These expressions reveal that the believer's struggle extends beyond visible circumstances and must be approached through the spiritual resources supplied by Almighty God. The repeated use of **"against"** emphasizes the seriousness of the conflict, while the opening statement concerning flesh and blood prevents Christians from reducing spiritual warfare to hostility toward other people.

The passage also establishes **the supremacy of Jesus Christ over hostile spiritual powers and the necessity of remaining within the boundaries of divine revelation**. Scripture confirms the existence of wicked spiritual beings without giving believers a complete account of their ranks, territories, or individual activities. The Christian should therefore reject both unbelief concerning spiritual opposition and superstition that invents explanations beyond the Bible. Salvation remains the gift of God through faith, while spiritual warfare belongs to the responsibilities of the redeemed. **The central lesson is that believers must recognize the spiritual enemy without treating human beings as**

the ultimate enemy, and must stand through the strength, truth, righteousness, faith, and word of Jesus Christ.

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. The Christian's Warfare Is Spiritual

Ephesians 6:10 — **“be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.”**

Ephesians 6:11 — **“Put on the whole armour of God”**

Ephesians 6:12 — **“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood”**

2 Corinthians 10:3 — **“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh:”**

2. Principalities And Powers Are Subject To Christ

Ephesians 1:21 — **“Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion,”**

Colossians 2:10 — **“which is the head of all principality and power:”**

Colossians 2:15 — **“And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly”**

Romans 8:38 — **“nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,”**

3. Scripture Reveals Unseen Spiritual Conflict

Daniel 10:13 — **“But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days:”**

Daniel 10:20 — **“and now will I return to fight with the prince of Persia:”**

Revelation 12:7 — **“And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon;”**

Isaiah 24:21 — **“the LORD shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high”**

4. Satan's Deception And Spiritual Darkness

2 Corinthians 4:4 — **“In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not”**

Ephesians 2:2 — **“the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:”**

2 Corinthians 2:11 — **“Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.”**

1 Peter 5:8 — **“your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:”**

5. Believers Must Walk In The Light

John 8:12 — **“I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness”**

Ephesians 5:8 — **“For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord:”**

Ephesians 5:11 — **“And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.”**

2 Corinthians 4:6 — **“For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts”**

6. People Are Not The Ultimate Enemy

Ephesians 6:12 — **“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood”**

2 Timothy 2:24 — **“And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient,”**

Romans 12:18 — **“If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.”**

Romans 12:21 — **“Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.”**

7. The Whole Armour Provides The Defense

Ephesians 6:13 — **“Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God”**

Ephesians 6:14 — **“Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth”**

Ephesians 6:16 — **“Above all, taking the shield of faith”**

Ephesians 6:17 — **“And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:”**

8. Prayer And Submission In Spiritual Resistance

Ephesians 6:18 — **“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit,”**

James 4:7 — **“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”**

1 Peter 5:9 — **“Whom resist stedfast in the faith”**

1 Thessalonians 5:17 — **“Pray without ceasing.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 6:12 confronts the Christian with a truth that cannot be dismissed merely because the enemy is invisible. Paul declares that believers wrestle against spiritual powers rather than flesh and blood. The battle is real, but the weapons God provides are not carnal. Human intelligence, physical strength, impressive religious credentials, and personal determination cannot replace the armour of God. A Christian may possess extensive knowledge of earthly affairs while remaining poorly prepared for spiritual deception. **The man who knows every argument against his neighbors but cannot recognize the devil's wiles has studied the wrong battlefield.** The Lord commands spiritual preparation rather than confidence in fallen flesh.

The words **“not against flesh and blood”** should also correct the bitterness that sometimes disguises itself as spiritual courage. Christians may encounter false teachers, hostile opponents, unreasonable relatives, and people who deliberately reject biblical truth. Those individuals remain responsible for their conduct, and error must be confronted according to Scripture. Nevertheless, the believer must not turn hatred into a substitute for righteous resistance. Second Timothy 2:24 commands the Lord's servant to demonstrate patience and gentleness while teaching. **A man can defeat another person's argument and still dishonor Christ through the manner in which he behaves.** Spiritual warfare never excuses cruelty, dishonesty, or unnecessary personal hostility.

The mention of principalities and powers establishes that the conflict reaches beyond ordinary human observation. Daniel 10 and Revelation 12 demonstrate the reality of spiritual beings and conflicts that human eyes do not normally perceive. Yet Scripture does not provide an exhaustive catalog of demonic ranks, personal names, or geographical assignments. The believer should therefore resist the temptation to manufacture knowledge concerning matters God has not explained. Speculation may attract attention, but attention does not establish sound doctrine. **A preacher who claims to know the name of every demon troubling a neighborhood may sound impressive, but the Bible has not commanded Christians to build their faith upon imaginary intelligence reports.** The written word remains sufficient.

The reference to the rulers of darkness also reminds believers that spiritual deception can operate through attractive and respectable appearances. Satan does not always promote error through obvious wickedness or open hostility toward Christianity. False teaching may be presented with religious language, emotional persuasion, and impressive claims of

spiritual authority. Second Corinthians 11:14 warns concerning Satan's appearance as an angel of light. Christians must therefore examine doctrine through Scripture rather than accept every confident religious declaration. Nevertheless, not every mistaken opinion or personal difficulty should be attributed directly to a demonic attack. **The Christian who blames every wrong decision upon the devil may avoid admitting that his own flesh remains capable of considerable foolishness.** Biblical discernment requires honesty.

The expression **"spiritual wickedness in high places"** should also produce confidence in the supremacy of Jesus Christ rather than fascination with invisible evil. Ephesians 1:21 declares that the risen Saviour is exalted above all principality and power. The Lord has not surrendered His authority because spiritual opposition continues during the present age. The Christian must therefore avoid both denying the enemy's existence and exaggerating the enemy's power. God has provided truth, righteousness, faith, salvation, Scripture, and prayer for the believer's spiritual preparation. **The devil is not greater than the Saviour, and the believer has no reason to act as though the outcome of Christ's victory remains undecided.** Dependence belongs to Jesus Christ.

Finally, Ephesians 6:12 should redirect the believer's attention toward faithful obedience in the midst of spiritual opposition. The Christian must study the Scriptures, reject false doctrine, pray continually, resist temptation, and refuse the bitterness that turns other people into permanent enemies. Salvation rests upon the finished work of Christ, while spiritual resistance belongs to the responsibilities of those already redeemed. The Lord has not commanded believers to defeat unseen powers through religious theatrics or personal arrogance. He has commanded them to stand in His strength. **Do not spend your Christian life fighting flesh and blood while neglecting the spiritual enemy Scripture identifies. Know the adversary, trust the Saviour, put on the whole armour of God, and stand upon the written word.** Remember Paul's declaration: **"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."**

Ephesians 6:13 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 6:13

"Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand."

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

“Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God”

The apostle Paul begins Ephesians 6:13 with a word that connects the command directly to the spiritual conflict revealed in the preceding verse: **“Wherefore.”** The Holy Spirit has just informed believers that their warfare is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness of this world, and spiritual wickedness in high places. In view of that revelation, Paul issues the command to take the whole armour of God. Notice the order. First comes the revelation concerning the enemy, and then comes the command concerning preparation. The Christian is not being invited to admire a collection of spiritual equipment or develop an academic interest in unseen warfare. He is being commanded to prepare for a real conflict. The word **“take”** places responsibility upon the believer. God provides the armour, but the Christian must obey the command to take it. **A soldier who refuses the equipment supplied by his commander cannot excuse his defeat by complaining that the battlefield was dangerous. The danger was precisely why the equipment was provided.** Spiritual preparation begins with obedience to divine instruction.

The expression **“whole armour”** deserves particular attention because Paul has now used it twice within three verses. Ephesians 6:11 commands believers to put on the whole armour of God, and verse 13 repeats that command after identifying the spiritual opposition. The repetition is deliberate. The Lord does not command Christians to select whichever pieces of spiritual protection appeal to their personalities. Ephesians 6:14–17 identifies truth, righteousness, the preparation of the gospel of peace, faith, salvation, and the word of God, while verse 18 continues with prayer. These provisions address different aspects of the believer's spiritual responsibilities. A Christian may defend sound doctrine while tolerating dishonesty in personal conduct. Another may speak confidently about faith while neglecting Scripture and prayer. Still another may understand salvation correctly while refusing the practical holiness commanded of the redeemed. **The Christian who carefully sharpens the sword while neglecting the breastplate has not demonstrated exceptional spiritual maturity. He has merely concentrated upon one responsibility while disregarding another.** The whole armour must be understood and employed together.

The words **“of God”** establish the source of the armour and prevent the believer from confusing spiritual warfare with confidence in human inventions. This is not equipment manufactured by religious tradition, ecclesiastical authority, emotional excitement, or the imagination of a particularly dramatic preacher. Second Corinthians 10:4 declares, **“(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down**

of strong holds;)" The armour belongs to God, and its power rests upon His provision. Nor is Paul describing a requirement through which lost sinners must earn salvation. Ephesians 2:8–9 has already established salvation by grace through faith, apart from works, while Ephesians 1:13 identifies believers as sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. The command in Ephesians 6:13 concerns the spiritual conduct of those already redeemed. **The sinner does not receive eternal life by assembling enough spiritual equipment to impress Almighty God. He receives salvation through Jesus Christ, and the saved believer is then commanded to stand in the strength of the Lord.** Salvation and faithful Christian warfare must never be confused.

"that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day"

The second expression reveals the immediate purpose of the armour: **"that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day."** Notice that Paul does not merely command believers to recognize evil, discuss evil, or develop elaborate explanations concerning the devil's methods. He commands them to withstand. The word carries the idea of resisting opposition rather than surrendering when pressure arrives. The Christian may encounter temptation, doctrinal deception, persecution, discouragement, moral compromise, or pressure to abandon biblical convictions. The armour is supplied so that the believer can remain faithful during such conflict. First Peter 5:9 instructs believers concerning the devil, **"Whom resist stedfast in the faith."** James 4:7 likewise declares, **"Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."** These passages establish resistance through faith and submission rather than fleshly arrogance. **The Christian is not commanded to impress the enemy with dramatic speeches about personal greatness. He is commanded to remain faithful when the enemy attempts to move him away from the truth.** Spiritual resistance is measured by steadfast obedience, not religious theatrics.

The expression **"the evil day"** requires careful interpretation because it can easily become the foundation for unnecessary prophetic confusion. Paul is addressing the Church in the context of practical spiritual warfare, not introducing a new chronological description of Daniel's seventieth week or the future time of Jacob's trouble. The phrase must first be interpreted according to its immediate context. The evil day represents the time when spiritual opposition requires the believer to withstand. That may involve a severe personal temptation, persecution, a dangerous doctrinal deception, or circumstances that place unusual pressure upon Christian faithfulness. Ephesians 5:16 has already commanded believers to redeem the time, **"because the days are evil."** The present age contains genuine wickedness, and individual believers may encounter particular seasons when its opposition becomes especially intense. **A man who turns every reference to an evil day into a complicated prophetic timetable may become so occupied arranging future**

events that he neglects the temptation standing directly in front of him. Rightly dividing the word of truth requires respecting the difference between practical instructions to the Church and prophetic passages concerning Israel.

The words **"may be able"** also demonstrate that spiritual strength must come from divine provision rather than confidence in human nature. Paul does not suggest that every believer naturally possesses sufficient power to withstand the enemy. Ephesians 6:10 has already commanded Christians to be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Philippians 3:3 describes believers who rejoice in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh. The Christian who depends upon intelligence, personality, religious experience, or natural determination may discover that these advantages provide little protection against spiritual deception. A man can accurately explain temptation while remaining vulnerable to the very sin he condemns. Another may defend biblical holiness publicly while neglecting the Scriptures that expose his private compromises. First Corinthians 10:12 warns, **"Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." The believer who believes he has become too spiritually experienced to fall has already stepped onto dangerous ground. Pride makes a poor shield, and self-confidence cannot replace the strength of Jesus Christ.** The armour is necessary precisely because the flesh cannot be trusted.

"and having done all, to stand"

The final expression brings the command to its unmistakable objective: **"and having done all, to stand."** Notice how repeatedly Paul emphasizes standing throughout this passage. Ephesians 6:11 declares that believers must put on the whole armour of God so they may stand against the devil's wiles. Verse 13 commands them to withstand in the evil day and, having done all, to stand. Verse 14 then begins, **"Stand therefore."** The repetition establishes the practical goal of spiritual preparation. The Christian is not being instructed to obtain worldwide political dominion, conquer human opponents through physical force, or demonstrate extraordinary spiritual authority through dramatic performances. He must remain faithful to the Lord and His word. Standing involves refusing doctrinal compromise, resisting temptation, maintaining righteous conduct, and continuing in obedience when opposition becomes costly. **The Lord did not issue the armour so that believers could spend their lives announcing how dangerous they are to the devil. He issued it so they would remain standing when the devil attempted to move them.** Faithfulness matters more than the appearance of spiritual heroism.

The expression **"having done all"** does not mean that believers earn eternal life by exhausting every possible human effort. Salvation has already been established as the free gift of God through faith in Jesus Christ. Neither does the expression suggest that the

Christian must perform every imaginable religious activity before the Lord will provide assistance. Paul is describing thorough spiritual preparation and faithful resistance within the conflict he has identified. A soldier who has properly equipped himself and carried out his responsibilities must still hold his position. Similarly, a Christian may study Scripture, pray, reject temptation, practice righteousness, and answer false teaching without becoming entitled to abandon faithfulness when difficulties continue. Second Timothy 2:3 commands, **"Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."** The believer's responsibility includes endurance. **A man who serves the Lord faithfully until obedience becomes inconvenient has misunderstood the meaning of standing. The command does not expire when circumstances become unpleasant.** Continued faithfulness is part of Christian discipleship.

Finally, the word **"stand"** identifies stability upon the truth rather than stubbornness concerning every personal opinion. A Christian should not confuse biblical conviction with an unwillingness to admit ordinary mistakes. He may stand immovably upon clear Scripture while remaining teachable concerning matters he has misunderstood. Second Timothy 2:15 commands the faithful study and right division of the word of truth. Standing upon that word requires submission to what God actually says, not endless defense of everything the believer has previously believed. First Corinthians 15:58 commands, **"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord."** That steadfastness belongs to the Lord's work and truth, not to personal pride. **The Christian who refuses correction because he has confused his opinions with divine revelation is not standing upon Scripture. He is standing upon himself and demanding that Scripture support his position.** Genuine steadfastness preserves biblical conviction while refusing to place human arrogance above the written word.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 6:13 establishes **the necessity of complete spiritual preparation, the certainty of opposition, and the responsibility of believers to remain faithful under pressure**. The word **"Wherefore"** connects the command directly to the unseen spiritual conflict identified in Ephesians 6:12. The expression **"whole armour of God"** emphasizes that the believer must depend upon every provision the Lord has supplied rather than selecting convenient portions of Christian obedience. The armour belongs to God, and its effectiveness rests upon His strength rather than human confidence. The believer must actively take what God has provided and obey the instructions accompanying it.

The verse also establishes **the purpose of spiritual resistance and the importance of steadfastness in the Christian walk**. The evil day describes the occasion when opposition

demands faithful endurance, not an automatic reference to a particular future prophetic period. The repeated command to stand reveals that the Christian's responsibility is to remain faithful to Jesus Christ rather than become fascinated with imaginary demonstrations of spiritual power. Salvation remains the gift of God through faith, while spiritual warfare belongs to Christian discipleship. **The central lesson is that God supplies the armour, the believer must take it, and the objective is to withstand evil without surrendering the truth. The Lord never commanded Christians to make an impressive appearance on the battlefield. He commanded them to stand.**

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. The Command To Take The Whole Armour

Ephesians 6:11 — **"Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."**

Ephesians 6:13 — **"Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God"**

Romans 13:12 — **"let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light."**

2 Corinthians 10:4 — **"For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God"**

2. The Reality Of The Spiritual Enemy

Ephesians 6:12 — **"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers"**

1 Peter 5:8 — **"your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:"**

2 Corinthians 2:11 — **"Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices."**

Ephesians 4:27 — **"Neither give place to the devil."**

3. Withstanding The Evil Day

Ephesians 6:13 — **"that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day"**

Ephesians 5:16 — **"Redeeming the time, because the days are evil."**

Galatians 1:4 — **"Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world"**

2 Timothy 3:12 — **“Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.”**

4. Resisting The Devil Through Faith

James 4:7 — **“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”**

1 Peter 5:9 — **“Whom resist stedfast in the faith”**

Ephesians 6:16 — **“Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.”**

1 Corinthians 10:13 — **“God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able;”**

5. Standing Fast Upon Biblical Truth

Ephesians 6:14 — **“Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth”**

1 Corinthians 16:13 — **“Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.”**

Philippians 1:27 — **“stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;”**

2 Thessalonians 2:15 — **“Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught”**

6. Endurance Through Spiritual Opposition

2 Timothy 2:3 — **“Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.”**

2 Timothy 4:7 — **“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:”**

Galatians 6:9 — **“And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.”**

1 Corinthians 15:58 — **“be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord”**

7. Divine Strength Rather Than Fleshly Confidence

Ephesians 6:10 — **“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.”**

Philippians 3:3 — **“and have no confidence in the flesh.”**

2 Corinthians 12:9 — **“My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.”**

2 Thessalonians 3:3 — **“But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 6:13 confronts every Christian with a responsibility that cannot be fulfilled through religious appearances or personal confidence. Paul commands believers to take the whole armour of God because the spiritual opposition identified in the preceding verse is genuine. The Lord has not left His people without instruction, protection, or the means of faithful resistance. Nevertheless, the believer must obey what God has commanded rather than merely admire the equipment described in Scripture. A Christian may possess extensive biblical knowledge and still neglect the righteousness, faith, and prayer necessary for faithful conduct. **The soldier who spends his life studying the specifications of his equipment while refusing to take it into battle has confused preparation with admiration.** Spiritual knowledge must produce obedience.

The command to take the whole armour also exposes the danger of selective Christianity. Some believers eagerly defend sound doctrine while tolerating dishonesty, pride, or bitterness in their personal lives. Others emphasize love and unity while refusing to confront false teaching that contradicts the Scriptures. Still others speak constantly about spiritual warfare while neglecting the written word and refusing to pray. Paul does not command Christians to wear whatever portion of the armour happens to agree with their preferences. Every provision belongs within the believer's responsibilities. **The man who insists upon carrying the sword while refusing the breastplate should not congratulate himself for being exceptionally well equipped.** The Lord requires complete preparation rather than selective obedience.

The expression **“the evil day”** should also correct the tendency to become fascinated with prophetic speculation while overlooking present responsibilities. The Bible contains genuine prophetic revelations concerning Israel, the Church, the Tribulation, and the return of Jesus Christ. Those distinctions must be maintained, but Ephesians 6:13 directly concerns the believer's ability to withstand spiritual opposition. The Christian does not need to identify a particular future calendar date before obeying this command. Temptation, persecution, doctrinal deception, and discouragement can confront the redeemed during the present age. **A man who spends every afternoon predicting the next prophetic development while refusing to resist the sin troubling his household has mistaken curiosity for obedience.** The evil day requires preparation.

The command to withstand also teaches that spiritual resistance depends upon submission to Jesus Christ. James 4:7 places submission to God before resistance against the devil, establishing the order that genuine spiritual warfare must follow. The Christian cannot knowingly cherish wickedness while expecting dramatic declarations of victory to substitute for repentance and obedience. Nor should he imagine that shouting at unseen enemies proves spiritual maturity. The Lord has supplied truth, righteousness, faith, salvation, the gospel, Scripture, and prayer. These are the resources believers must use. **The Christian who refuses the commandments of Christ while announcing his personal authority over Satan has overlooked the Commander before attempting to confront the enemy.** Spiritual strength comes through dependence upon the Lord.

The words **"having done all, to stand"** provide an especially important lesson concerning endurance. A believer may resist temptation faithfully and still encounter further opposition. A preacher may defend sound doctrine and continue facing criticism, while another Christian may remain obedient despite discouraging circumstances. The Lord has not promised that every difficulty will disappear immediately after the believer takes the armour. He commands steadfastness even when the conflict continues. Second Timothy 2:3 instructs the Christian to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. **The soldier who abandons his assigned position because the battle lasted longer than expected has not demonstrated faithful endurance.** Standing means remaining obedient when circumstances become difficult.

Finally, Ephesians 6:13 should produce confidence in the Lord rather than arrogance in the believer. Salvation is received through faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ, while faithful spiritual resistance belongs to the responsibilities of those already redeemed. The Christian should study Scripture, pray, reject known sin, resist deception, and remain steadfast without imagining that his personal abilities make him invincible. First Corinthians 10:12 warns against presuming that one cannot fall. The strength belongs to Christ, and the armour belongs to God. **The Lord does not measure spiritual faithfulness by how loudly a Christian boasts about his victories, but by whether he remains obedient to the truth.** Remember the command: **"Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand."**

Ephesians 6:14 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 6:14

"Stand# Ephesians 6:14 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 6:14

"Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;"

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"Stand therefore"

The apostle Paul now begins identifying the individual pieces of spiritual armour, but before describing a single piece, he repeats the command that dominates this entire passage: **"Stand therefore."** Notice the repetition throughout Ephesians 6:11–14. The Christian is commanded to stand against the wiles of the devil, withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand. Now Paul commands him again to stand. The Holy Spirit is not filling space with unnecessary repetition. He is establishing the objective of Christian spiritual warfare. The believer is not commanded to impress the world, defeat every theological opponent in an argument, or manufacture spectacular displays of spiritual authority. He must remain faithful to the Lord when opposition comes. **A soldier who abandons his position the moment the enemy begins shooting has misunderstood why he was issued armour in the first place.** The Christian must recognize that steadfastness requires preparation, conviction, and dependence upon Jesus Christ.

The word **"therefore"** connects this command with the spiritual conflict described in the preceding verses. Ephesians 6:12 identifies the opposition as principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness of this world, and spiritual wickedness in high places. These are not merely unpleasant neighbors, troublesome relatives, difficult employers, or people who disagree with a preacher. The conflict involves spiritual opposition that cannot be overcome through fleshly confidence. Second Corinthians 10:4 declares, **"(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)"** The believer's responsibility is therefore to stand according to the instructions God has provided. **The Christian who thinks spiritual warfare means becoming increasingly angry at other human beings has mistaken the battlefield for a personal quarrel. A man can win a shouting match and still lose a spiritual battle through pride, dishonesty, and bitterness.** God's armour must govern the conduct of those who wear it.

Standing also involves remaining faithful to biblical truth rather than becoming stubborn about personal opinions. First Corinthians 16:13 declares, **"Watch ye, stand fast in the**

faith, quit you like men, be strong." That command establishes steadfastness in the faith, not inflexibility concerning every conclusion a man has ever reached. A Christian should remain immovable concerning the gospel of Jesus Christ, the authority of Scripture, and the doctrines clearly revealed in the word of God. Nevertheless, he must remain teachable when Scripture exposes a misunderstanding. Second Timothy 2:15 commands believers to study and rightly divide the word of truth. **The fellow who refuses to change a mistaken interpretation because he has spent twenty years defending it is not necessarily standing upon Scripture. He may simply be standing upon twenty years of personal embarrassment that he is unwilling to acknowledge.** Genuine steadfastness means submitting to the Book rather than demanding that the Book submit to the interpreter.

"having your loins girt about with truth"

The first piece of spiritual equipment concerns the loins: **"having your loins girt about with truth."** The language reflects the practical preparation of a man who gathers and secures loose clothing around his waist so that movement will not be hindered. A soldier preparing for action could not afford to become entangled in garments that interfered with his ability to move. The girding of the loins therefore provides an appropriate picture of readiness, discipline, and freedom from unnecessary hindrances. First Peter 1:13 commands, **"Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober,"** connecting the imagery with disciplined thinking. Paul places truth at the foundation of this spiritual preparation because deception lies at the heart of the devil's methods. **The Christian who attempts to fight spiritual deception while remaining careless about biblical truth is like a soldier who has carefully sharpened his sword but forgotten to secure his clothing. He is prepared to make an impressive movement until the first serious obstacle catches him.** Truth prepares the believer to stand without becoming entangled in falsehood.

The expression demands more than possessing correct information about religious subjects. The Christian must know the truth, speak the truth, and submit his conduct to the truth. John 17:17 declares, **"Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth."** Although Christ spoke these words within His prayer concerning the disciples, the declaration establishes the character of God's word. Ephesians 4:25 commands believers to put away lying and speak truth with their neighbors. A man may accurately defend biblical inspiration while deliberately misleading customers, exaggerating ministry accomplishments, concealing wrongdoing, or manipulating people through selective information. Such conduct contradicts the truth he claims to defend. **A preacher who insists that every word in his King James Bible is true while expecting everyone to overlook the lies coming out of his own mouth has developed a rather peculiar understanding of**

spiritual warfare. The truth around the loins must be reflected in the Christian's doctrine and dealings.

Truth also protects the believer against the subtle distortions of Scripture that characterize religious deception. In Genesis 3, the serpent questioned and contradicted God's command, while Matthew 4 records the devil using Scripture during the temptation of Jesus Christ. The Lord answered through the written word, demonstrating that truth must be understood according to what God actually revealed. Second Corinthians 2:11 warns believers not to remain ignorant of Satan's devices. False teachers may quote impressive passages while removing their context, confusing Israel with the Church, turning grace into works-salvation, or using eternal security as permission for deliberate sin. Rightly dividing Scripture prevents those distortions. **The devil does not need to persuade a Christian to throw away his Bible if he can persuade him to misuse it. A verse twisted from its context may sound religious, but religious language does not turn error into truth.** The believer must be girded with the written word properly understood and faithfully practiced.

“and having on the breastplate of righteousness”

The second piece of armour is the breastplate: **“and having on the breastplate of righteousness.”** A breastplate protects the vital portion of the soldier's body, particularly the chest and the organs beneath it. Paul employs this familiar picture to teach the necessity of righteousness in the Christian's practical conduct. The immediate context concerns believers preparing to stand against spiritual opposition, not lost sinners attempting to obtain justification before Almighty God. That distinction is essential. Romans 4:5 declares, **“But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.”** The believer's acceptance before God rests upon Jesus Christ, not upon his own successful performance. Second Corinthians 5:21 identifies the righteousness received through Christ's redemptive work. **A Christian does not manufacture the righteousness necessary for salvation by assembling a spiritual uniform. He receives salvation through faith in the Saviour, and then he is commanded to live righteously as someone who belongs to Him.** Imputed righteousness and practical righteousness must not be confused.

The breastplate in Ephesians 6:14 particularly emphasizes the believer's responsibility to practice righteousness. Ephesians 4:24 commands Christians to put on the new man, **“which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”** Titus 2:12 teaches believers to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. These instructions concern the Christian walk. A saved person may possess eternal security in Jesus Christ while grieving the Holy Spirit through disobedience, damaging his testimony, and suffering the consequences of sinful conduct. The Lord has

not authorized believers to confuse their secure standing with permission to live carelessly. **Eternal security is not a divine license to march through the devil's territory with the breastplate hanging in the closet. The Saviour secures the redeemed, but He also commands the redeemed to walk in righteousness.** Sound doctrine concerning grace should strengthen holiness rather than excuse wickedness.

The practical importance of righteousness becomes especially evident when temptation approaches the heart. A Christian who secretly cultivates lust, greed, envy, dishonesty, bitterness, or spiritual pride is creating opportunities for serious defeat. Ephesians 4:27 commands, **"Neither give place to the devil."** This does not mean every sinful desire proves direct demonic possession or that the devil personally causes every wrong decision. James 1:14 identifies the role of personal lust in temptation. Nevertheless, deliberate sin weakens the believer's practical obedience and provides opportunities for deception. The breastplate illustrates the importance of guarding one's conduct through righteousness. **The Christian who spends all his time investigating imaginary demonic activity while refusing to repent of obvious personal wickedness has become fascinated with the enemy and careless about his own heart.** God does not command believers to invent elaborate explanations for unseen attacks. He commands them to put on righteousness and stand.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 6:14 establishes **steadfastness in spiritual warfare through truth and practical righteousness**. The opening command, **"Stand therefore,"** connects the verse with the spiritual opposition identified in Ephesians 6:10–13. The girding of the loins illustrates readiness and disciplined preparation, while truth provides the foundation necessary to resist deception. The Christian must not merely possess accurate biblical information but must also speak honestly, interpret Scripture faithfully, and refuse the distortions employed by false teachers. God's word remains the standard by which doctrine and conduct must be examined.

The breastplate of righteousness establishes the necessity of holy living while preserving the distinction between salvation and discipleship. The believer is justified through faith in Jesus Christ, not through the successful performance of religious duties. Nevertheless, the redeemed are commanded to live righteously, reject sin, and protect their testimony through obedience. **The central lesson is that the Christian cannot stand faithfully while neglecting truth or tolerating unrighteousness. The Lord supplies the armour, but the believer must put it on. A man who defends biblical truth with his mouth while refusing biblical righteousness in his life has left a dangerous opening in his spiritual preparation.**

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. The Command To Stand Firm

Ephesians 6:13 — **“and having done all, to stand.”**

Ephesians 6:14 — **“Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth”**

1 Corinthians 16:13 — **“Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.”**

Philippians 1:27 — **“stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;”**

2. Girding The Loins For Readiness

1 Peter 1:13 — **“Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober”**

Luke 12:35 — **“Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning;”**

Exodus 12:11 — **“with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand;”**

2 Timothy 2:15 — **“Study to shew thyself approved unto God”**

3. The Word Of God Is Truth

John 17:17 — **“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.”**

Psalm 119:160 — **“Thy word is true from the beginning:”**

John 8:32 — **“And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”**

2 Timothy 2:15 — **“rightly dividing the word of truth.”**

4. Truth Must Govern Christian Conduct

Ephesians 4:25 — **“Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour:”**

Colossians 3:9 — **“Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;”**

Proverbs 12:22 — **“Lying lips are abomination to the LORD: but they that deal truly are his delight.”**

2 Corinthians 4:2 — **“nor handling the word of God deceitfully;”**

5. The Righteousness Received Through Christ

Romans 4:5 — **“his faith is counted for righteousness.”**

2 Corinthians 5:21 — **“that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”**

1 Corinthians 1:30 — **“who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:”**

Philippians 3:9 — **“not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law”**

6. The Breastplate Of Practical Righteousness

Ephesians 4:24 — **“which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”**

Romans 6:13 — **“yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead”**

Titus 2:12 — **“we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;”**

1 Timothy 6:11 — **“follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.”**

7. Spiritual Armour Against The Devil

Ephesians 6:11 — **“Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.”**

Ephesians 6:16 — **“Above all, taking the shield of faith”**

Ephesians 6:17 — **“and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:”**

Ephesians 6:18 — **“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 6:14 confronts every believer with two responsibilities that cannot be replaced by religious enthusiasm: truth and righteousness. Paul has commanded the Christian to stand against spiritual opposition, but he now explains that standing requires particular spiritual equipment. The believer cannot depend upon personal courage, extensive religious experience, or confidence in his own understanding. He must be prepared according to the instructions God has provided. Truth must govern his thinking and speech, while righteousness must govern his conduct. **A man who announces that he is prepared for spiritual warfare while refusing honesty and holiness has misunderstood what preparation means.** The Lord supplies spiritual armour rather than religious decorations.

The command to have the loins girded about with truth should awaken Christians who have become careless concerning Scripture. God's word establishes the standard by which doctrine, teaching, and conduct must be examined. A believer should not accept every

religious interpretation merely because it is delivered confidently or supported by an impressive personality. Second Timothy 2:15 commands the right division of the word of truth. This includes recognizing the distinctions Scripture establishes between Israel and the Church, salvation and Christian service, and the believer's standing and state. **A preacher who twists the Bible to defend his favorite doctrine has not protected the truth. He has placed personal preference above divine revelation.** Truth must remain the foundation.

The girding of the loins also concerns honesty in practical Christian living. A man may defend the King James Bible publicly while being dishonest in business, family relationships, or ministry administration. Such conduct contradicts the spiritual equipment he claims to possess. Ephesians 4:25 commands believers to put away lying and speak truth with their neighbors. The Christian should therefore reject deliberate exaggeration, manipulation, false accusations, and the concealment of wrongdoing. Truth is not merely something to be defended in a theological argument. It must govern ordinary conversation and daily responsibilities. **A man cannot wear truth convincingly while treating honesty as optional whenever telling the truth becomes inconvenient.** Biblical conviction requires integrity.

The breastplate of righteousness likewise establishes the importance of practical holiness without confusing Christian conduct with the means of salvation. Eternal life is received through faith in Jesus Christ, whose finished work supplies the righteousness necessary for justification. The believer does not become accepted before God by accumulating enough righteous deeds. Nevertheless, the redeemed are commanded to reject sin and walk according to the new man. Ephesians 4:24 identifies righteousness and true holiness as characteristics of that new life. **The Christian who appeals to grace as permission for deliberate wickedness has turned a glorious doctrine into an excuse for disobedience.** Grace saves the sinner and instructs the saved to live godly.

The breastplate also warns believers against the danger of secret compromise. A person may maintain a respectable Christian reputation while privately cultivating bitterness, lust, greed, envy, or dishonesty. Those sins remain serious even when other people do not discover them. The Lord knows the heart, and Scripture commands believers to take responsibility for their conduct. James 1:14 explains how a man is tempted when drawn away by his own lust and enticed. The Christian must therefore resist the temptation to attribute every personal failure directly to the devil. **A man who keeps blaming invisible enemies while refusing to confront visible disobedience has discovered a convenient way to avoid examining himself.** Righteousness requires genuine repentance and obedience.

Finally, Ephesians 6:14 should produce steadfast confidence in Jesus Christ rather than pride in personal accomplishments. The Christian's strength comes from the Lord, and the armour belongs to God. Truth and righteousness must operate together because correct doctrine cannot excuse wicked conduct, and outward morality cannot replace the gospel of salvation by grace. The believer must remain faithful to Scripture while submitting his daily life to its correction. Spiritual warfare is not won through impressive declarations or dramatic religious performances. **The Lord has commanded His people to stand, not to boast about how formidable they appear.** Remember the instruction: **"Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;"**

Ephesians 6:15 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 6:15

"And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;"

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"And your feet shod"

The apostle Paul continues describing the whole armour of God by directing attention to something that an inexperienced soldier might consider less impressive than a sword, shield, or breastplate: **"And your feet shod."** Notice that the Holy Spirit does not overlook the feet. A soldier may possess excellent weapons, considerable courage, and impressive training, but if his feet are unprotected and unstable, his ability to stand or move becomes seriously compromised. Footwear provided protection, traction, and readiness for difficult ground. The picture is especially appropriate because Paul has repeatedly commanded believers to stand. Ephesians 6:11 commands them to stand against the wiles of the devil, verse 13 instructs them to withstand in the evil day, and verse 14 begins, **"Stand therefore."** Now the apostle describes the spiritual preparation associated with the feet. **A soldier who cannot keep his footing will have a difficult time defending his position, regardless of how impressive his weapons appear.** The Christian's spiritual preparation must extend beyond the things that attract public attention.

The feet also possess particular significance because they carry a man wherever he goes. Throughout Ephesians, Paul repeatedly emphasizes the believer's walk. Ephesians 4:1

commands Christians to **“walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.”** Ephesians 5:2 instructs them to walk in love, while Ephesians 5:8 commands them to walk as children of light. Ephesians 5:15 adds, **“See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise.”** The apostle now connects the feet with spiritual warfare, demonstrating that Christian preparation must govern the ordinary places and circumstances of life. The believer's testimony is not confined to church services, Sunday school classrooms, or organized evangelistic meetings. He carries his Christian responsibilities into his home, employment, neighborhood, and daily conversations. **The fellow who possesses a tremendous testimony inside the church building but leaves it hanging beside his Sunday clothes has misunderstood the Christian walk.** The same feet that carry him into the assembly carry him into a world that desperately needs the gospel.

Nevertheless, the military imagery must not be twisted into authorization for physical aggression. Ephesians 6:12 has already declared, **“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood.”** Second Corinthians 10:4 likewise identifies the weapons of Christian warfare as not carnal. The believer is not commanded to conquer human opponents through violence, establish religious dominion through force, or treat lost sinners as enemies to be destroyed. The feet described in Ephesians 6:15 belong to a spiritual illustration, and their purpose must be determined by the words that follow. Paul does not command the believer to prepare his feet for the destruction of people. He commands preparation associated with the gospel of peace. That distinction exposes the absurdity of religious zeal that delights in hostility while neglecting evangelism. **The Christian soldier is not equipped to trample sinners beneath his feet. He is prepared to carry the message by which sinners may be reconciled to Almighty God.** The nature of the warfare must never be separated from the nature of the gospel.

“with the preparation of the gospel of peace”

The second expression explains what must characterize the believer's spiritual footwear: **“with the preparation of the gospel of peace.”** Notice the word **“preparation.”** Paul is not merely describing a Christian who knows that the gospel exists. He is describing a believer who is prepared in relation to that gospel. Preparation requires understanding the message, recognizing its importance, and being ready to communicate it when an appropriate opportunity arises. First Peter 3:15 commands believers to **“be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:”** Although Peter's epistle possesses its own audience and context, the principle of readiness harmonizes with Paul's instruction. The Christian should not have to begin inventing a plan of salvation after someone asks how to be saved. **A man can spend**

twenty years studying the identity of the Antichrist, debating prophetic charts, and discussing obscure biblical questions while remaining unable to explain the gospel to a frightened sinner in five minutes. Something is badly out of order when a Christian knows the enemy's supposed biography better than the message of his own Saviour. Preparation begins with understanding what God has revealed concerning salvation.

The gospel itself must be identified according to Scripture rather than religious imagination. First Corinthians 15:1–4 establishes the gospel Paul preached, declaring that **"Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;"** and **"that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:"** There is the historical foundation of the saving message: the death, burial, and bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. Romans 3:23 declares that all have sinned, while Romans 6:23 identifies eternal life as the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Acts 16:31 records the answer given to the Philippian jailer: **"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."** Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes salvation by grace through faith, not of works. The believer must therefore distinguish the gospel from religious improvement, ceremonial obedience, baptismal regeneration, Sabbath keeping, church membership, or efforts to earn divine acceptance. **A preacher who requires a sinner to complete a religious obstacle course before trusting Jesus Christ has confused the free gift of salvation with the responsibilities that follow salvation.** The gospel announces what Christ accomplished, not a program through which sinners complete His unfinished work.

The final words, **"gospel of peace,"** identify the character of this message. Romans 5:1 declares, **"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:"** Before salvation, the sinner stands guilty before a holy God. The problem is not merely that he feels unhappy, possesses insufficient self-esteem, or experiences conflict with other people. His sins have separated him from God, and he needs reconciliation through the blood of Jesus Christ. Colossians 1:20 speaks of Christ **"having made peace through the blood of his cross."** Ephesians 2:14–16 further reveals that Christ has made peace between believing Jews and Gentiles, reconciling both unto God in one body by the cross. That is a glorious truth concerning the present Church, but it must not be used to erase God's distinct prophetic promises concerning national Israel. **The peace of the gospel is not obtained by pretending sin does not matter or by negotiating a more comfortable arrangement with Almighty God. Peace was purchased through the blood of Jesus Christ, and the sinner receives its saving benefit through faith in Him.** The cross accomplished what human religion never could.

The expression also distinguishes genuine spiritual peace from the world's counterfeit versions. Jesus Christ declared in John 14:27, **"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give**

unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you." The world frequently defines peace as the absence of disagreement, discomfort, or opposition. Under that definition, a preacher could achieve remarkable popularity simply by avoiding every biblical doctrine that offends the natural man. He could stop preaching about sin, judgment, the necessity of the new birth, and salvation through Jesus Christ, and the resulting silence might be advertised as a wonderful spirit of unity. Yet Galatians 1:8 warns against preaching another gospel, and Second Timothy 4:2 commands preaching that includes reproof, rebuke, and exhortation. Genuine biblical peace does not require abandoning divine truth. **The preacher who removes the cross from his message to make everybody comfortable has not become an ambassador of peace. He has removed the very means by which peace with God was made possible.** Peace without the truth of Christ is no substitute for reconciliation through His blood.

Finally, the preparation of the gospel of peace must govern the believer's manner as well as his message. Second Corinthians 5:20 declares, **"Now then we are ambassadors for Christ,"** and continues with the appeal, **"be ye reconciled to God."** An ambassador represents another authority and delivers the message entrusted to him. He does not possess permission to replace that message with his own opinions, nor does he accomplish his responsibility by insulting everyone who refuses to listen. Second Timothy 2:24 commands, **"And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient,"** while the following verses address instructing those who oppose themselves. The Christian must preach plainly, answer honestly, correct error when necessary, and remain faithful even when the gospel is rejected. Yet he must never confuse personal harshness with spiritual courage. **A man who possesses the gospel of peace but seems determined to make himself personally unbearable has not improved the message through his attitude.** The truth must remain uncompromised, and the manner of its delivery must remain governed by biblical charity.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 6:15 establishes **the necessity of spiritual readiness and the importance of the gospel within the believer's warfare**. The imagery of shod feet presents a soldier properly equipped to stand and move without unnecessary hindrance. Within the Christian walk, that preparation includes understanding the gospel, remaining ready to communicate it, and carrying a consistent testimony into ordinary life. The believer's readiness is not measured by religious excitement, impressive theological vocabulary, or familiarity with obscure biblical controversies. He must be prepared to explain the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the salvation freely offered through faith in Him.

The verse also establishes **the relationship between the gospel and genuine peace with God**. The peace announced through the gospel rests upon the finished work of Jesus Christ, not human religious performance or the abandonment of biblical truth. Ephesians 2 reveals reconciliation through the cross and the formation of one spiritual body from believing Jews and Gentiles, while preserving the proper distinctions between the Church and God's prophetic dealings with Israel. The believer must therefore remain steadfast in sound doctrine while proclaiming the gospel with sincerity and appropriate gentleness. **The central lesson is that Christian soldiers must be prepared to carry a message of peace rather than wage a carnal war against sinners. The feet are prepared, the gospel is supplied, and the responsibility to proclaim Christ belongs to the redeemed.**

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. The Feet Prepared For The Gospel

Ephesians 6:15 — **"And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;"**

Romans 10:15 — **"How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace"**

Isaiah 52:7 — **"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace;"**

1 Peter 3:15 — **"be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you"**

2. The Gospel Defined By Scripture

1 Corinthians 15:3 — **"Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;"**

1 Corinthians 15:4 — **"And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:"**

Romans 1:16 — **"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation"**

2 Corinthians 4:3 — **"But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:"**

3. Peace With God Through Jesus Christ

Romans 5:1 — **"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:"**

Colossians 1:20 — **"And, having made peace through the blood of his cross"**

Ephesians 2:14 — **"For he is our peace, who hath made both one"**

Ephesians 2:16 — **“And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross”**

4. Salvation By Grace Through Faith

Ephesians 2:8 — **“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:”**

Ephesians 2:9 — **“Not of works, lest any man should boast.”**

Acts 16:31 — **“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.”**

Romans 4:5 — **“his faith is counted for righteousness.”**

5. The Ministry Of Reconciliation

2 Corinthians 5:18 — **“and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;”**

2 Corinthians 5:19 — **“and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.”**

2 Corinthians 5:20 — **“Now then we are ambassadors for Christ”**

Romans 10:17 — **“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”**

6. Readiness With Boldness And Gentleness

2 Timothy 4:2 — **“Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season;”**

Ephesians 6:19 — **“that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel,”**

2 Timothy 2:24 — **“And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient,”**

1 Peter 3:15 — **“with meekness and fear:”**

7. Spiritual Warfare Is Not Carnal

Ephesians 6:12 — **“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood”**

2 Corinthians 10:3 — **“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh:”**

2 Corinthians 10:4 — **“For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God”**

Romans 12:18 — **“If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.”**

8. Standing Firm In The Christian Walk

Ephesians 6:11 — **“Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.”**

Ephesians 6:13 — **“and having done all, to stand.”**

Ephesians 5:15 — **“See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,”**

1 Corinthians 16:13 — **“Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 6:15 confronts every Christian with the necessity of being prepared to communicate the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul has commanded believers to put on the whole armour of God, and he now directs attention toward the feet. A soldier may possess considerable courage and excellent weapons, but without proper preparation he will struggle to maintain his position or move effectively. The spiritual application is plain: believers must understand the gospel they profess to believe. Knowing a collection of religious expressions is not the same as being able to explain salvation from Scripture. **A Christian who can discuss every controversy in the Church but cannot explain how a sinner is saved has spent considerable time studying secondary matters while neglecting the message that brings eternal life.** The gospel must remain central.

The preparation of the gospel of peace also establishes a responsibility that extends beyond pastors and organized evangelistic ministries. Every believer should be willing to testify concerning Jesus Christ when a suitable opportunity arises. That does not mean every Christian possesses the same gift, public confidence, or responsibility within the Church. Nevertheless, salvation through faith in Christ is not a secret reserved for professional preachers. First Peter 3:15 commands readiness to answer those who inquire concerning the believer's hope. The Christian should therefore become familiar with the biblical message of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. **A believer does not need an impressive title before he can explain that Jesus Christ died for sinners and rose again.** The truth is worth knowing and sharing.

The expression **“gospel of peace”** should also correct the widespread misunderstanding that Christianity offers salvation through moral improvement or religious performance. Romans 5:1 establishes peace with God through justification by faith. The sinner does not obtain that peace by joining a denomination, undergoing a religious ceremony, or promising to become sufficiently righteous. Jesus Christ made peace through the blood of His cross, and eternal life is received through faith in Him. Ephesians 2:8–9 excludes human works from the foundation of salvation. **The preacher who adds human requirements to the**

finished work of Christ has not made the gospel more complete. He has confused the sinner about the sufficiency of the Saviour. Salvation remains God's gift.

The gospel of peace must never become an excuse for compromising the truth in order to avoid disagreement. The world frequently confuses peace with silence concerning uncomfortable subjects. Yet Scripture commands believers to preach the word, confront serious doctrinal error, and distinguish the gospel from counterfeit messages. Biblical peace cannot be purchased by abandoning the very cross through which reconciliation was accomplished. The Christian should remain charitable toward those who disagree without pretending that contradictory teachings are equally true. Galatians 1:8 warns against another gospel, while Second Timothy 4:2 commands faithful preaching. **A man who removes the truth to keep everybody comfortable may produce an agreeable religious atmosphere, but he has not necessarily brought anyone into peace with God.** Christ remains the only foundation.

The preparation of the feet also reminds believers that their manner of witnessing should reflect the message they carry. A Christian may preach accurate doctrine while behaving in a way that unnecessarily drives people away from listening. Scripture commands the Lord's servant to be gentle, patient, and capable of teaching. Those qualities do not eliminate the necessity of boldness or the responsibility to confront falsehood. They establish that faithful evangelism should not become an exhibition of personal arrogance. The goal is to proclaim Jesus Christ rather than prove the messenger's superiority over the person hearing him. **A witness who seems more interested in winning an argument than winning a sinner's attention to the gospel has confused his personal victory with the purpose of the message.** Truth and charity belong together.

Finally, Ephesians 6:15 should produce steadfast confidence in the gospel rather than fascination with the enemy. The spiritual warfare described in this passage is real, but the believer's responsibilities remain clearly identified by Scripture. He must stand in the Lord's strength, walk in truth and righteousness, trust God's promises, use His word, and continue in prayer. The preparation of the gospel of peace belongs within that complete armour. Salvation remains the gift of God, while faithful witness belongs to Christian discipleship. **The Lord did not command His soldiers to spend their lives frightening sinners with stories about how powerful the devil is. He commanded them to stand prepared with the message of what Jesus Christ has accomplished.** Remember the words of the apostle: **“And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;”**

Ephesians 6:16 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 6:16

"Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked."

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"Above all, taking the shield of faith"

The apostle Paul now introduces one of the most important defensive provisions in the whole armour of God: **"Above all, taking the shield of faith."** Notice that he does not begin this verse by describing another ornament to make the Christian soldier appear impressive. He identifies a shield, an instrument of protection against weapons directed toward the individual carrying it. The Roman soldier's shield was not merely something to display during a military procession. It was intended to protect him when the enemy began attacking. A soldier could possess a sword, wear a breastplate, and maintain proper footing, but he still needed protection against projectiles approaching from beyond the reach of his weapon. Paul has already commanded the believer to stand against the wiles of the devil, and he now identifies faith as essential protection against those attacks. **The Christian who spends his time polishing his religious reputation while neglecting his confidence in God's word is preparing for a parade rather than a battle.** The armour of God is not intended to impress spectators. It is intended to enable the believer to stand.

The expression **"Above all"** gives the shield of faith particular emphasis, but it does not cancel the necessity of the other pieces of armour. Ephesians 6:11 commands the whole armour of God, and verse 13 repeats that instruction. The believer cannot substitute faith for truth, righteousness, the preparation of the gospel of peace, or the sword of the Spirit. Nevertheless, faith is indispensable because the Christian must trust the Lord whose truth he believes and whose commandments he obeys. Hebrews 11:6 declares, **"But without faith it is impossible to please him:"** Second Corinthians 5:7 adds, **"(For we walk by faith, not by sight:)"** The shield therefore represents something far greater than natural optimism, stubborn determination, or the ability to convince oneself that circumstances will improve. Biblical faith rests upon the character, promises, and revealed word of Almighty God. **A man may have enough positive thinking to convince himself that a cardboard shield is made of iron, but his confidence will not change the material. Biblical faith is not confidence in confidence. It is confidence in the God who cannot lie.** The object of faith determines its value.

The words **“taking the shield of faith”** also establish the believer's responsibility to exercise faith rather than merely discuss it. Salvation is received through faith in Jesus Christ, as Ephesians 2:8–9 plainly establishes, but the present passage concerns the continuing spiritual responsibilities of those already redeemed. Saving faith and the believer's daily walk of faith must be distinguished without separating them into contradictory doctrines. The sinner trusts Christ for salvation; the redeemed Christian must continue trusting the Lord as he encounters temptation, opposition, discouragement, and spiritual deception. Galatians 2:20 declares, **“and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”** The Christian does not remain faithful by manufacturing strength within his fallen nature. He depends upon the Saviour who redeemed him. **A believer who claims to trust Christ with his eternal soul but refuses to trust His word during an ordinary trial has not lost the Saviour's power. He has exposed an area where his own confidence needs correction.** The shield must be taken up and used.

“wherewith ye shall be able to quench”

The second expression identifies what the shield of faith accomplishes: **“wherewith ye shall be able to quench.”** Notice the word **“quench.”** Paul does not merely say that the believer will observe the enemy's weapons, understand their construction, or learn to explain where they originated. He declares that the shield of faith provides the means by which their destructive force can be extinguished. The Christian's protection is not intellectual fascination with satanic activity but practical dependence upon Almighty God. The fiery projectile might strike the shield, but its burning effect is overcome rather than allowed to consume the soldier. The spiritual application is powerful because temptation and deception often begin with an attack upon confidence in God's character or word. A believer may be tempted to doubt the sufficiency of Christ, question the truth of Scripture, surrender to fear, or accept a false doctrine because it appears attractive. Faith answers by trusting what God has revealed rather than surrendering to the suggestion. **The enemy may launch the accusation, but the Christian does not have to provide it with a permanent residence in his heart.** God's truth supplies a foundation upon which faith can stand.

The words **“ye shall be able”** express the sufficiency of God's provision without promising that Christians will never experience temptation, distress, or spiritual conflict. The shield is supplied because the attack is real. Its purpose is not to guarantee a life without opposition but to provide protection when opposition arrives. First Corinthians 10:13 declares, **“God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able;”** and continues by identifying the way of escape that God provides. The emphasis rests upon divine faithfulness rather than personal invincibility. Likewise, Second Corinthians 12:9 records

the Lord telling Paul, **“My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.”** A Christian may experience genuine fear, discouragement, grief, or difficulty without proving that his salvation is defective or that every hardship resulted from insufficient faith. **The shield of faith is not a religious guarantee that life will never hurt. It is God's provision for remaining faithful when the battle becomes painful.** Faith rests upon the Lord even when circumstances do not immediately change.

“all the fiery darts of the wicked”

The final expression reveals the nature and source of the attack: **“all the fiery darts of the wicked.”** The picture is unmistakably military. A fiery dart is not merely a harmless object thrown toward a soldier to attract his attention. It is a weapon intended to wound, burn, and spread destruction. Such imagery illustrates the dangerous character of spiritual temptation and deception. Ephesians 6:11 has already identified the wiles of the devil, while verse 12 describes spiritual opposition involving principalities, powers, rulers of darkness, and spiritual wickedness in high places. The immediate context therefore connects these fiery darts with the adversary and his destructive work. First Peter 5:8 identifies **“your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion,”** seeking someone to devour. Satan is not presented as a harmless religious symbol or a convenient explanation for human ignorance. Scripture identifies a genuine enemy whose methods require vigilance. **The devil does not have to break down the front door when he can persuade the Christian to welcome a destructive thought and begin furnishing a room for it.** The danger lies not merely in the arrival of temptation but in yielding to what contradicts the word of God.

These fiery darts can be illustrated through the different forms of temptation and deception identified elsewhere in Scripture. Genesis 3 records the serpent questioning God's command and contradicting the warning given concerning disobedience. Matthew 4:1–11 records the devil attempting to tempt Jesus Christ, including the misuse of Scripture. Second Corinthians 11:3 warns concerning the serpent's subtilty, while Second Corinthians 11:14 declares that Satan is transformed into an angel of light. The enemy's methods may include falsehood, religious deception, accusations, pride, fear, or invitations to abandon obedience. Yet the Christian must exercise discernment rather than declare that every troubling thought, ordinary disagreement, or personal difficulty is a supernatural projectile. James 1:14 establishes that personal lust also plays a role in temptation. **A man who blames Satan every time his own flesh wants something wicked has overlooked the enemy he carries around in his own fallen nature.** Spiritual warfare is real, but biblical honesty requires recognizing the distinctions Scripture makes.

The word **“all”** emphasizes the adequacy of faith in God's provision against the attacks identified in the passage. Paul does not teach that some category of satanic deception is

so powerful that obedience to the Lord becomes impossible. Nor does he suggest that Christians must purchase additional spiritual protection through ceremonies, religious objects, secret knowledge, or supposed revelations concerning invisible forces. Faith rests upon the Lord, and His word supplies the truth necessary for steadfast resistance. Romans 10:17 declares, **"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."** The Christian who neglects Scripture while announcing that he possesses extraordinary faith has separated his confidence from the very revelation that establishes its foundation. The shield does not become stronger because the believer speaks more loudly or adopts a more impressive religious appearance. **The devil's darts are dangerous, but they do not become greater than Almighty God simply because the Christian becomes frightened. Faith must look away from the size of the enemy and toward the sufficiency of the Lord.** The armour belongs to God, and His strength remains the believer's confidence.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 6:16 establishes **the indispensable place of faith in spiritual warfare and the necessity of actively trusting Almighty God when confronted by satanic deception**. The shield is a defensive provision supplied within the whole armour of God, not a substitute for the other pieces. The command to take it demonstrates that the Christian must exercise faith rather than merely profess religious confidence. Biblical faith rests upon the Lord and His revealed word, not positive thinking, human imagination, or exaggerated claims of personal spiritual authority. The fiery darts illustrate destructive attacks that seek to weaken the believer through deception, temptation, accusation, and distrust of God's truth.

The verse also establishes **the sufficiency of God's provision and the distinction between saving faith and the continuing walk of the redeemed**. Eternal life is received through faith in Jesus Christ, while the saved believer is commanded to remain steadfast amid spiritual opposition. Quenching the fiery darts does not mean Christians will never experience hardship, temptation, or discouragement. It means God has supplied the spiritual means necessary to resist the enemy faithfully. **The central lesson is that the Christian must not attempt to defeat the devil through confidence in the flesh. Faith in the Lord is the shield, God's word establishes its foundation, and the believer must take it up when spiritual opposition comes.**

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. The Shield Within The Whole Armour

Ephesians 6:11 — **"Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."**

Ephesians 6:13 — **“Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God”**

Ephesians 6:14 — **“Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth”**

Ephesians 6:16 — **“Above all, taking the shield of faith”**

2. Faith Must Rest Upon God's Word

Romans 10:17 — **“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”**

2 Corinthians 5:7 — **“(For we walk by faith, not by sight:)”**

Hebrews 11:6 — **“But without faith it is impossible to please him:”**

Galatians 2:20 — **“I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”**

3. God Identified As A Shield

Genesis 15:1 — **“Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.”**

Psalm 3:3 — **“But thou, O LORD, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head.”**

Psalm 18:30 — **“he is a buckler to all those that trust in him.”**

Proverbs 30:5 — **“Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him.”**

4. The Devil's Devices And Deceptive Attacks

Ephesians 6:12 — **“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood”**

2 Corinthians 2:11 — **“Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.”**

2 Corinthians 11:3 — **“as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty”**

1 Peter 5:8 — **“your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:”**

5. Temptation And Spiritual Resistance

1 Corinthians 10:13 — **“but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.”**

James 4:7 — **“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”**

Galatians 5:16 — **“Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.”**

James 1:14 — **“But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.”**

6. The Believer's Security Against Condemnation

Ephesians 2:8 — **“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:”**

Ephesians 1:13 — **“ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,”**

Romans 8:1 — **“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus”**

Romans 8:33 — **“Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.”**

7. Steadfast Faith And Continuing Prayer

1 Peter 5:9 — **“Whom resist stedfast in the faith”**

Hebrews 10:23 — **“Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering;”**

Ephesians 6:18 — **“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit,”**

2 Timothy 2:3 — **“Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 6:16 confronts every Christian with the necessity of exercising genuine faith when spiritual opposition comes. Paul identifies the shield as part of the whole armour of God because the believer cannot withstand the enemy through personal strength alone. A man may possess extensive biblical knowledge, considerable religious experience, and an impressive reputation for spiritual courage while remaining dangerously dependent upon himself. The shield of faith requires confidence in the Lord rather than confidence in those accomplishments. **The Christian who believes his own strength makes him invulnerable has placed his confidence in the very flesh Scripture commands him not to trust.** The enemy's attacks are real, but God's provision is sufficient.

The distinction between saving faith and the believer's continuing walk of faith must also remain clear. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes that salvation is by grace through faith, not of works. The Christian does not receive eternal life by successfully extinguishing every temptation that approaches him. He is saved through Jesus Christ and subsequently commanded to walk faithfully as one who belongs to the Saviour. Daily confidence in God's

word therefore concerns Christian discipleship rather than an effort to purchase eternal security. **A believer who experiences fear or spiritual discouragement has not automatically lost the salvation Christ purchased for him.** He needs to return his attention to the Lord and His promises.

The fiery darts illustrate the destructive character of deception, temptation, and accusations that seek to weaken Christian confidence. A believer may encounter suggestions that God's word cannot be trusted, that obedience is unnecessary, or that personal failure has placed him beyond divine mercy. Other temptations appeal to pride, lust, bitterness, envy, or the desire for human approval. Yet not every wrong thought should automatically be attributed to direct satanic activity. James 1:14 identifies the important role of personal lust in temptation. **The devil may provide an invitation, but the Christian remains responsible for whether he welcomes the suggestion and begins acting upon it.** Biblical discernment requires honesty concerning the enemy and the flesh.

The word **"all"** should strengthen the believer's confidence without encouraging exaggerated claims concerning earthly victory. Paul does not promise that faithful Christians will never become ill, suffer persecution, experience grief, or encounter difficult circumstances. The shield is supplied precisely because spiritual attacks must be resisted. God's provision enables the believer to remain faithful, but the presence of hardship does not automatically establish a deficiency in faith. Second Corinthians 12:9 demonstrates that divine grace can remain sufficient while human weakness continues. **A preacher who tells suffering Christians that every difficulty proves they have failed to exercise enough faith has confused the armour of God with a guarantee of earthly comfort.** Scripture promises sufficient grace.

The shield of faith also requires serious attention to the written word of God. Romans 10:17 declares that faith comes by hearing the word of God, establishing the proper foundation for biblical confidence. The Christian cannot replace Scripture with positive thinking, emotional excitement, religious superstition, or dramatic declarations about spiritual authority. He must understand what God has actually promised and trust the Lord according to that revelation. A believer who continually neglects Scripture while claiming exceptional spiritual strength has abandoned the foundation upon which his confidence should rest. **Faith does not become stronger because a man speaks more loudly about it. Faith becomes properly grounded when the believer learns God's word and trusts the One who gave it.** Truth must govern confidence.

Finally, Ephesians 6:16 should direct the Christian's attention toward Jesus Christ rather than producing fear or fascination with the devil. The enemy possesses deceptive methods, but the risen Saviour remains supreme over every principality and power. The

believer should therefore take the shield of faith, study Scripture, pray, resist known sin, and remain steadfast during opposition. He does not need to manufacture supernatural explanations for every difficulty or boast about personal authority over unseen enemies. **The Christian's confidence does not rest upon how impressive he appears while carrying the shield. It rests upon the Lord whose faithfulness makes the shield sufficient.** Remember the command: **"Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked."**

Ephesians 6:17 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 6:17

"And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:"

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"And take the helmet of salvation"

The apostle Paul continues his description of the whole armour of God by directing attention to the soldier's head: **"And take the helmet of salvation."** Notice that the Holy Spirit has already identified the girdle of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the preparation of the gospel of peace, and the shield of faith. Now comes the helmet. A soldier might survive a wound to his arm or leg, but a serious blow to an unprotected head could bring the entire battle to an abrupt conclusion. The helmet was not supplied to make the soldier look distinguished during a military parade. It was provided because the head required protection. Paul has already established that the Christian's warfare is spiritual rather than carnal, and the helmet must therefore be understood according to its spiritual significance. First Thessalonians 5:8 declares, **"But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation."** The helmet directs attention toward the believer's confidence in the salvation God has provided through Jesus Christ. **The devil would be delighted to see a Christian spend his entire life defending the gospel while remaining so uncertain about his own salvation that he cannot stand confidently upon the promises of God.** The helmet belongs upon the head, not hanging beside the other armour as a religious decoration.

This instruction must be rightly divided because the believer's salvation is not obtained by successfully putting on spiritual equipment. Ephesians 2:8–9 declares, **"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."** The apostle is writing to people who have already trusted

Jesus Christ. Ephesians 1:13 identifies those who believed the gospel as sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, while Ephesians 4:30 declares that believers are sealed unto the day of redemption. The Christian therefore does not place the helmet upon his head in order to persuade Almighty God to save him. He receives salvation through faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and he is then commanded to stand in the assurance and hope belonging to that salvation. The believer presently possesses eternal life, while the future redemption of the body remains ahead. Romans 8:23 describes believers waiting for **"the redemption of our body."** That future hope does not make present justification uncertain. **A man who already possesses the gift of eternal life does not need to spend every morning trying to purchase it again through good behavior. The salvation Christ accomplished is not rented to the believer on a thirty-day contract that expires whenever the flesh stumbles.** The helmet concerns the protection associated with salvation, not a second payment for redemption.

The helmet also protects the believer from serious doctrinal confusion concerning his standing before God. Religious systems that teach salvation can be maintained only through human performance leave their adherents looking continually toward their own accomplishments rather than the sufficiency of Jesus Christ. A Christian may experience conviction over genuine sin, grief over personal failure, or discouragement during temptation, but none of those experiences automatically proves that his salvation has been lost. Romans 8:1 declares, **"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."** Romans 8:33 asks, **"Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth."** These passages direct the believer toward the Lord rather than the changing condition of his emotions. Yet assurance must never become permission for deliberate sin. The redeemed are commanded to walk in righteousness precisely because they belong to Christ. **The helmet of salvation is not a license to live foolishly; it is protection against the false doctrine that Christ's finished work needs the flesh to complete what He left undone.** The Christian should guard his thinking with the truth of salvation while submitting his daily conduct to the Saviour.

"and the sword of the Spirit"

Paul now moves from protective armour to the weapon that enables the Christian to answer spiritual opposition: **"and the sword of the Spirit."** The preceding equipment has emphasized readiness, protection, and resistance. The sword introduces the necessity of confronting error with the instrument God has supplied. Notice carefully that Paul does not call it the sword of the preacher, the sword of the denomination, the sword of the scholar, or the sword of human tradition. It belongs to the Spirit. The weapon is spiritual because

the conflict itself is spiritual. Second Corinthians 10:4 declares, **"(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)"** Consequently, Ephesians 6:17 cannot be used to justify threatening, injuring, or physically attacking people who disagree with Christian doctrine. Ephesians 6:12 has already explained that the believer's fundamental wrestling is not against flesh and blood. **A preacher who believes the sword of the Spirit gives him permission to behave like an angry bully has mistaken the weapon entirely. The Lord supplied His word for spiritual warfare, not a divine permit for the flesh to settle personal grudges.** The Christian must understand both the weapon and its intended use.

The Lord Jesus Christ demonstrated the proper employment of Scripture during His temptation in Matthew 4. When Satan challenged Him, Christ did not answer with philosophical speculation, personal boasting, or an entertaining display of religious excitement. He answered, **"It is written."** Matthew 4:4 records His declaration, **"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."** The devil later attempted to use Scripture himself, demonstrating that possessing biblical language does not guarantee faithful interpretation. Christ answered with the written word properly applied, exposing the distinction between divine truth and the distortion of that truth. Although this encounter occurred during the Lord's earthly ministry to Israel before the cross, it supplies a powerful demonstration of the authority of Scripture against temptation. **The devil can quote a verse when it suits his purpose. That ought to make a careless Bible teacher nervous, because merely repeating religious words does not guarantee that the meaning being taught is correct.** The Christian must know the Scriptures well enough to distinguish what God said from what somebody wishes God had said.

The sword also requires faithful handling. Second Timothy 2:15 commands the believer to study and rightly divide the word of truth. A sword mishandled can injure the person carrying it, and Scripture mishandled can produce serious doctrinal confusion. A man may take promises concerning Israel's national restoration and apply them indiscriminately to the Church. Another may confuse the gospel of grace with the requirements of the Mosaic law. Still another may use passages concerning Christian service to teach that eternal salvation must be purchased through good works. Such errors do not arise because Scripture lacks authority; they arise because the interpreter refuses the distinctions Scripture establishes. Second Timothy 3:16 identifies the God-given Scriptures as profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness. **The fellow who swings his Bible at everyone while refusing to study its context is not necessarily a skilled soldier. He may simply be a dangerous amateur carrying a weapon he has**

never learned to handle. The sword of the Spirit must be used according to the truth revealed by the Spirit.

“which is the word of God”

The final expression identifies the sword without leaving the reader to manufacture his own interpretation: **“which is the word of God.”** Notice that Paul supplies the definition. The sword is not an emotional sensation, an unusual religious experience, a supposedly prophetic dream, or a special authority possessed by an impressive minister. The sword of the Spirit is the word of God. Hebrews 4:12 declares, **“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword,”** and continues by describing its ability to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. Scripture therefore possesses an authority that human philosophy, religious entertainment, and personal opinion cannot reproduce. It exposes sin, reveals divine truth, teaches sound doctrine, and directs sinners toward salvation through Jesus Christ. **The preacher who replaces the word of God with motivational speeches, emotional manipulation, and fashionable religious slogans has traded a sword for a rubber club and then wondered why the enemy is not particularly frightened.** The Holy Spirit has identified the weapon. The Christian's responsibility is to receive it, understand it, and employ it faithfully.

The expression also demands that Christians distinguish between the Lord Jesus Christ as the living Word and the written Scriptures identified here as the believer's spiritual weapon. John 1:1 declares, **“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”** Revelation 19:13 identifies the returning Christ with the declaration, **“and his name is called The Word of God.”** Those passages concern the Person of Jesus Christ. Ephesians 6:17, however, identifies the word of God as the sword employed by believers. The Christian receives divine revelation through the Scriptures and must not substitute his private feelings for what God has written. John 8:47 declares, **“He that is of God heareth God's words:”** Notice the emphasis upon God's words, not merely general religious ideas detached from the language through which they are communicated. Proverbs 30:5 likewise declares, **“Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him.” God did not command the Christian to defend a collection of religious impressions while treating His actual words as disposable packaging. The words matter because the truth is communicated through the words.** The believer who professes confidence in Scripture must take seriously what Scripture actually says.

For the Christian who receives the King James Bible as the preserved word of God in English, this conviction carries direct practical responsibilities. The Bible must be read, studied, compared with itself, and allowed to govern doctrine and conduct. It is not enough to carry an impressive leather-bound volume, display it prominently, or argue passionately

concerning its authority while remaining ignorant of its contents. Psalm 119:11 declares, **“Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.”** The immediate historical setting of the Psalm belongs to Israel, but its testimony concerning the value of God's word plainly illustrates why Scripture should govern the believer's inward life. Romans 10:17 declares, **“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”** The Christian should therefore approach the Book with reverence, diligence, and the willingness to obey. **A Bible gathering dust on the shelf is not being wielded as the sword of the Spirit. A Christian who can win arguments about the Book but cannot remember its instructions when temptation arrives has polished the scabbard while neglecting the blade.** The word of God must be known and used.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 6:17 establishes **the protection of salvation and the authority of the word of God in spiritual warfare**. The helmet of salvation directs the believer toward the security, assurance, and future hope provided through Jesus Christ. Salvation is received by grace through faith rather than earned through Christian service, while the redeemed remain responsible for obedient living. The helmet protects the believer's confidence in the Saviour against doctrinal confusion, false condemnation, and the temptation to place trust in personal accomplishments. The sword of the Spirit identifies God's word as the instrument by which the Christian answers deception, exposes error, and stands faithfully upon divine revelation.

The verse also establishes **the necessity of knowing and rightly dividing the written Scriptures**. The Holy Spirit has not directed believers toward human tradition, religious speculation, emotional excitement, or personal authority as substitutes for the Bible. Scripture must be studied, understood in context, and applied according to the distinctions God has established. The word of God is the believer's weapon, not a justification for cruelty toward human opponents. **The central lesson is that the Christian must protect his confidence through the salvation Christ has provided and confront spiritual deception with the word God has revealed. The helmet guards the head, the sword answers the enemy, and both depend upon the Lord rather than the flesh.**

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. The Helmet Of Salvation

Ephesians 6:17 — **“And take the helmet of salvation”**

1 Thessalonians 5:8 — **“and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.”**

Ephesians 1:13 — **“ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,”**

Ephesians 4:30 — **“whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.”**

2. Salvation By Grace Through Faith

Ephesians 2:8 — **“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:”**

Ephesians 2:9 — **“Not of works, lest any man should boast.”**

Titus 3:5 — **“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us,”**

Romans 4:5 — **“his faith is counted for righteousness.”**

3. The Believer's Security And Future Hope

Romans 8:1 — **“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus”**

Romans 8:33 — **“Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.”**

Romans 8:23 — **“waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.”**

Philippians 3:21 — **“Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body,”**

4. The Sword Of The Spirit

Ephesians 6:17 — **“and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:”**

Hebrews 4:12 — **“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword,”**

2 Corinthians 10:4 — **“For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God”**

2 Timothy 3:16 — **“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:”**

5. Christ Answered Temptation With Scripture

Matthew 4:4 — **“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”**

Matthew 4:7 — **“It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.”**

Matthew 4:10 — **“Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.”**

Luke 4:4 — **“It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.”**

6. The Words Of God Are Truth

John 17:17 — **“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.”**

John 8:47 — **“He that is of God heareth God's words:”**

Proverbs 30:5 — **“Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him.”**

Psalm 119:160 — **“Thy word is true from the beginning:”**

7. The Written Word Must Be Studied And Obeyed

2 Timothy 2:15 — **“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”**

Psalm 119:11 — **“Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.”**

James 1:22 — **“But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.”**

Colossians 3:16 — **“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom;”**

8. The Word Exposes Error And Establishes Faith

Romans 10:17 — **“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”**

Ephesians 4:14 — **“That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine,”**

2 Timothy 4:2 — **“Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season;”**

2 Corinthians 4:2 — **“nor handling the word of God deceitfully;”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 6:17 confronts every Christian with two provisions that cannot be replaced by religious enthusiasm, impressive knowledge, or personal courage. The helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit belong within the whole armour of God. One directs attention toward the salvation received through Jesus Christ, while the other identifies the written word as the weapon supplied for spiritual warfare. The believer cannot safely substitute human imagination for either provision. A man may possess a tremendous reputation for Bible knowledge while remaining confused concerning his own salvation, or possess assurance of salvation while neglecting the Scriptures. **The Christian who protects his**

reputation more carefully than his doctrine has begun defending the wrong thing. God commands the believer to take what He has provided.

The helmet of salvation should particularly strengthen believers who have been troubled by false teaching concerning eternal security. Salvation is not purchased through religious ceremonies, personal holiness, baptism, church membership, or a sufficient record of good works. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes that the sinner is saved by grace through faith, apart from human merit. The Christian's future hope rests upon the finished work of Jesus Christ rather than the changing condition of his emotions. Nevertheless, secure salvation does not excuse deliberate disobedience or eliminate the responsibility to pursue righteousness. **The man who thinks every personal failure requires Christ to purchase his redemption again has misunderstood the cross.** The believer should confess wrongdoing, obey Scripture, and remain confident in the Saviour.

The sword of the Spirit should also awaken Christians who have become more interested in defending their religious opinions than understanding the Scriptures. Paul identifies the sword as the word of God, not the personal authority of a preacher or the traditions of a denomination. The Christian must therefore read, study, compare, and rightly divide the Bible rather than accept every impressive argument carrying religious language. Second Timothy 2:15 commands diligent study, while Second Timothy 3:16 establishes the usefulness of Scripture for doctrine and correction. **A man who never opens his Bible except to prove somebody else wrong has turned a spiritual weapon into an instrument of personal vanity.** God's word must correct its defender as well as his opponent.

The temptation of Jesus Christ provides an important demonstration of how Scripture must be employed against deception. The Lord answered Satan through the written word rather than through dramatic declarations about personal superiority. The devil himself attempted to misuse Scripture, showing that biblical words can be quoted while their proper application is distorted. Christians must therefore recognize the importance of context, sound doctrine, and the distinctions established throughout divine revelation. The same Bible that reveals Israel's earthly promises also reveals the Church's spiritual position in Jesus Christ. **The Christian who ignores those distinctions may possess the right words while drawing the wrong conclusions.** Faithful spiritual warfare requires the truth properly understood and applied.

The relationship between the helmet and sword also teaches that Christian confidence must be accompanied by practical obedience. The believer should know that salvation rests upon Christ, but he must also understand what the Lord commands concerning honesty, holiness, prayer, witness, and resistance against temptation. Scripture is not

merely an object to display or an argument to win. James 1:22 commands believers to become doers of the word rather than hearers only. A Christian may successfully defend biblical inspiration while refusing the correction of the inspired Scriptures in his private life. **The fellow who insists that the Bible is perfect while continually treating its commandments as optional has developed an impressive defense of a Book he refuses to obey.** Truth must govern conduct.

Finally, Ephesians 6:17 should produce steadfast confidence in Jesus Christ and renewed devotion to the written word of God. Spiritual opposition is real, but the believer's responsibility is not to become fascinated with imagined details concerning unseen enemies. He must receive the protection supplied through salvation, study the Scriptures, resist deception, and remain faithful in prayer and obedience. The Christian does not need to manufacture extraordinary spiritual authority or replace biblical truth with religious performances. The risen Saviour is sufficient, and His word remains the believer's spiritual weapon. **The helmet reminds the Christian whose salvation protects him, and the sword reminds him whose truth must guide him. A soldier who forgets either has neglected equipment the Lord Himself supplied.** Remember the command: **"And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:"**

Ephesians 6:18 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 6:18

"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;"

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit"

The apostle Paul has finished identifying the individual pieces of the whole armour of God, but he has not finished explaining how the Christian must conduct himself in spiritual warfare. Immediately after commanding the believer to take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, he declares, **"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit."** Notice the connection. The soldier has been equipped with truth, righteousness, the gospel of peace, faith, salvation, and the word of God. Now he is commanded to maintain continual dependence upon the Lord who supplied the equipment. Prayer is not

an afterthought attached to an otherwise complete lesson. It belongs to the spiritual responsibilities necessary for faithful resistance. Ephesians 6:10 has already commanded believers to be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Prayer is one of the means through which that dependence is expressed. **A soldier who trusts his own strength while ignoring his commander's instructions may possess excellent equipment and still make a disastrous mess of the battle.** The Christian must not become so impressed with his Bible knowledge that he imagines he has outgrown the necessity of approaching Almighty God.

The word **"always"** establishes the continuing character of the believer's prayer life. First Thessalonians 5:17 commands, **"Pray without ceasing."** This does not mean a Christian must speak audible prayers every waking moment, abandoning employment, family responsibilities, sleep, or ordinary conversation. Scripture recognizes occasions of concentrated prayer as well as the necessity of attending to daily duties. The command concerns an enduring attitude of dependence and a life in which prayer is continually practiced rather than reserved for emergencies. A believer should pray when circumstances are favorable and when they become difficult, when he understands the situation and when he lacks wisdom, when he has received an answer and when the answer has not yet become apparent. Romans 12:12 describes believers as **"continuing instant in prayer;"** The Christian who prays only after exhausting every earthly possibility has treated the Lord as a final emergency contact rather than the One upon whom he continually depends. **Some Christians keep prayer in a glass cabinet marked for emergencies, and then wonder why their spiritual lives have become a continuing emergency.** The Lord commands prayer as an ongoing responsibility.

The expression **"with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit"** develops the manner and character of that dependence. Prayer includes worship, thanksgiving, confession, and requests brought before Almighty God. Supplication particularly emphasizes earnest petitions concerning needs that require His help. Philippians 4:6 declares, **"but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."** Yet Paul adds the essential words **"in the Spirit."** The Christian must not confuse genuine prayer with religious performance, vain repetition, or an attempt to force God into granting whatever the flesh desires. Romans 8:26 acknowledges, **"for we know not what we should pray for as we ought:"** and explains the Holy Spirit's intercession with groanings which cannot be uttered. That passage does not identify unintelligible human speech as the necessary evidence of spiritual prayer. First Corinthians 14:15 speaks of praying with the spirit and with the understanding also. **The Holy Spirit does not require the believer to abandon his understanding before he can approach God. A man may produce a tremendous quantity of religious noise without demonstrating that his**

requests agree with the mind of the Lord. Prayer in the Spirit involves dependence upon His help and submission to God's revealed truth.

“and watching thereunto with all perseverance”

The second natural expression introduces two responsibilities that are frequently neglected when believers discuss prayer: **“and watching thereunto with all perseverance.”** Notice that Paul does not command Christians merely to pray and then forget what they have requested. He commands them to watch in connection with prayer. Colossians 4:2 provides a direct parallel: **“Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving;”** Watchfulness involves spiritual attentiveness, readiness, and sober recognition of the dangers and responsibilities confronting the believer. A guard who closes his eyes while claiming he has complete confidence in the strength of the fortress has misunderstood his assignment. Likewise, a Christian who asks God for wisdom while deliberately ignoring biblical warnings is not exercising superior faith. He is refusing to consider the very truth God has revealed. **Prayer is not a substitute for spiritual alertness, and spiritual alertness is not a substitute for prayer. The Christian needs both because the Lord has commanded both.** A watchful believer examines his conduct, recognizes temptation, listens to biblical correction, and remains attentive to opportunities for obedience.

Watchfulness is especially important because spiritual danger does not always arrive beneath an obvious appearance of wickedness. First Peter 5:8 declares, **“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:”** The Christian should recognize the reality of satanic opposition without attributing every disagreement, illness, troubling thought, or difficult circumstance directly to the devil. Scripture identifies the flesh, the world, personal wrongdoing, and ordinary human limitations as genuine sources of difficulty. The believer must exercise discernment rather than cultivate superstition. A man may pray for protection against temptation while continually placing himself in circumstances where he deliberately encourages the very sin he claims to resist. Another may pray for peace within his church while spreading gossip that destroys fellowship. **The fellow who asks God to guard the door while he personally keeps opening the windows has not discovered a mysterious spiritual problem. He has discovered the consequences of ignoring plain instructions.** Watching requires taking seriously the responsibilities accompanying prayer.

The words **“with all perseverance”** establish that prayer requires continuing faithfulness rather than momentary enthusiasm. A Christian may begin praying earnestly concerning a serious burden, only to become discouraged when circumstances do not change according to his preferred schedule. Yet the Lord has never promised that every petition will

be granted immediately or in precisely the form requested. Second Corinthians 12:8 records Paul declaring concerning his affliction, **“For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.”** The answer recorded in the following verse was, **“My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.”** Paul's prayer was not disregarded, but the answer was not the removal he originally requested. Perseverance therefore means continuing in prayer and obedience while submitting to the Lord's wisdom. It does not mean attempting to overpower God through repetition. **A believer who thinks he can make Almighty God surrender by repeating the same demand enough times has confused perseverance with an attempt to negotiate terms with his Creator.** Genuine faith continues praying while trusting the Lord's righteousness concerning the answer.

“and supplication for all saints”

The final expression directs the believer's attention beyond his own troubles: **“and supplication for all saints.”** Notice that Paul does not command prayer merely for the Christian's personal protection, financial needs, family circumstances, or ministerial accomplishments. He commands intercession for other believers. The word **“saints”** refers here to people sanctified in Jesus Christ, not an exclusive class of unusually distinguished religious figures awarded special status after death. First Corinthians 1:2 addresses believers as those **“sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints.”** Ephesians has already established the unity of believing Jews and Gentiles within the one spiritual body of Christ. The present command concerns the practical responsibilities of those believers toward one another. It does not erase God's prophetic promises concerning Israel or require Old Testament references to saints to describe the Church in every context. **A Christian who believes prayer is important only when his own affairs are in trouble has reduced the spiritual body of Christ to a private assistance program for himself.** The Lord commands His people to remember the needs of their brethren.

The words **“all saints”** also confront the tendency to pray only for people who belong to a familiar congregation, denomination, ministry, or circle of personal friends. Biblical fellowship requires discernment concerning doctrine, but the Lord's redeemed people are not confined to one earthly organization. A believer may disagree with another Christian concerning a secondary question without becoming entitled to ignore that person's genuine needs. Ephesians 4:4 declares, **“There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;”** Prayer should therefore extend toward suffering Christians, struggling families, faithful ministers, persecuted believers, the discouraged, the sick, and those seeking wisdom to obey the Lord. Such intercession does not require Christians to endorse every teaching or practice of every person claiming to be saved. It

requires them to recognize that the needs of the saints extend beyond their immediate surroundings. **The Christian who prays only for believers who agree with him about everything may discover that his prayer list is becoming remarkably similar to a mirror.** Charity must not disappear whenever personal preferences are challenged.

The command becomes even more practical when considered alongside Paul's request in the following verses. Ephesians 6:19 begins, **"And for me,"** and asks that he might open his mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel. Verse 20 identifies him as **"an ambassador in bonds."** Notice the remarkable humility of the apostle. The man who received extraordinary revelations and endured tremendous hardship in the ministry still requested the prayers of ordinary believers. He did not pretend that experience, knowledge, or apostolic responsibility made him independent of the Lord's help. Nor did he ask merely for improved circumstances or personal comfort. He requested boldness to proclaim the gospel faithfully. **The preacher who believes he has become too important to need the prayers of the congregation has achieved a level of self-confidence that the apostle Paul never claimed for himself.** Prayer for all saints should include those entrusted with preaching, those suffering for the truth, and those laboring faithfully where their names may never become widely known.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 6:18 establishes **prayer as a continual responsibility accompanying the whole armour of God**. The Christian is commanded to pray always, bringing his requests before the Lord in dependence upon the Holy Spirit. Prayer must not become an occasional religious performance or a desperate measure reserved for emergencies. It involves thanksgiving, earnest petitions, submission to divine wisdom, and confidence in God's faithfulness. Watchfulness requires spiritual discernment, while perseverance demands continued obedience even when the answer to prayer is delayed or differs from what the believer originally desired.

The verse also establishes **the responsibility of intercession for the entire spiritual body of Christ**. Believers are not commanded to concentrate exclusively upon their own difficulties but to remember the needs of other saints. The immediate continuation of the passage demonstrates the importance of praying for ministers to proclaim the gospel boldly. Prayer does not replace biblical truth or eliminate the believer's responsibility to act righteously. **The central lesson is that the Christian soldier must remain dependent upon the Lord, watchful against spiritual danger, persevering through difficulty, and faithful in praying for his brethren. The armour belongs to God, and the believer must never become independent of the One who supplied it.**

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. The Command To Pray Continually

Ephesians 6:18 — **“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit”**

1 Thessalonians 5:17 — **“Pray without ceasing.”**

Romans 12:12 — **“continuing instant in prayer;”**

Colossians 4:2 — **“Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving;”**

2. Prayer, Supplication, And Thanksgiving

Philippians 4:6 — **“but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.”**

1 Timothy 2:1 — **“supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men;”**

Psalm 62:8 — **“pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us.”**

Hebrews 4:16 — **“Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace”**

3. Prayer In The Holy Spirit

Romans 8:26 — **“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities:”**

Romans 8:27 — **“he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.”**

Jude 1:20 — **“praying in the Holy Ghost,”**

1 Corinthians 14:15 — **“I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also:”**

4. Watching And Spiritual Vigilance

Ephesians 6:18 — **“and watching thereunto with all perseverance”**

Colossians 4:2 — **“Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving;”**

1 Peter 5:8 — **“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about”**

1 Corinthians 16:13 — **“Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.”**

5. Perseverance And Submission To God's Answer

Luke 18:1 — **“that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;”**

2 Corinthians 12:8 — **“For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.”**

2 Corinthians 12:9 — **“My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.”**

Galatians 6:9 — **“And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.”**

6. Praying For All The Saints

Ephesians 6:18 — **“and supplication for all saints;”**

Ephesians 1:16 — **“Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers;”**

Colossians 1:9 — **“do not cease to pray for you”**

Philippians 1:4 — **“Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy,”**

7. Prayer For Boldness In Gospel Ministry

Ephesians 6:19 — **“And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly”**

Colossians 4:3 — **“Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance”**

2 Thessalonians 3:1 — **“Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course”**

Romans 15:30 — **“that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me;”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 6:18 exposes a serious weakness among Christians who enjoy discussing spiritual warfare but neglect the prayer life commanded by Scripture. Paul has identified the armour of God, including truth, righteousness, faith, salvation, and the sword of the Spirit. Yet immediately afterward he commands believers to pray continually. The Christian cannot separate spiritual preparation from dependence upon the Lord who provides the strength necessary to stand. A man may possess considerable Bible knowledge, defend sound doctrine, and expose false teaching while remaining strangely independent of God in his daily decisions. **The soldier who carries excellent equipment but refuses communication with his Commander has misunderstood the nature of his assignment.** Spiritual strength must never become an excuse for prayerlessness.

The command **“Praying always”** should correct the notion that prayer belongs exclusively to church services, scheduled religious gatherings, or personal emergencies. The believer should maintain a continuing relationship of dependence upon Almighty God throughout ordinary life. Prayer belongs in the home, during employment, before important decisions, amid temptation, and throughout difficult circumstances. It should also accompany thanksgiving rather than consist entirely of requests for personal advantages. First Thessalonians 5:17 commands believers to pray without ceasing, establishing the importance of continuing faithfulness. **A Christian who remembers God only when circumstances become desperate has treated prayer like an emergency alarm rather than an ordinary responsibility of Christian living.** The Lord deserves more than occasional attention.

The words **“in the Spirit”** also distinguish genuine Christian prayer from empty religious performance. A person may repeat impressive phrases, speak with great emotional intensity, or make dramatic declarations without demonstrating submission to God's word. Romans 8:26 acknowledges that believers do not always know what they should pray for as they ought. The Holy Spirit provides help and intercession according to divine wisdom rather than encouraging the flesh to demand its own preferences. Prayer must therefore involve understanding, humility, and willingness to accept the Lord's will. **The believer who imagines that enough noise will force Almighty God to surrender has confused spiritual dependence with an attempt to issue orders to heaven.** Prayer seeks God's help rather than replacing His authority.

The command to watch with perseverance further exposes the danger of careless spirituality. A Christian cannot knowingly encourage temptation while expecting prayer to excuse his refusal to obey Scripture. Nor should he assume that every difficult circumstance is a direct attack from Satan or evidence that God has abandoned him. Paul himself prayed concerning an affliction, yet the Lord answered by declaring His grace sufficient. That answer demonstrates that faithful prayer does not guarantee the immediate removal of every hardship. Believers must therefore continue in prayer without demanding that God's timetable agree with their personal expectations. **Perseverance does not mean trying to wear down the Lord's resistance. It means remaining faithful while trusting His wisdom.** Prayer and obedience must continue together.

The words **“supplication for all saints”** should also confront the selfishness that can creep into the Christian's prayer life. A believer may spend considerable time praying about his personal difficulties while rarely remembering the needs of others. Yet the spiritual body of Christ includes people facing persecution, sickness, financial hardship, discouragement, family troubles, and serious responsibilities in gospel ministry. The

Christian should remember those needs without allowing denominational loyalty or personal preferences to become the boundary of his concern. Praying for another believer does not require agreement with every opinion that person holds. **The Lord's people belong to a spiritual body, not a private religious club whose members receive attention only when they are personally convenient.** Christian charity should extend beyond familiar friendships.

Finally, Ephesians 6:18 should direct believers toward faithful intercession for those proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul requested prayer for boldness, despite his extraordinary experience and authority as an apostle. He understood that faithful ministry required continuing dependence upon Almighty God rather than confidence in personal accomplishments. Pastors, missionaries, Bible teachers, and ordinary witnesses need prayer for wisdom, courage, faithfulness, and opportunities to communicate the truth. Salvation remains the gift of God through Jesus Christ, while prayer belongs to the responsibilities of His redeemed people. **The Christian who wants to help strengthen the Church should not underestimate the importance of faithfully praying for its members.** Remember the command: **"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;"**

Ephesians 6:19 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 6:19

"And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel,"

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"And for me"

The apostle Paul now makes a remarkable personal request following his instructions concerning the whole armour of God: **"And for me."** Notice who is asking for prayer. This is the apostle who received extraordinary revelations from Jesus Christ, preached the gospel throughout the Roman world, established churches, confronted false teachers, endured imprisonment, and wrote inspired Scripture under the direction of the Holy Ghost. Yet this same man turns toward ordinary believers and requests their prayers. He does not suggest

that his apostolic authority has made him spiritually independent. He does not claim that his experience guarantees sufficient courage for every occasion. He does not announce that his knowledge of Scripture has eliminated his need for divine assistance. Instead, he requests prayer from the very Christians he has been instructing. **The man who had received revelations concerning the mystery of Christ still recognized that he needed the prayers of the saints. That ought to embarrass the modern religious celebrity who behaves as though receiving correction or requesting help would somehow diminish his spiritual greatness.** Paul understood that the servant never outgrows dependence upon the Master.

The context makes the request particularly significant. Ephesians 6:18 commands believers to pray always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, watching with perseverance and making supplication for all saints. Paul immediately places himself among those who need prayer. The spiritual warfare he has described is not reserved for inexperienced Christians struggling with elementary matters of discipleship. Ministers are also exposed to temptation, discouragement, opposition, fear, and the pressure to compromise. Colossians 4:3 records a similar request: **"Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds:"** Notice that Paul did not merely ask Christians to admire his accomplishments or celebrate his extraordinary calling. He wanted them to pray for the continued effectiveness of the gospel ministry. **A preacher who requests applause instead of prayer may receive exactly what he asks for, but applause cannot supply what only Almighty God can provide.** The congregation should pray for its ministers, and those ministers should possess enough humility to recognize that they need it.

"that utterance may be given unto me"

The second expression identifies the particular assistance Paul desires: **"that utterance may be given unto me."** Notice the words **"may be given."** Paul does not approach gospel preaching as though every spiritual requirement can be supplied through natural intelligence, education, rhetorical ability, or extensive experience. The apostle understood that the ability to communicate divine truth faithfully involves dependence upon God. This does not mean that study, preparation, careful explanation, and clear speech are unnecessary. Second Timothy 2:15 commands diligent study and the right division of the word of truth. Nevertheless, a man may possess tremendous intellectual ability and still fail to communicate the gospel accurately. Another may speak with extraordinary confidence while proclaiming religious opinions that contradict Scripture. First Corinthians 2:4 declares, **"And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power:"** The gospel does not derive its

authority from the cleverness of the person delivering it. **A preacher may possess enough vocabulary to bewilder an entire congregation without possessing enough biblical clarity to explain how one sinner can be saved. God did not command ministers to impress people with their education. He commanded them to preach His word.**

The word **"utterance"** concerns the communication of the message, and the immediate context identifies that message as the mystery of the gospel. Paul is not requesting mysterious syllables, unintelligible religious sounds, or a supposed supernatural language that bypasses human understanding. He desires the ability to open his mouth and communicate the revealed truth plainly. First Corinthians 14:19 declares, **"Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue."** The apostle understood the importance of intelligible instruction. The preacher's responsibility is to explain what God has revealed rather than manufacture spiritual excitement through confusing language. Colossians 4:4 records Paul's desire, **"That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak."** There is the objective: making the message understandable. **A sermon is not spiritually powerful because nobody can follow it. The word of God was given to be understood, believed, and obeyed, not buried beneath a mountain of impressive religious terminology.** The minister should seek divine help to speak accurately, clearly, and faithfully.

"that I may open my mouth boldly"

The third expression identifies the particular quality Paul desires in his preaching: **"that I may open my mouth boldly."** Notice that the apostle does not ask merely for greater knowledge or an improved speaking style. He asks for boldness. This is extraordinary because Paul had already endured remarkable opposition while proclaiming Jesus Christ. He had been beaten, imprisoned, threatened, and rejected, yet he still recognized the need for courage. Ephesians 6:20 explains that he was **"an ambassador in bonds."** His request therefore comes from a man experiencing real consequences for proclaiming the truth, not someone inventing an imaginary persecution because a congregation disagreed with his favorite opinion. The importance of boldness is demonstrated in Acts 4:29, where believers prayed, **"and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word,"** and Acts 4:31 records that they spoke the word of God with boldness. **The Christian who believes courage is unnecessary because he possesses correct doctrine has forgotten that truth must sometimes be proclaimed when the consequences are unpleasant.** Knowing the message and having the courage to deliver it are related responsibilities, but they are not identical.

Biblical boldness must also be distinguished from personal arrogance, reckless accusations, and the deliberate humiliation of those who disagree. A preacher may shout loudly, insult people, ridicule opponents, and develop a reputation for being difficult without demonstrating the courage Paul requested. Second Timothy 2:24 commands, **"And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient,"** while the following verse requires meekness when instructing those who oppose themselves. Such instructions do not prohibit strong preaching or the correction of serious error. They prohibit the assumption that personal cruelty becomes righteous merely because the offender happens to be carrying a Bible. Galatians 1:10 establishes that the servant of Christ must not make pleasing men his governing objective. Yet refusing to please men at the expense of truth is not permission to make needless enemies through the flesh. **Boldness is the courage to say what God has written when silence would be easier. Arrogance is the desire to make everybody notice how courageous the preacher thinks he is.** One serves the truth; the other serves personal reputation.

The request also demonstrates that boldness must be exercised consistently rather than reserved for comfortable circumstances. A preacher may condemn sin vigorously before an audience already convinced that his message is correct, yet become strangely quiet when the same Scripture confronts influential supporters, wealthy contributors, respected acquaintances, or popular religious leaders. The issue is not whether every sermon must address every possible controversy. Faithful preaching requires judgment concerning what Scripture teaches and what the congregation needs to understand. Nevertheless, a minister should not deliberately conceal necessary truth because proclaiming it might threaten his position. Acts 20:27 records Paul's declaration, **"For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God."** The apostle's request for boldness was therefore consistent with his commitment to biblical completeness. **A preacher who discovers that certain commandments become unmentionable whenever an important contributor enters the building may have found the location of his real authority. It is not necessarily the Bible sitting upon the pulpit.** The servant of Christ must remain accountable to the Lord rather than the approval of influential people.

"to make known the mystery of the gospel"

The final expression establishes the purpose of the requested utterance and boldness: **"to make known the mystery of the gospel."** Notice that Paul does not request spiritual courage merely so he can become famous, embarrass his opponents, or demonstrate his superiority over other ministers. He wants the revealed message of Jesus Christ to become known. First Corinthians 15:3–4 identifies the gospel Paul preached: Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, was buried, and rose again the third day according to the

Scriptures. Romans 1:16 declares, **“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth;”** The sinner's salvation rests upon Jesus Christ and His finished redemptive work, not human religious accomplishments. The apostle's boldness was therefore directed toward a message possessing eternal significance. **A preacher may win every religious argument in the county and still fail in his most important responsibility if sinners never hear clearly how Jesus Christ saves them.** The gospel must remain central rather than being buried beneath controversies that attract attention but do not explain redemption.

The word **“mystery”** must be interpreted according to the revelation given through the apostle Paul rather than treated as a vague reference to something confusing or impossible to understand. Ephesians 3:3 declares, **“How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery;”** and Ephesians 3:6 explains, **“That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:”** The mystery concerns revealed truth associated with the present spiritual body of Jesus Christ, including the union of believing Jews and Gentiles in one body. Colossians 1:26 identifies a mystery previously hidden but now made manifest to the saints. That revelation must not be used to deny the gospel's foundation in the Old Testament Scriptures or pretend that Christ's death and resurrection were unrelated to what God had previously revealed. Nor should the unity of the Church be interpreted as the cancellation of God's distinct national promises concerning Israel. **Rightly dividing the word of truth means allowing the mystery revealed through Paul to mean what God says it means without erasing what God promised Israel.** The present Church is one spiritual body in Christ, not a replacement nation authorized to confiscate every earthly covenant promise.

Paul's desire to make the mystery known also exposes the error of religious teachers who treat biblical mysteries as private knowledge available only to an enlightened inner circle. The apostle did not request boldness to conceal the message from ordinary believers. He requested boldness to make it known. Ephesians 3:9 identifies his desire to make men see the fellowship of the mystery, while Colossians 1:27 declares, **“which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:”** The revealed truth was intended to strengthen the understanding of God's redeemed people. The preacher should therefore explain the distinctions between Israel and the Church, law and grace, salvation and discipleship, and the believer's standing and state without manufacturing secret revelations beyond Scripture. **A Bible teacher who transforms every mystery into an elaborate private theory requiring unquestioning loyalty to himself has turned revelation into a personal franchise.** God's word belongs above the teacher's reputation. Paul requested utterance and boldness because he wanted people to understand the truth, not because he wanted people to become dependent upon his personality.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 6:19 establishes **the importance of intercessory prayer for gospel ministers and the necessity of divine assistance in communicating biblical truth**. The apostle Paul requests prayer despite his extraordinary calling, experience, and knowledge. His dependence upon God demonstrates that spiritual maturity does not eliminate the need for prayer. The expression concerning utterance emphasizes the communication of divine revelation, while the request for boldness reveals the courage required to proclaim the truth amid opposition. Boldness must be distinguished from arrogance, verbal cruelty, and the pursuit of personal recognition. The preacher must remain faithful to Scripture rather than subordinate the message to public approval.

The verse also establishes **the centrality of the gospel and the revealed mystery concerning the present spiritual body of Christ**. Paul desires to make known the saving message of Jesus Christ and the truth revealed concerning believing Jews and Gentiles united in one body. The gospel rests upon Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, while salvation is received by grace through faith rather than earned through works. The mystery must be understood according to Paul's inspired explanation without confusing the Church with national Israel. **The central lesson is that faithful preaching requires prayer, clear utterance, genuine boldness, and complete submission to the revealed word of God. The messenger must never become more important than the message, and the message must never be surrendered for the approval of men.**

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. Prayer For Gospel Ministers

Ephesians 6:18 — **“and supplication for all saints;”**

Ephesians 6:19 — **“And for me, that utterance may be given unto me”**

Colossians 4:3 — **“Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance”**

Romans 15:30 — **“that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me;”**

2. Utterance And Divine Sufficiency

Ephesians 6:19 — **“that utterance may be given unto me”**

Colossians 4:4 — **“That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.”**

2 Corinthians 3:5 — **“but our sufficiency is of God;”**

1 Corinthians 2:4 — **“And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom”**

3. Boldness In Proclaiming God's Word

Acts 4:29 — **“and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word,”**

Acts 4:31 — **“and they spake the word of God with boldness.”**

2 Timothy 1:7 — **“For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.”**

Ephesians 6:20 — **“that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.”**

4. The Revelation Of The Mystery

Ephesians 3:3 — **“How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery;”**

Ephesians 3:6 — **“That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body”**

Colossians 1:26 — **“Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:”**

Colossians 1:27 — **“which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:”**

5. The Gospel Of Salvation

1 Corinthians 15:3 — **“how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;”**

1 Corinthians 15:4 — **“And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:”**

Romans 1:16 — **“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ:”**

Ephesians 2:8 — **“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:”**

6. Jews And Gentiles In One Spiritual Body

Ephesians 2:14 — **“For he is our peace, who hath made both one”**

Ephesians 3:6 — **“and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:”**

1 Corinthians 12:13 — **“whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free;”**

Galatians 3:28 — **“for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.”**

7. Boldness Without Fleshly Arrogance

2 Timothy 2:24 — **“And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient,”**

2 Timothy 2:25 — **“In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves;”**

2 Corinthians 4:5 — **“For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord;”**

Colossians 4:6 — **“Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt,”**

8. The Gospel Proclaimed Despite Imprisonment

Ephesians 6:20 — **“For which I am an ambassador in bonds:”**

Philippians 1:12 — **“the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel;”**

2 Timothy 2:9 — **“but the word of God is not bound.”**

Acts 28:31 — **“Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 6:19 provides a remarkable lesson concerning humility in Christian ministry. The apostle Paul possessed extraordinary knowledge, experience, and spiritual responsibility, yet he requested the prayers of ordinary believers. He understood that the servant of Jesus Christ never becomes independent of the Lord's assistance. Pastors and Bible teachers should remember that education, experience, and public recognition cannot replace divine strength. A man may have preached thousands of sermons and still need prayer before opening his mouth again. **The preacher who believes he has become too important to request prayer has developed a confidence that the apostle Paul never claimed.** Spiritual maturity should produce greater dependence upon Christ rather than greater admiration for oneself.

The request for utterance should also challenge ministers who have confused impressive speaking with faithful preaching. A preacher may possess an extraordinary vocabulary, natural confidence, and the ability to hold an audience's attention without clearly explaining the gospel. Scripture does not condemn the development of communication skills, but those abilities must remain servants of biblical truth. Paul desired utterance that would make the message known rather than merely display his personal accomplishments. The congregation needs understandable doctrine, not endless religious entertainment. **A sermon that impresses everybody with the preacher's intelligence**

while leaving them uncertain about what God said has accomplished remarkably little. The written word must remain central.

The request for boldness should confront Christians who allow fear of human opinion to govern their testimony. A minister may know the truth and still become reluctant to proclaim it when influential people might become offended. Another may hesitate because previous opposition has produced discouragement or personal suffering. Paul requested boldness while experiencing imprisonment, demonstrating that courage remains necessary even among faithful servants. Nevertheless, boldness does not excuse cruelty, unnecessary insults, or personal arrogance. **The preacher who insults everybody and calls the resulting hostility persecution has confused the consequences of his behavior with suffering for biblical truth.** Genuine courage proclaims Scripture faithfully while remaining subject to the Lord's commandments concerning conduct.

The mystery of the gospel also demands careful attention to the distinctions established through divine revelation. Ephesians 3 explains the revealed truth concerning believing Jews and Gentiles united in one spiritual body through Jesus Christ. That mystery does not permit Christians to erase the promises God made concerning national Israel. Nor does it establish a separate method of salvation through which sinners are accepted apart from the finished work of Christ. The gospel remains centered upon His death, burial, and resurrection, with salvation received through faith. **The man who mixes every biblical covenant into one religious arrangement has not rightly divided the Scriptures merely because he can quote numerous verses.** God's revealed distinctions deserve faithful examination.

The verse should also encourage congregations to pray specifically for those entrusted with proclaiming the gospel. General expressions of appreciation are valuable, but Paul requested something more important than public recognition. He wanted utterance and boldness so the truth would become known. Believers should therefore pray that ministers will understand Scripture, reject temptation, resist compromise, and proclaim Christ faithfully. They should also pray for missionaries, Bible teachers, and ordinary Christians witnessing in difficult circumstances. **A congregation that applauds its preacher enthusiastically while seldom praying for his faithfulness has emphasized public encouragement while neglecting a responsibility the apostle expressly requested.** Prayer should accompany the ministry of the word.

Finally, Ephesians 6:19 should direct every Christian toward the importance of making Jesus Christ known. The gospel is not a collection of impressive religious opinions, and the ministry does not exist to manufacture celebrities. Sinners need to hear that Christ died for their sins, was buried, and rose again according to the Scriptures. The redeemed should

understand the mystery revealed concerning their spiritual union in the body of Christ. Faithful witnesses must therefore study the word, pray for courage, and speak the truth without surrendering to fear or pride. **The greatest accomplishment of a preacher is not making people remember how powerfully he spoke, but helping them understand the Saviour he proclaimed.** Remember Paul's request: **"And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel,"**

Ephesians 6:20 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 6:20

"For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak."

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"For which I am an ambassador in bonds"

The apostle Paul now identifies himself with one of the most remarkable descriptions of Christian ministry found anywhere in the New Testament: **"For which I am an ambassador in bonds."** Notice the extraordinary contradiction between the dignity of his commission and the humiliation of his circumstances. An ambassador represents a government, carries an official message, and acts on behalf of the authority that sent him. Paul represents Jesus Christ, the risen and exalted Saviour, yet he is writing as a prisoner. The representative of heaven is wearing the restraints of an earthly government. The world can imprison the messenger, but it cannot overthrow the authority of the One who sent him. Second Corinthians 5:20 declares, **"Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us."** Paul understood that his assignment came from the Lord, not from the approval of earthly rulers. **An ambassador does not cease representing his King because the local authorities dislike his message. The chains may identify his earthly circumstances, but they do not identify the limits of his heavenly commission.**

The expression **"For which"** connects this verse directly with Ephesians 6:19, where Paul requests prayer that he might make known the mystery of the gospel. His imprisonment is associated with his service to the revealed truth concerning Jesus Christ. Ephesians 3:6 explains that believing Gentiles are fellowheirs, members of the same body, and partakers

of God's promise in Christ by the gospel. The apostle's commission involved proclaiming that revelation without confusing the present spiritual body of Christ with Israel's national promises. Yet the foundation of salvation remains the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, as declared in First Corinthians 15:1–4. Paul was not an ambassador commissioned to advertise a religious institution, promote his own personality, or establish a private kingdom beneath his name. **The preacher who spends more time representing his denomination, reputation, or financial interests than proclaiming the gospel has confused the ambassador's assignment with the ambassador's ambitions.** The message belongs to the King, and the messenger possesses no authority to rewrite it.

The words **"in bonds"** also establish that divine approval cannot be measured by outward comfort or favorable circumstances. A preacher may serve faithfully and still encounter rejection, opposition, poverty, imprisonment, or other genuine hardships. Philippians 1:12 records Paul's declaration that the things which happened unto him had fallen out **"rather unto the furtherance of the gospel."** His imprisonment did not prove that God had abandoned him. Nevertheless, the passage must not be twisted into the notion that every Christian who suffers legal consequences is necessarily suffering for righteousness. First Peter 4:15 warns against suffering as an evildoer. A man imprisoned for fraud cannot claim the same testimony as Paul merely because he carried a Bible into the courtroom. **There is a considerable difference between wearing chains because you faithfully proclaimed Christ and wearing chains because you deliberately broke a righteous law. A prison cell does not automatically transform a criminal into a martyr.** The cause of the suffering matters, and Scripture demands honesty concerning it.

"that therein I may speak boldly"

The second expression reveals Paul's remarkable desire while enduring imprisonment: **"that therein I may speak boldly."** Notice the word **"therein."** Paul is not merely asking for the courage to preach once he has been released and his difficulties have disappeared. He desires boldness within the circumstances where he presently finds himself. His liberty has been restricted, his situation is uncertain, and the consequences of proclaiming the gospel have already become painfully evident. Yet he is not requesting permission to become silent until conditions improve. Ephesians 6:19 records his request for utterance, while Ephesians 6:20 identifies boldness as the quality he desires. **The flesh would prefer to postpone obedience until the opposition has surrendered, the consequences have vanished, and everybody has promised to behave pleasantly. Paul wants enough grace to proclaim the truth while the chains are still fastened.** That is biblical courage rather than comfortable religious enthusiasm.

It is particularly striking that Paul asks other believers to pray for boldness. Here is a man who has already confronted powerful opponents, endured severe persecution, and traveled extensively proclaiming Jesus Christ. Yet he does not assume that yesterday's courage guarantees tomorrow's faithfulness. Colossians 4:3–4 contains a similar request for prayer concerning an open door of utterance and the faithful presentation of the mystery of Christ. Even an experienced servant of God recognizes his dependence upon divine help. Acts 4:29 records believers praying, **"and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word."** The early Christians did not treat courage as an independent personality trait that made prayer unnecessary. **A preacher who believes he has become too experienced to pray for courage has developed a confidence the apostle Paul never claimed for himself. It is possible to be naturally loud, personally argumentative, and spiritually afraid all at the same time.** Genuine boldness must be directed by the Lord.

Paul's request also corrects the dangerous assumption that boldness means uncontrolled anger, deliberate insults, or unnecessary confrontation. A Christian may speak truthfully and plainly without becoming personally abusive. Second Timothy 2:24 declares, **"And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient,"** while the following verse commands meekness when instructing those who oppose themselves. The apostle's courage was expressed through the proclamation of divine truth, not through a desire to make everyone personally despise him. Boldness may provoke opposition because the message is rejected, but needless cruelty can provoke opposition because the messenger has behaved foolishly. **A man who insults the entire congregation and then announces that he is being persecuted for righteousness should first investigate whether his personality has become the offense rather than the Scriptures.** Biblical courage does not require the preacher to become a coward, and biblical charity does not require him to become a bully.

"as I ought to speak"

The final expression establishes that bold gospel preaching is not merely a personal preference but an obligation: **"as I ought to speak."** Notice that Paul recognizes a standard governing his speech. He does not say that he intends to speak according to whichever message will produce the greatest applause or secure the most favorable treatment from the authorities. His responsibility is to proclaim what the Lord has entrusted to him. First Corinthians 9:16 declares, **"for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!"** Paul understood that gospel ministry was a stewardship requiring faithfulness. Second Timothy 4:2 commands, **"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine."** The

preacher's assignment is therefore governed by Scripture rather than public opinion. **A minister who alters the gospel whenever somebody important becomes uncomfortable has not demonstrated exceptional wisdom. He has simply discovered how to make the ambassador's message answer to the audience instead of the King.**

The expression also establishes that the manner of preaching must agree with the message being delivered. Paul desires boldness, but the biblical standard requires accuracy, honesty, sound doctrine, patience, and faithfulness to Jesus Christ. Second Corinthians 4:5 declares, **"For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake."** The gospel must remain central because sinners need salvation, not the religious accomplishments of the preacher. The Christian must proclaim Christ's death for sins, His burial, His resurrection, and salvation through faith in Him. Those truths must not be replaced with religious ceremonies, works-salvation, human traditions, or the pursuit of institutional loyalty. **A preacher who can explain every controversy surrounding Christianity but cannot clearly explain how a sinner receives eternal life has become remarkably skilled at discussing the battlefield while neglecting the rescue mission.** The ambassador must communicate the message entrusted to him.

Finally, Paul's words carry a practical responsibility for ordinary believers who may never occupy a pulpit or face imprisonment. The Christian should recognize opportunities to speak of Jesus Christ without assuming that every conversation requires an aggressive confrontation. A faithful witness must know the gospel, understand the Scriptures, answer sincere questions, and refuse to deny Christ merely to avoid embarrassment. First Peter 3:15 commands readiness to give an answer concerning the believer's hope **"with meekness and fear."** The Christian may experience fear, hesitation, or uncertainty, but those difficulties should direct him toward prayer and preparation rather than permanent silence. Not every believer possesses the same responsibilities or opportunities, yet each should desire faithfulness within the circumstances God has permitted. **The ambassador does not have to manufacture a prison sentence to demonstrate loyalty to Christ. He must be faithful with the opportunities already before him.** Paul's chains magnify the importance of the commission, but obedience to the Lord is required whether the servant is bound or free.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 6:20 establishes **the dignity of the Christian's commission, the possibility of suffering in faithful gospel ministry, and the necessity of boldness despite opposition**. Paul identifies himself as an ambassador representing Jesus Christ, although his earthly circumstances include imprisonment. His chains do not invalidate his commission or

silence the authority of the One who sent him. The gospel remains the message to be proclaimed, and the believer's responsibility is to represent Christ faithfully rather than pursue personal recognition, institutional prestige, or the approval of powerful people.

The verse also establishes **the importance of prayer for gospel ministers and the biblical standard governing Christian speech**. Paul requests boldness because spiritual courage must remain dependent upon the Lord, even after years of faithful service. Such courage must be distinguished from fleshly arrogance, needless hostility, and religious showmanship. The apostle desires to speak as he ought, meaning that his communication must remain faithful to the message entrusted to him. **The central lesson is that an ambassador of Jesus Christ remains responsible to his heavenly King regardless of earthly circumstances. The chains may restrict the messenger's movements, but they cannot cancel the obligation to proclaim the gospel faithfully.**

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. Ambassadors Representing Jesus Christ

Ephesians 6:20 — **“For which I am an ambassador in bonds:”**

2 Corinthians 5:20 — **“Now then we are ambassadors for Christ”**

Philippians 3:20 — **“For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:”**

1 Corinthians 4:1 — **“Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.”**

2. The Gospel Entrusted To The Ambassador

Ephesians 6:19 — **“to make known the mystery of the gospel,”**

1 Corinthians 15:3 — **“how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;”**

1 Corinthians 15:4 — **“And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:”**

Romans 1:16 — **“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ:”**

3. The Ambassador's Chains Cannot Bind God's Word

Philippians 1:12 — **“the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel;”**

Colossians 4:3 — **“to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds:”**

2 Timothy 2:9 — **“but the word of God is not bound.”**

Acts 26:29 — **“except these bonds.”**

4. Boldness Despite Opposition

Ephesians 6:20 — **“that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.”**

Acts 4:29 — **“that with all boldness they may speak thy word,”**

Acts 4:31 — **“and they spake the word of God with boldness.”**

2 Timothy 1:7 — **“For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.”**

5. Prayer For Gospel Ministers

Ephesians 6:18 — **“and supplication for all saints;”**

Ephesians 6:19 — **“And for me, that utterance may be given unto me”**

Colossians 4:3 — **“Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance”**

Romans 15:30 — **“that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me;”**

6. Suffering For Righteousness Rather Than Wrongdoing

1 Peter 4:15 — **“But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters.”**

1 Peter 4:16 — **“Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed;”**

2 Timothy 2:3 — **“Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.”**

Philippians 1:14 — **“are much more bold to speak the word without fear.”**

7. Speaking Faithfully As A Servant Of Christ

2 Timothy 4:2 — **“Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season;”**

2 Corinthians 4:5 — **“For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord;”**

Galatians 1:10 — **“for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.”**

Colossians 4:6 — **“Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt,”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 6:20 presents one of the most remarkable pictures of faithful Christian service in the New Testament. The apostle Paul represents Jesus Christ, yet his earthly circumstances include imprisonment. His chains do not mean his commission has failed or that Almighty God has abandoned him. They demonstrate that obedience to Christ may carry consequences the flesh would prefer to avoid. The Christian must therefore distinguish divine approval from earthly comfort, personal popularity, and favorable circumstances. **An ambassador does not measure the authority of his King by the hospitality of the country where he has been sent.** The Lord remains sovereign whether His servant is celebrated, rejected, imprisoned, or free.

The expression **"an ambassador in bonds"** should also correct the tendency to make Christianity revolve around personal advancement. Some ministers become preoccupied with recognition, influence, financial support, and the preservation of an impressive public reputation. Paul describes himself through his commission and his chains rather than a collection of flattering accomplishments. He understands that the message belongs to Jesus Christ, not the individual entrusted with proclaiming it. Second Corinthians 5:20 identifies believers as ambassadors for Christ, while the ministry of reconciliation directs sinners toward the Saviour. **A preacher who begins treating the ministry as his personal kingdom has forgotten that an ambassador represents another King.** The commission demands faithfulness rather than self-promotion.

Paul's request for boldness should awaken believers who hesitate to speak the truth whenever opposition becomes uncomfortable. The apostle had already demonstrated remarkable courage, yet he still recognized his need for prayer. That humility exposes the foolishness of pretending that spiritual experience eliminates human weakness. Christians may fear rejection, ridicule, lost opportunities, or the disapproval of influential people. Those concerns should direct them toward the Lord rather than permanent silence. Nevertheless, courage must never be confused with unnecessary aggression or insulting behavior. **A man who provokes hostility through foolishness cannot automatically claim the honor of suffering for righteousness.** Biblical boldness proclaims the truth faithfully while remaining governed by the commandments of Christ.

The final words **"as I ought to speak"** establish that Christian speech is a responsibility rather than an opportunity for personal exhibition. The believer must communicate the gospel accurately, distinguishing salvation through faith in Jesus Christ from the good works commanded after salvation. He must also rightly divide Scripture, preserving the distinction between God's prophetic promises concerning Israel and the revealed mystery of the present Church. Biblical preaching should confront error without replacing sound doctrine with religious speculation or personal opinions. **The preacher who changes the**

message to preserve popularity has ceased behaving like a faithful ambassador. The King supplies the message, and the servant must proclaim it without alteration.

The verse also encourages believers who labor under circumstances that seem to limit their usefulness. A Christian may experience illness, financial difficulty, restricted opportunities, or opposition that makes public ministry more difficult. Such circumstances do not automatically demonstrate spiritual failure. Paul proclaimed Christ while imprisoned, and Philippians 1 describes how his bonds contributed to the furtherance of the gospel. Nevertheless, faithfulness does not require deliberately seeking persecution or manufacturing unnecessary conflict. The believer should serve responsibly within the opportunities available to him. **A man does not need chains around his wrists before he can demonstrate loyalty to Jesus Christ.** Faithfulness begins with obeying the Lord wherever He has placed him.

Finally, Ephesians 6:20 should direct every Christian toward prayer, courage, and renewed commitment to the gospel. Paul requested boldness because he understood that the ministry depended upon divine assistance rather than personal accomplishments. The Church should therefore pray for faithful preachers, missionaries, Bible teachers, and ordinary witnesses who proclaim Jesus Christ. The gospel remains the message of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, with eternal salvation received through faith rather than human works. No earthly authority can cancel the truth of that message. **The chains may bind the ambassador, but they cannot bind the word of God.** Remember Paul's declaration: **“For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.”**

Ephesians 6:21 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 6:21

“But that ye also may know my affairs, and how I do, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, shall make known to you all things:”

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

“But that ye also may know my affairs, and how I do”

The apostle Paul now begins bringing the Epistle to the Ephesians toward its conclusion, and the transition is more important than a careless reader might imagine. After describing

the believer's heavenly position in Jesus Christ, salvation by grace, the mystery of the Church, the Christian walk, the household, and the whole armour of God, he turns toward a matter that appears comparatively ordinary: **“But that ye also may know my affairs, and how I do.”** Notice that Paul does not treat his personal circumstances as completely irrelevant to the spiritual welfare of the believers receiving his letter. He has already explained that he is an ambassador in bonds, and he has requested prayer for boldness in proclaiming the gospel. Now he wants the brethren to understand how he is doing. The apostle is not merely a theological machine delivering inspired doctrine without human relationships. He is a genuine servant of Jesus Christ whose circumstances concern the people who love him. **A man may understand every piece of the armour of God and still overlook the brother standing beside him who needs encouragement. Paul did not consider Christian affection an interruption to sound doctrine. He considered it part of the life produced by that doctrine.**

The expression **“my affairs”** concerns Paul's personal circumstances and the matters associated with his ministry. It should not be stretched into a claim that the apostle intended to disclose every private conversation, personal thought, or detail of his imprisonment. The accompanying words **“and how I do”** establish that the believers were to receive a meaningful report concerning his condition. Philippians 1:12 demonstrates the same concern when Paul declares, **“But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel;”** The apostle desired that believers understand his circumstances in relation to the work of Jesus Christ. He was not attempting to manufacture an impressive personal legend or persuade people that every difficulty he encountered proved his extraordinary greatness. His report was meant to inform and encourage the saints. **There is a difference between telling brethren how the Lord is sustaining a ministry and turning every personal difficulty into an advertisement for the preacher's importance. Paul wanted the Church informed, not entertained by a running performance of his own sufferings.** Faithful communication should serve truth rather than vanity.

There is also a practical lesson concerning honesty and accountability in Christian ministry. Paul did not imagine that his apostolic calling required him to maintain a mysterious public image through which ordinary believers could never understand his circumstances. He recognized a proper place for trustworthy communication. This does not eliminate legitimate privacy or require every pastor to disclose sensitive information concerning himself or other people. Nor does it mean a congregation should demand access to every private detail of a minister's household. Nevertheless, important matters should not be deliberately distorted to preserve an artificial appearance of uninterrupted success. Second Corinthians 4:2 rejects **“handling the word of God deceitfully;”** while

Ephesians 4:25 commands believers to put away lying and speak truth. **A ministry that can never admit difficulty, acknowledge a mistake, or provide an honest account of its work should not confuse secrecy with spirituality. The apostle Paul was willing to let trustworthy brethren know how he was doing.** Christian leadership should be governed by truth rather than the preservation of an untouchable reputation.

"Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord"

The next expression introduces a man who deserves far more attention than his brief appearances in Scripture ordinarily receive: **"Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord."** Notice that Paul does not identify Tychicus through an elaborate religious title, a collection of academic credentials, or an impressive account of his public influence. He calls him a beloved brother and a faithful minister. Those descriptions are brief, but they reveal something important concerning the man entrusted with Paul's report. Tychicus was not merely a convenient traveler who happened to be passing through the appropriate region. The apostle recognized him as a trusted fellow believer and servant of Jesus Christ. Colossians 4:7 provides a closely related description: **"All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you, who is a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellowservant in the Lord:"** The language establishes affection, confidence, and shared Christian service. **A man does not have to become the most famous preacher in the Church to become extraordinarily useful to the work of God. Sometimes the servant entrusted with delivering the message performs a duty just as necessary as the man who wrote it.**

The expression **"beloved brother"** identifies the spiritual relationship shared by Paul and Tychicus through Jesus Christ. The apostle is not praising Tychicus because he belongs to a superior social class, possesses an impressive public reputation, or occupies a higher spiritual caste than ordinary Christians. The relationship rests upon their common standing in the Lord. Ephesians 4:4 declares, **"There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;"** Believing Jews and Gentiles are united in the one spiritual body of Christ through the gospel, as explained in Ephesians 3:6. That truth must not be used to erase God's distinct prophetic promises concerning national Israel. It establishes the spiritual fellowship enjoyed by redeemed people in the present Church. Tychicus possessed the dignity of belonging to Christ before anyone considered the particular responsibilities he performed. **A Christian does not become more saved because he receives a prominent assignment, and he does not become less valuable because his service takes place outside the public spotlight. The blood of Jesus Christ establishes the brotherhood; the duties assigned to individual members do not determine their worth before God.** Christian affection should reflect that relationship.

The description **“faithful minister in the Lord”** emphasizes reliability in service rather than public prominence. First Corinthians 4:2 declares, **“Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.”** Notice what Paul identifies as the requirement. He does not say that every steward must become famous, attract enormous audiences, or possess the ability to impress influential people. He must be faithful. Tychicus appears elsewhere in connection with Paul's missionary work and correspondence. Acts 20:4 names him among those accompanying Paul, while Second Timothy 4:12 declares, **“And Tychicus have I sent to Ephesus.”** Titus 3:12 also mentions him as a potential messenger. These passages demonstrate his repeated usefulness without supplying a complete biography of his life. The Bible does not reveal the precise extent of every assignment he completed, and no interpreter should manufacture heroic adventures to fill the silence. **The Lord did not preserve an autobiography of Tychicus containing every accomplishment he could place beneath his name. He preserved the testimony that the man was beloved and faithful. That is a shorter inscription than many religious celebrities would prefer, but it is a far better recommendation than a thousand flattering introductions unsupported by Christian character.**

“shall make known to you all things:”

The final expression establishes the specific responsibility entrusted to Tychicus: **“shall make known to you all things:”** Notice that Paul is not merely expressing a hope that somebody might eventually provide the believers with accurate information. He identifies the man responsible for communicating the report. Tychicus was trusted to explain Paul's circumstances and related matters concerning his ministry. The parallel in Colossians 4:7 confirms this assignment, while Colossians 4:8 explains the purpose of the communication and its connection with comforting the saints. The following verse in Ephesians likewise states that Tychicus was sent so the believers might know their affairs and have their hearts comforted. There is a practical distinction here between possessing information and communicating it responsibly. A messenger who exaggerates, conceals significant facts, or alters the message according to personal preference is not faithful merely because he delivered something. **A man entrusted with another person's report has no authority to improve the facts by adding whatever makes the story more exciting. The usefulness of a messenger rests upon his faithfulness to the message, not his ability to decorate it.** Tychicus was trusted because Paul believed he would communicate properly.

The words **“all things”** must be understood according to the subject already established in the verse. Paul is speaking about his affairs and how he is doing. The expression does not mean that Tychicus possessed unlimited knowledge of every mystery of God, every future

prophetic event, or every detail of Paul's life. Ordinary language frequently uses comprehensive expressions within an identified subject. Scripture itself supplies the context necessary to determine what is included. A reader who insists that **“all things”** must mean absolutely everything imaginable has ignored the words immediately preceding the expression. This is an important lesson in rightly dividing Scripture. The Bible must be interpreted according to its actual statements rather than speculative definitions imposed upon individual words. **A man who turns Paul's ordinary promise of a complete ministry report into a claim that Tychicus knew every secret in the universe has not discovered a hidden revelation. He has simply forgotten to read the beginning of the sentence.** The word of God deserves careful interpretation, and context is not an optional accessory for those who prefer imaginative conclusions.

Finally, the promise that Tychicus would make these matters known demonstrates the importance of dependable servants within the spiritual body of Christ. Paul was the apostle, but he did not perform every necessary task personally. Other believers accompanied him, carried communications, assisted congregations, encouraged the saints, and participated in the practical work of the ministry. First Corinthians 12:22 declares, **“Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary:”** The passage concerns the functioning of Christ's spiritual body and reminds believers that usefulness cannot be measured entirely through public visibility. Tychicus had an identifiable responsibility within a much larger work. His willingness to serve did not diminish Paul's ministry; it helped extend its practical benefit to other churches. **The congregation that celebrates the preacher while overlooking every faithful servant who supports the work has misunderstood the lesson of the body of Christ. A ministry is not sustained by public voices alone. It also depends upon the brethren who can be trusted when nobody is watching.** The faithful messenger deserves appreciation because the truth must reach those who need to hear it.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 6:21 establishes **the importance of trustworthy communication, faithful Christian service, and genuine affection within the spiritual body of Jesus Christ**. Paul desires that the believers understand his circumstances, and he entrusts that responsibility to Tychicus, a man identified as both a beloved brother and a faithful minister. These descriptions demonstrate that Christian usefulness is measured by faithfulness rather than public recognition. The passage also reminds believers that spiritual leadership does not eliminate the need for personal relationships, honest communication, or encouragement from other members of Christ's body.

The verse further establishes **the responsibility of servants entrusted with communicating important information to the Church**. Tychicus was expected to report Paul's affairs accurately, not manufacture details or alter the message to increase his own importance. His service illustrates how the Lord uses dependable believers to strengthen churches, support ministers, and encourage the saints. The original setting concerns Paul's particular circumstances, but its principles of integrity, brotherly affection, and responsible service remain relevant. **The central lesson is that faithfulness does not require fame, and spiritual usefulness cannot be measured entirely by public accomplishments. The Church needs men and women who love the brethren, serve the Lord, and can be trusted with the responsibilities placed in their hands.**

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. Paul's Concern For The Churches

Ephesians 6:21 — **"But that ye also may know my affairs, and how I do"**

Philippians 1:12 — **"But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel;"**

2 Corinthians 11:28 — **"that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches."**

Philippians 2:19 — **"that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state."**

2. Tychicus The Trusted Fellow Labourer

Ephesians 6:21 — **"Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord"**

Colossians 4:7 — **"who is a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellowservant in the Lord:"**

Acts 20:4 — **"and of Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus."**

2 Timothy 4:12 — **"And Tychicus have I sent to Ephesus."**

3. The Brotherhood Of Believers

Romans 12:10 — **"Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;"**

Ephesians 4:4 — **"There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;"**

Galatians 3:28 — **"for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."**

Colossians 3:14 — **“And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.”**

4. Faithfulness In Christian Ministry

1 Corinthians 4:2 — **“Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.”**

2 Timothy 2:2 — **“the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.”**

Colossians 4:7 — **“a faithful minister and fellowservant in the Lord:”**

Matthew 25:21 — **“Well done, thou good and faithful servant:”**

5. The Ministry Of Encouragement

Ephesians 6:22 — **“that ye might know our affairs, and that he might comfort your hearts.”**

Colossians 4:8 — **“that he might know your estate, and comfort your hearts;”**

1 Thessalonians 5:11 — **“Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.”**

2 Corinthians 1:4 — **“Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble”**

6. Every Member Has A Necessary Responsibility

1 Corinthians 12:18 — **“But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.”**

1 Corinthians 12:22 — **“Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary:”**

Romans 12:5 — **“So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.”**

3 John 1:8 — **“We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellowhelpers to the truth.”**

7. Truthfulness And Integrity In Communication

Ephesians 4:25 — **“Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour:”**

Colossians 3:9 — **“Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;”**

2 Corinthians 8:21 — **“Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.”**

Proverbs 12:22 — **“Lying lips are abomination to the LORD: but they that deal truly are his delight.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 6:21 provides a remarkable lesson concerning the value of faithful servants who receive relatively little public attention. The apostle Paul possessed extraordinary authority and responsibility, yet he depended upon other believers to assist with the practical work of the ministry. Tychicus was entrusted with communicating important information concerning Paul's circumstances to the churches. His assignment may appear ordinary beside the apostle's preaching, imprisonment, and inspired writings, but the responsibility was nevertheless significant. A messenger who could not be trusted would have endangered the accuracy of the report and the confidence of the believers receiving it. **The Lord's work does not depend exclusively upon the men standing behind pulpits. It also depends upon faithful servants who can be trusted to fulfill responsibilities without demanding public recognition.** A ministry without dependable workers will eventually discover the importance of the people it overlooked.

The description **“a beloved brother”** should also confront the pride that sometimes develops within Christian organizations. Believers may begin measuring one another according to ministerial positions, educational accomplishments, financial contributions, or public influence. Yet the spiritual brotherhood established through Jesus Christ rests upon salvation rather than human status. A pastor may possess responsibilities that another member of the congregation does not possess, but those responsibilities do not make him more redeemed. Likewise, a believer performing ordinary service should not imagine that his contribution is meaningless because few people know his name. Romans 12:10 commands brotherly affection and the honoring of others. **A church that reserves all its appreciation for prominent personalities while ignoring dependable servants has confused public visibility with spiritual value.** Christian fellowship should recognize faithfulness wherever it appears.

Paul's willingness to communicate his affairs should also encourage honesty and appropriate accountability among those involved in ministry. There is a legitimate difference between protecting private information and deliberately concealing important facts from those who deserve a truthful explanation. Ministers should not feel compelled to

manufacture stories of uninterrupted success to preserve an impressive reputation. Congregations likewise should not demand access to every private matter merely because they support a ministry. The proper standard is responsible communication governed by truth, discretion, and genuine concern for others. Ephesians 4:25 commands believers to put away lying and speak truth. **The preacher who cannot admit that his ministry has experienced difficulty may have become more concerned with appearing successful than behaving honestly.** Biblical integrity requires truth even when the truth is less impressive than the story a person would prefer to tell.

The description **"faithful minister in the Lord"** establishes a standard that should govern every Christian entrusted with responsibility. Faithfulness means more than beginning enthusiastically, making impressive promises, or announcing ambitious plans. It involves completing assigned duties honestly and remaining dependable when the work becomes inconvenient. Tychicus was useful because Paul could entrust him with information that needed to reach other believers. The same principle applies to those who teach children, assist struggling families, maintain church responsibilities, distribute biblical resources, or support gospel work through ordinary service. First Corinthians 4:2 declares that stewards must be found faithful. **A Christian who constantly advertises what he intends to accomplish while repeatedly neglecting what he has already promised has confused ambition with obedience.** The Lord values the faithful completion of responsibilities.

The expression **"shall make known to you all things"** further demonstrates the necessity of understanding Scripture according to context. Paul is discussing his affairs and his circumstances, not assigning unlimited supernatural knowledge to Tychicus. The believer must recognize that biblical expressions should be interpreted according to their subject rather than stretched beyond what the passage establishes. This principle becomes especially important when studying prophetic passages, doctrinal mysteries, and the distinctions between Israel and the Church. A man may create impressive theories by removing individual words from their context, but that does not make his conclusions sound doctrine. Second Timothy 2:15 commands the right division of the word of truth. **A Bible teacher who ignores the surrounding passage while claiming to have discovered a secret meaning has not necessarily gone deeper into Scripture. He may simply have wandered farther away from what it says.** Faithful interpretation requires discipline.

Finally, Ephesians 6:21 should encourage believers to recognize the importance of dependable Christian service and genuine concern for the brethren. Paul wanted the churches informed, Tychicus was entrusted with the report, and the following verse explains that the communication would also provide comfort. The Lord uses ordinary relationships and responsibilities to strengthen His people. Salvation remains the gift of

God through faith in Jesus Christ, while faithful service belongs to the Christian life that follows redemption. Not every believer will preach before large audiences, write extensive commentaries, or occupy a recognized position within the Church. Nevertheless, every believer can pursue honesty, reliability, charity, and obedience to the Lord. **The Christian who wants to be useful does not need to manufacture an impressive reputation. He needs to become someone whom others can trust to serve faithfully.** Remember Paul's description: **"Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord."** A testimony like that is worth far more than an impressive title unsupported by a faithful life.

Ephesians 6:22 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 6:22

"Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that ye might know our affairs, and that he might comfort your hearts."

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose"

The apostle Paul continues his closing remarks by explaining why Tychicus was sent to the believers at Ephesus: **"Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose."** Notice that the verse begins with **"Whom,"** pointing directly back to the man identified in Ephesians 6:21 as **"a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord."** The Holy Spirit does not introduce an unknown messenger or leave the identity of the servant to religious speculation. This is Tychicus, a trusted fellow labourer entrusted with a definite responsibility. Paul had just requested prayer for boldness in proclaiming the mystery of the gospel while enduring imprisonment. Now he demonstrates that Christian ministry involves more than public preaching and doctrinal controversy. It also requires trustworthy servants who can carry information, maintain fellowship, and strengthen other believers. **A man may spend his entire Christian life trying to become the most important person behind a pulpit while overlooking the value of being someone the Lord's servants can actually trust.** Tychicus did not need an impressive public reputation to possess an important assignment. His usefulness rested upon his faithfulness.

The expression **"I have sent"** establishes that this was an intentional act rather than an accidental meeting between travelers. Paul entrusted Tychicus with a mission because the

believers needed information and encouragement. Colossians 4:7–8 contains a closely related account in which Tychicus is likewise described as a beloved brother and faithful minister, sent for a particular purpose. Scripture therefore demonstrates that the apostle relied upon dependable fellow workers to communicate with congregations beyond his immediate presence. This does not mean every Christian messenger possesses apostolic authority or that ministers today may claim divine revelation merely because they announce that they have been sent. Paul's apostleship occupied a particular place within God's revelation to the Church. The practical principle, however, remains clear: responsible ministry requires faithful delegation. **A preacher who believes every useful task must pass through his own hands has confused stewardship with personal control. The Lord's work is larger than the man presently occupying the most visible position.** Trustworthy service strengthens the ministry rather than diminishing the one who directs it.

The words **“for the same purpose”** connect the sending of Tychicus with the explanation already supplied in verse 21. He was to communicate matters concerning Paul's circumstances, and verse 22 adds the comfort his visit was intended to provide. The assignment was neither mysterious nor a license for the messenger to promote himself. His responsibility was to fulfill the purpose for which he had been sent. First Corinthians 4:2 declares, **“Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.”** Faithfulness means carrying out an entrusted responsibility honestly rather than reshaping it according to personal ambition. Tychicus was not dispatched to create a competing ministry, gather personal admirers, or persuade the congregation that his own importance exceeded the apostle's. He was sent to serve the brethren. **The servant who cannot carry another man's message without inserting himself into the center of it has misunderstood the meaning of faithful service.** The purpose of a Christian assignment should remain more important than the publicity received by the individual performing it.

“that ye might know our affairs”

The second expression identifies the information Tychicus was expected to communicate: **“that ye might know our affairs.”** Notice that Paul changes from the singular language concerning his affairs in verse 21 to the plural expression **“our affairs”** in verse 22. This naturally includes the circumstances of Paul and those associated with him in the work, although the verse does not identify every person or every detail Tychicus would report. The expression concerns matters relevant to the believers receiving the letter. Paul was not promising an unlimited explanation of every private conversation, personal thought, or future event. The context establishes the scope. Philippians 1:12 provides an important parallel when Paul explains that the things happening to him had contributed to the

furtherance of the gospel. His circumstances mattered because the churches cared about the apostle and the ministry in which he laboured. **Christian fellowship is not maintained by treating every member of the body as a distant stranger whose difficulties are none of our concern. The brethren had reason to know how the work was proceeding and how the Lord's servant was doing.** Their concern reflected a living spiritual relationship.

The expression also demonstrates the importance of honest communication within Christian ministry. Paul did not instruct Tychicus to manufacture an impressive account in which every difficulty had disappeared and every undertaking had produced spectacular results. He sent a trusted man to explain the actual circumstances. This is particularly significant because the apostle had already acknowledged his imprisonment in Ephesians 6:20. His bonds were not something he needed to conceal in order to protect an artificial reputation for uninterrupted success. The gospel remained glorious even when the messenger suffered. Second Corinthians 8:21 declares, **“Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.”** That principle should govern the reporting of ministry activities, financial responsibilities, difficulties, and accomplishments. **A ministry that must exaggerate every victory and conceal every legitimate problem to maintain public confidence has begun treating its reputation as more important than the truth.** Faithful communication does not require turning every report into a funeral procession, but it certainly forbids decorating the facts until they no longer resemble reality.

Yet Paul's example must not be distorted into a demand that Christian leaders disclose every private matter to everyone who requests information. Scripture recognizes the importance of discretion, confidentiality, and protecting individuals who may be affected by what is reported. Knowing **“our affairs”** does not authorize gossip, reckless disclosure, or public speculation about circumstances the Bible has not explained. The believers were receiving information through a trusted messenger rather than being encouraged to manufacture rumours. Ephesians 4:25 commands Christians to put away lying and speak truth, while Colossians 3:9 commands, **“Lie not one to another.”** Truthfulness and discretion should operate together. An honest report may explain enough for the brethren to pray intelligently without exposing every sensitive detail. **The Christian who cannot distinguish between responsible communication and spreading private matters has mistaken curiosity for spiritual concern. A faithful messenger tells the truth entrusted to him; he does not convert another person's difficulties into entertainment.** Tychicus was sent because he could be trusted, and the trustworthiness of the messenger was essential to the purpose of the mission.

“and that he might comfort your hearts”

The final expression reveals a purpose that some readers may overlook after concentrating upon the information Tychicus was bringing: **"and that he might comfort your hearts."** Paul did not merely want the believers to receive news. He wanted them strengthened and encouraged through the communication. The distinction is important because information alone does not necessarily comfort anyone. A person can provide a perfectly accurate account of difficult circumstances while leaving the hearer unnecessarily frightened or discouraged. The Christian who communicates truth should also consider what that truth means for those receiving it. Colossians 4:8 records a parallel purpose involving comfort for the brethren. Second Corinthians 1:4 describes God as the One **"Who comforteth us in all our tribulation,"** and explains that believers are thereby able to comfort others. **The Christian ministry is not merely a system for distributing accurate information to people who are expected to survive without encouragement. The Lord uses faithful brethren to strengthen one another in the midst of genuine difficulties.** Tychicus was carrying more than news; he was carrying a ministry of encouragement.

The words **"comfort your hearts"** also identify the depth of the intended encouragement. Paul is not describing a superficial compliment, an entertaining speech, or an empty declaration that every difficulty will immediately disappear. He wants the believers comforted concerning matters that could otherwise produce anxiety, sorrow, or uncertainty. The apostle's imprisonment might have troubled Christians who loved him and wondered whether his ministry had been defeated. A trustworthy account could help them understand that earthly restraints had not cancelled the Lord's purposes. Philippians 1:12–14 demonstrates how Paul's bonds could become occasions for the furtherance of the gospel and increased courage among other believers. Such encouragement rests upon the truth rather than pretending suffering does not exist. **There is a considerable difference between telling a troubled Christian that his difficulties are imaginary and reminding him that the Lord remains faithful while those difficulties are real.** Biblical comfort does not require the believer to deny painful circumstances. It directs his confidence toward Almighty God within them.

Finally, this expression establishes that comforting believers is a genuine responsibility within the spiritual body of Christ. First Thessalonians 5:11 commands, **"Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do."** The command is not limited to prominent ministers. Ordinary believers can encourage those experiencing hardship, pray for the discouraged, help those carrying practical burdens, and remind one another of the promises of God. This does not mean every difficult situation can be repaired through pleasant words or that serious wrongdoing should be overlooked to preserve an appearance of peace. Biblical comfort must remain faithful to righteousness and sound doctrine. Sometimes comfort requires patient listening, practical assistance,

appropriate correction, or the willingness to remain present when circumstances do not improve quickly. **A Christian who knows how to expose every false teacher but cannot find a kind word for a suffering brother has neglected part of the work of the body of Christ.** Tychicus was called faithful, and one of the purposes of his faithful service was to comfort the hearts of the saints.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 6:22 establishes **the importance of faithful messengers, trustworthy communication, and genuine Christian encouragement**. Paul deliberately sends Tychicus to communicate matters concerning his circumstances and those associated with his ministry. The apostle's purpose is not to promote himself but to inform and strengthen the believers. This demonstrates that faithful Christian service includes responsibilities beyond public preaching, doctrinal exposition, and evangelism. Dependable servants who carry out necessary assignments contribute to the welfare of the entire spiritual body of Jesus Christ.

The verse also establishes **the relationship between truth and comfort within Christian fellowship**. Paul wants the brethren to understand their circumstances accurately, but he also desires that their hearts be encouraged. Biblical comfort does not require concealing difficulties, manufacturing encouraging reports, or pretending suffering is evidence of spiritual defeat. It involves communicating truth while directing believers toward the faithfulness of the Lord. **The central lesson is that faithful ministry does more than inform the mind. It strengthens the heart. The messenger must be trustworthy, the report must be truthful, and the encouragement must rest upon the promises of God rather than empty religious optimism.**

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. Faithful Messengers Sent With Purpose

Ephesians 6:22 — **“Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose”**

Colossians 4:8 — **“Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose”**

2 Timothy 4:12 — **“And Tychicus have I sent to Ephesus.”**

Titus 3:12 — **“When I shall send Artemas unto thee, or Tychicus”**

2. The Faithful Ministry Of Tychicus

Ephesians 6:21 — **“Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord”**

Colossians 4:7 — **“who is a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellowservant in the Lord:”**

Acts 20:4 — **“and of Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus.”**

1 Corinthians 4:2 — **“Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.”**

3. The Churches Informed Of Paul's Affairs

Ephesians 6:21 — **“that ye also may know my affairs, and how I do”**

Philippians 1:12 — **“the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel;”**

Philippians 2:19 — **“that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state.”**

Colossians 4:7 — **“All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you”**

4. Honesty And Integrity In Communication

Ephesians 4:25 — **“Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour:”**

Colossians 3:9 — **“Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;”**

2 Corinthians 8:21 — **“Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.”**

Proverbs 12:22 — **“Lying lips are abomination to the LORD: but they that deal truly are his delight.”**

5. The Ministry Of Comforting Hearts

Ephesians 6:22 — **“and that he might comfort your hearts.”**

Colossians 4:8 — **“and comfort your hearts;”**

2 Corinthians 1:4 — **“Who comforteth us in all our tribulation”**

1 Thessalonians 5:11 — **“Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.”**

6. Mutual Care Within Christ's Body

Ephesians 4:4 — **“There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;”**

1 Corinthians 12:25 — **“but that the members should have the same care one for another.”**

1 Corinthians 12:26 — **“And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it;”**

Romans 12:15 — **“Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.”**

7. Encouragement Through Gospel Hardship

Philippians 1:12 — **“the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel;”**

Philippians 1:14 — **“are much more bold to speak the word without fear.”**

2 Timothy 2:9 — **“but the word of God is not bound.”**

Ephesians 6:19 — **“that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel,”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 6:22 reminds believers that faithful Christian ministry involves far more than preaching sermons or occupying recognized positions within the Church. The apostle Paul possessed extraordinary spiritual responsibilities, yet he depended upon a trusted brother to communicate with other believers. Tychicus was entrusted with an assignment that required honesty, reliability, and genuine concern for the saints. His service demonstrates that the Lord uses ordinary responsibilities to accomplish important purposes within Christ's spiritual body. A Christian does not become useful merely because people recognize his name. **The servant who insists upon receiving public attention before he will perform a necessary duty has confused Christian ministry with personal promotion.** Faithfulness remains the requirement for a steward.

The command concerning Paul's affairs also provides an important lesson about integrity in ministry communication. Paul wanted the believers to understand his circumstances rather than receive an artificially impressive account of uninterrupted success. His imprisonment was real, and his hardships were not evidence that the gospel had failed. Christian leaders should likewise communicate honestly concerning their work without exaggerating accomplishments or concealing significant problems merely to protect a reputation. Appropriate privacy remains necessary, but secrecy must never become an excuse for deception. Ephesians 4:25 commands believers to put away lying and speak truth. **A ministry that cannot report its difficulties honestly may have become more**

concerned with appearing successful than actually serving faithfully. Truth must govern every report.

The purpose of comforting hearts should also challenge Christians who possess considerable knowledge but demonstrate little concern for suffering believers. Sound doctrine is indispensable, but the word of God commands more than winning theological arguments. Believers are instructed to encourage, strengthen, pray for, and care for one another. A struggling Christian may need biblical correction, but he may also need reassurance, practical assistance, or someone willing to listen patiently. The proper response depends upon the actual circumstances rather than the personality of the person offering help. First Thessalonians 5:11 commands believers to comfort and edify one another. **A man who can identify every false doctrine in the neighborhood but cannot demonstrate kindness toward a hurting brother has neglected an important responsibility of Christian fellowship.** Truth and charity belong together.

Biblical comfort must nevertheless remain grounded in truth rather than empty religious optimism. A Christian experiencing serious hardship does not necessarily need someone to promise that every difficulty will disappear immediately. Such assurances may sound encouraging while possessing no foundation in Scripture. Paul himself experienced imprisonment and opposition, yet Philippians 1 demonstrates how those circumstances contributed to the furtherance of the gospel. The Lord's faithfulness does not depend upon the removal of every earthly burden. Genuine encouragement therefore directs believers toward divine promises without denying their suffering. **The Christian who comforts others by inventing promises God never made has offered temporary reassurance at the expense of biblical truth.** Faithful encouragement must remain honest.

The reference to Tychicus also demonstrates the importance of dependable relationships within the spiritual body of Christ. Paul did not treat every fellow worker as a competitor seeking personal advancement. He entrusted meaningful responsibilities to men whose character made them reliable. Churches likewise need believers willing to teach, encourage, distribute resources, assist families, and perform necessary work without demanding constant recognition. Such responsibilities may receive little public attention, but they can significantly strengthen the congregation. First Corinthians 12:25 establishes that members should possess the same care one for another. **The Lord's work is not strengthened when every servant insists upon occupying the most prominent position. It is strengthened when each believer faithfully performs the responsibilities entrusted to him.** Christian service requires cooperation.

Finally, Ephesians 6:22 should encourage every believer to recognize the value of truthfulness, faithfulness, and compassionate communication. Salvation remains the gift

of God through faith in Jesus Christ, while Christian service belongs to the responsibilities of those already redeemed. The believer must not confuse public recognition with spiritual usefulness or religious enthusiasm with dependable obedience. Paul sent Tychicus because he could be trusted to communicate the truth and strengthen the brethren. That is a testimony worth desiring in every Christian life. **The Lord does not need every servant to become famous, but He commands every servant to remain faithful. A trustworthy messenger who comforts the hearts of God's people accomplishes something far greater than merely making himself noticed.** Remember Paul's words: **"Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that ye might know our affairs, and that he might comfort your hearts."**

Ephesians 6:23 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 6:23

"Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"Peace be to the brethren"

The apostle Paul approaches the conclusion of Ephesians with a remarkable blessing: **"Peace be to the brethren."** Notice what has immediately preceded these words. Paul has spent considerable time warning believers about spiritual warfare, describing the whole armour of God, identifying the wiles of the devil, and commanding Christians to withstand in the evil day. He has requested prayer for boldness while identifying himself as an ambassador in bonds. Yet after all that discussion concerning conflict, opposition, and spiritual enemies, he turns toward the brethren and pronounces peace. There is no contradiction here. The Christian who is commanded to stand against the devil is also commanded to maintain proper fellowship with other believers. Ephesians 6:12 declares that the Christian's warfare is not against flesh and blood. **A man who reads six chapters of Ephesians and concludes that his principal responsibility is to remain permanently angry at everybody in the congregation has missed the purpose of the armour and apparently forgotten who the enemy is.** The Lord equips His people for spiritual warfare, not perpetual warfare against one another.

The expression **“the brethren”** identifies those who belong to Jesus Christ through the gospel. Paul is not merely offering a sentimental wish for universal religious harmony regardless of salvation or doctrine. Ephesians 2:13 declares that those who were sometimes far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. Ephesians 2:14 continues, **“For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us;”** Within the present Church, believing Jews and Gentiles have been reconciled unto God in one spiritual body through the cross. That unity must not be confused with the cancellation of God's national promises to Israel or the establishment of an earthly political kingdom by the Church. The peace Paul desires belongs to people united in the Lord Jesus Christ. **The blood that purchased redemption also established a fellowship that human prejudice, social importance, and religious vanity have no authority to overthrow.** A believer should not treat another redeemed person as spiritually inferior merely because his earthly position receives less attention.

There is also an important distinction between **peace with God** and peace among believers. Romans 5:1 declares, **“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:”** That peace concerns the sinner's reconciliation to God through justification by faith. It is not purchased through good works, baptism, church membership, or a sufficiently respectable religious life. Ephesians 2:8–9 has already settled the foundation of salvation by grace through faith. But Christians who possess peace with God remain responsible for maintaining peaceful relationships with one another. Ephesians 4:3 commands, **“Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”** The first is the believer's standing through Christ; the second concerns the practical conduct of the redeemed. **A man may possess eternal peace with God while creating an unnecessary war in his own congregation through pride, gossip, and bitterness.** Salvation does not make such behavior righteous. The brethren must learn to practice the peace that belongs to their calling.

“and love with faith”

Paul next adds an expression that deserves careful attention: **“and love with faith.”** Notice that he does not separate love from faith or suggest that either should function independently of the other. Throughout Ephesians, the apostle has emphasized both doctrines. Ephesians 1:15 mentions the believers' faith in the Lord Jesus and love unto all the saints. Ephesians 3:17 speaks of Christ dwelling in their hearts by faith and of their being rooted and grounded in love. Ephesians 4:15 commands believers to speak the truth in love. Now, as the epistle closes, Paul brings love and faith together once again. These are not ornamental religious words placed near the conclusion because they sound pleasant. They belong to the daily responsibilities of the Christian life. **Faith without love can**

become an excuse for treating other people harshly, while a supposed love that refuses the truth can become little more than religious sentimentality. The Lord has not instructed Christians to choose whichever virtue makes their personalities most comfortable. He expects faith and love to operate together.

Faith must remain grounded in the truth of Almighty God rather than the preferences of the individual believer. Romans 10:17 declares, **"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."** Biblical faith does not mean believing every impressive religious claim, accepting every alleged revelation, or manufacturing confidence that circumstances will unfold according to personal desires. It rests upon the Lord and what He has revealed. Love likewise must remain governed by truth. Philippians 1:9 expresses Paul's prayer **"that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment;"** Notice that the apostle connects love with knowledge and judgment rather than ignorance. A Christian may genuinely care about another person while recognizing that the person's doctrine or conduct requires correction. **The preacher who abandons sound doctrine to prove how loving he is has confused charity with surrender. Love does not require pretending that error becomes truth whenever somebody's feelings are involved.** Genuine Christian affection seeks another person's spiritual welfare according to Scripture.

At the same time, sound doctrine cannot become an excuse for personal cruelty. First Corinthians 13:2 declares, **"and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing."** The statement should trouble anyone who has mistaken theological knowledge for complete spiritual maturity. A believer may accurately explain dispensational distinctions, defend salvation by grace, and identify serious false teaching while treating his brethren with arrogance or contempt. Such conduct does not become righteous because his doctrinal conclusions happen to be correct. Galatians 5:6 speaks of **"faith which worketh by love."** The Christian's confidence in God's word should produce obedience that includes patience, honesty, kindness, and concern for other believers. This does not eliminate the necessity of rebuke when Scripture requires it. It establishes the spirit in which Christian conduct must operate. **A man who can defend every major doctrine of the faith but cannot speak kindly to a struggling brother has learned how to sharpen his sword while neglecting the condition of his heart.** Love with faith belongs to the whole Christian walk.

"from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ"

The final expression identifies the source of the blessing: **"from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."** Notice that Paul does not present peace, love, and faith as accomplishments manufactured entirely through human determination. He directs

attention toward God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. This is consistent with the opening of the epistle, where Ephesians 1:2 declares, **“Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.”** The same divine source appears at the beginning and near the conclusion. The Christian's blessings are grounded in the Lord rather than the strength of fallen human nature. That does not eliminate personal responsibility to pursue peace and practice love. It establishes why those responsibilities must be approached through dependence upon God. **A man who imagines he can manufacture genuine Christian peace through personality, impressive organization, or carefully managed appearances has overlooked the One from whom the blessing comes.** Heaven is not dependent upon a church committee to invent what Christ has already provided.

The distinction between **“God the Father”** and **“the Lord Jesus Christ”** must also be preserved. Paul identifies the Father and the Son without treating them as merely two titles for the same person or reducing Jesus Christ to an ordinary created messenger. John 1:1 declares, **“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”** John 1:14 identifies the Word made flesh, while Colossians 2:9 declares concerning Christ, **“For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.”** The Son possesses true deity, and the Father and Son remain personally distinct. Paul's blessing therefore harmonizes with the New Testament revelation of the Godhead rather than supporting the error that denies the personal distinction between Father and Son. **The Lord Jesus Christ is not a religious assistant standing beside Almighty God, and He is not merely a human teacher whose memory deserves respect. He is the divine Saviour through whom sinners receive redemption and believers possess their spiritual blessings.** The language must be allowed to say what it says.

Finally, the divine source of peace and love with faith connects the closing blessing with the entire argument of Ephesians. The believer's salvation rests upon grace, his position is in Christ, his spiritual walk must be worthy of his calling, and his strength in warfare comes from the Lord. None of these truths makes the Christian independent of the Father and Son. Rather, each establishes the continuing necessity of dependence upon divine provision. Philippians 4:7 describes **“the peace of God, which passeth all understanding,”** while Second Thessalonians 3:16 declares, **“Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace always by all means.”** Such passages demonstrate that Christian peace cannot be reduced to favorable outward circumstances. Paul himself pronounces peace while enduring imprisonment. **A Christian may possess genuine peace while the world remains hostile, because the source of that peace is not the cooperation of earthly circumstances. The source is the Lord.** The believer should therefore seek peace,

practice love, and continue in faith while remembering that the blessings belong ultimately to God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 6:23 establishes **the relationship between peace, love, and faith within the spiritual body of Jesus Christ**. Paul concludes his instructions concerning spiritual warfare by seeking peace for the brethren, demonstrating that steadfast resistance against the devil must not become an excuse for unnecessary conflict among believers. Peace with God is received through justification by faith, while peace among Christians belongs to their responsibilities in daily fellowship. Love must operate with faith, remaining grounded in biblical truth rather than descending into sentimentality or becoming an excuse for doctrinal compromise.

The verse also identifies **God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ as the divine source of these blessings**. Christians cannot manufacture genuine spiritual peace through reputation, religious activity, or organizational influence. The Father and Son are distinctly identified, and the divine authority of Jesus Christ remains essential to the blessing. **The central lesson is that believers who stand together against spiritual opposition must also walk together in peace, love, and faith. Sound doctrine should produce faithful conduct, and Christian affection must remain governed by the truth of God's word.**

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. Peace With God Through Jesus Christ

Romans 5:1 — **“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:”**

Ephesians 2:14 — **“For he is our peace, who hath made both one”**

Colossians 1:20 — **“And, having made peace through the blood of his cross”**

Ephesians 2:16 — **“And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross”**

2. Peace Among The Brethren

Ephesians 4:3 — **“Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”**

Romans 12:18 — **“If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.”**

Colossians 3:15 — **“And let the peace of God rule in your hearts”**

1 Thessalonians 5:13 — **“And be at peace among yourselves.”**

3. Faith Joined Together With Love

Ephesians 1:15 — **“your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints,”**

Ephesians 3:17 — **“That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,”**

Galatians 5:6 — **“but faith which worketh by love.”**

1 Corinthians 13:2 — **“and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.”**

4. Love Must Remain Governed By Truth

Ephesians 4:15 — **“But speaking the truth in love”**

Philippians 1:9 — **“that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment;”**

1 Corinthians 13:6 — **“Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;”**

Romans 16:17 — **“mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.”**

5. The Divine Source Of Peace And Love

Ephesians 1:2 — **“Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.”**

1 Corinthians 1:3 — **“Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.”**

2 Thessalonians 3:16 — **“Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace always by all means.”**

2 Corinthians 13:14 — **“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all.”**

6. Believers United In One Spiritual Body

Ephesians 2:16 — **“And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross”**

Ephesians 3:6 — **“That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body”**

Ephesians 4:4 — **“There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;”**

1 Corinthians 12:13 — **“whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free;”**

7. Practical Evidence Of Brotherly Love

Romans 12:10 — **“Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;”**

Ephesians 4:32 — **“And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.”**

Galatians 6:2 — **“Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.”**

Hebrews 12:14 — **“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 6:23 should trouble Christians who have mistaken spiritual warfare for permission to remain angry at everybody. Paul has just warned about the devil, described the whole armour of God, and requested courage while imprisoned. Yet his blessing for the brethren is peace. The same apostle who commands believers to stand against wickedness also expects them to treat one another as members of Christ's body. Doctrinal conviction does not authorize gossip, revenge, or endless personal quarrels. **A man who knows how to identify every enemy outside the church but cannot stop fighting his brethren inside it has misunderstood the battle.** The armour was issued for standing against the devil, not settling every wounded preference.

Peace with God must be distinguished from peace among Christians. Romans 5:1 identifies reconciliation through justification by faith, not through moral performance or religious ceremony. The believer's standing rests upon the finished work of Jesus Christ. But Ephesians 4:3 commands redeemed people to endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit. They can neglect that responsibility through suspicion, favoritism, selfish ambition, and refusal to forgive. Such failures do not make Christ's saving work insufficient, but they can seriously damage fellowship and testimony. **A Christian may be eternally secure in Christ while making his congregation thoroughly miserable through the stubbornness of his flesh.** The Lord commands a better walk.

Paul joins love with faith because neither should become a substitute for the other. Biblical faith rests upon what God has said, while love seeks the genuine welfare of others. A teacher who changes salvation by grace into religious works to avoid offending listeners is

not displaying superior charity. Neither is a defender of sound doctrine who humiliates every confused believer demonstrating spiritual maturity. Philippians 1:9 connects love with knowledge and judgment, while Ephesians 4:15 commands speaking the truth in love. **Truth without charity can become a weapon of personal pride, while charity without truth becomes an invitation to deception.** Both belong in faithful Christian conduct.

Peace must not be confused with the silence of a church that refuses to address serious wrongdoing. Some organizations maintain attractive public harmony by discouraging honest questions, overlooking exploitation, or protecting influential personalities from accountability. That is not the peace Paul commends. Romans 16:17 directs believers to recognize divisive teaching contrary to received doctrine, while Ephesians 4:25 commands truthfulness. The brethren should pursue reconciliation wherever possible without requiring injured people to pretend that actual harm never occurred. **A congregation cannot purchase biblical peace by burying the truth beneath a carpet of religious politeness.** True love protects others, welcomes appropriate correction, and refuses to exchange righteousness for appearances.

Paul identifies the source of these blessings as God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. The wording distinguishes the Father and Son while honoring the divine authority of Christ. It also rebukes the assumption that a skilled leader can manufacture genuine unity through clever speeches, pressure, or attractive programs. Human wisdom can arrange meetings and settle administrative questions; it cannot replace the transforming work of God. Christians should pray for peace, exercise faith, and practice forgiveness because divine grace does not abolish their responsibility to obey. **A church cannot organize its way into spiritual health while deliberately refusing the word of the Lord who gives peace.**

Finally, the closing blessing should send every believer back into ordinary relationships with renewed purpose. Is there a brother who needs encouragement, an offense that requires honest resolution, or a harsh word that should be confessed? Does doctrinal discussion produce greater faithfulness, or has it become another occasion for showing off? Paul ends a forceful epistle without abandoning affection for the brethren. Salvation remains God's gift through Christ, and Christian fellowship remains a responsibility of the redeemed. **Stand against the devil, but do not treat the saints as targets. Hold fast to truth, practice love, and remember the divine source of peace.** Remember the apostle's blessing: **“Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”**

Ephesians 6:24 — Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary

1. Verse Quoted in KJV

Ephesians 6:24

"Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen."

2. Detailed Exegesis of Each Natural Phrase

"Grace be with all them"

The apostle Paul concludes his Epistle to the Ephesians with the same divine provision upon which the entire Christian life depends: **"Grace be with all them."** Notice that after six chapters of tremendous doctrine, practical instruction, correction, exhortation, and spiritual warfare, the final blessing is not human strength, religious accomplishment, financial prosperity, or personal recognition. It is grace. Paul opened the epistle in Ephesians 1:2 with the words, **"Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ."** Now he finishes with grace once again. That is not accidental. Ephesians 2:8–9 has already established the foundation of the believer's salvation: **"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."** The same apostle who commands Christians to walk worthy of their calling knows that salvation never originated in their own worthiness. **The Christian life begins with grace, continues in dependence upon grace, and ends with no room whatsoever for the flesh to congratulate itself.** A man who finishes reading Ephesians believing that his own righteousness purchased eternal life has somehow managed to miss one of the clearest declarations in the entire New Testament.

The words **"Grace be with"** are especially important because Paul is addressing believers who have already received salvation through Jesus Christ. He is not commanding saved people to purchase grace through additional religious accomplishments. Nor is he suggesting that eternal life must be repeatedly obtained whenever a Christian encounters temptation or fails in practical obedience. Romans 3:24 declares that believers are **"Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:"** Salvation is freely bestowed through the finished work of the Saviour. Yet grace also supplies help for the Christian walk. Second Corinthians 12:9 records the Lord declaring, **"My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness."** Paul understood the difference between grace as the foundation of justification and God's gracious provision for continuing Christian service. The believer remains dependent upon the Lord for wisdom, endurance, strength, and faithful obedience. **Grace is not a religious installment plan in which Christ makes the first payment and the sinner spends the remainder of his life**

attempting to pay off the balance. Redemption is accomplished through Christ, and the redeemed must continue trusting the One who saved them.

The expression **“all them”** also deserves attention because Paul's concluding blessing reaches beyond a single prominent minister, congregation, or religious organization. The immediate readers are the Ephesian believers, but the description that follows embraces those who sincerely love the Lord Jesus Christ. The apostle does not reserve his blessing for Christians possessing impressive social standing, exceptional educational credentials, or public religious influence. Within the present dispensation, believing Jews and Gentiles are joined in one spiritual body through the gospel, as explained in Ephesians 3:6. The grace of God is not the private property of a denomination, nor can an earthly institution claim the authority to distribute salvation according to its own preferences. **The preacher who behaves as though grace belongs exclusively to people enrolled beneath his particular religious banner has mistaken the Church of Jesus Christ for a membership organization under private management.** God's grace does not become more powerful when a man attaches his institution's name to it.

“that love our Lord Jesus Christ”

The second expression identifies the people included in Paul's closing blessing: **“that love our Lord Jesus Christ.”** Notice the complete designation of the Saviour. Paul does not merely speak of admiration for a historical religious teacher or respect for a moral philosopher whose teachings have become influential. He identifies **“our Lord Jesus Christ.”** The name Jesus directs attention toward the Saviour who came into the world and gave Himself for sinners. The title Christ identifies Him as the promised Messiah, while Lord establishes His authority. The apostle's language is not casual religious decoration. It identifies the Person toward whom the believer's affection and allegiance are directed. First John 4:19 declares, **“We love him, because he first loved us.”** The Christian's love for Christ does not originate in the idea that sinful humanity somehow discovered a sufficiently attractive religious example. It responds to the love revealed through God's redemptive provision. **A man who claims to love Jesus Christ while rejecting His identity, denying His finished work, or replacing Him with another object of worship has reduced the Saviour to a name attached to his own religious invention.** Genuine Christian love must be directed toward the Christ revealed in Scripture.

Love for Jesus Christ must also be distinguished from a passing emotional experience. A person may become deeply moved during a religious service, enjoy Christian music, admire biblical stories, or express affectionate language concerning the Saviour without possessing saving faith in Him. The gospel requires believing the truth concerning Christ's death for sins, burial, and resurrection, as declared in First Corinthians 15:1–4. Salvation

remains by grace through faith rather than through the intensity of religious feelings. Yet genuine love should not remain entirely detached from the believer's conduct. John 14:15 records the Lord declaring, **“If ye love me, keep my commandments.”** Although spoken during Christ's earthly ministry before the cross, the principle harmonizes with the practical obedience commanded of believers throughout the New Testament. First John 5:3 declares, **“For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.” A man may become emotional while singing about loving Christ and remain strangely unemotional when Scripture commands him to abandon a favorite sin.** Love that refuses obedience needs serious examination rather than another opportunity for religious performance.

The wording also prevents the believer from confusing love for Christ with unquestioning loyalty to human representatives who claim to speak for Him. A Christian should appreciate faithful ministers, receive sound teaching, and demonstrate proper respect toward those entrusted with spiritual responsibilities. Nevertheless, no preacher, denomination, institution, or movement possesses authority to replace Jesus Christ as the object of the believer's devotion. First Corinthians 1:12–13 rebukes the tendency toward divisions centered upon prominent personalities, asking, **“Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?”** Those questions should correct the Christian who begins treating a respected preacher's opinions as though they were equal to Scripture. The Lord deserves devotion that earthly servants cannot claim. **A man who will defend his favorite preacher more fiercely than he will defend the plain words of the Bible has developed a loyalty problem, even if the preacher happens to be an excellent teacher.** The love Paul commends belongs first and supremely to the Lord Jesus Christ.

“in sincerity. Amen.”

The final expression brings the epistle to its conclusion with words that expose the difference between genuine Christian devotion and religious hypocrisy: **“in sincerity. Amen.”** Notice that Paul does not merely say grace be with those who speak favorably about Jesus Christ, attend religious gatherings, or possess an outward reputation for spiritual enthusiasm. He speaks of those who love the Lord **“in sincerity.”** That word directs attention toward genuineness rather than pretense. The Christian must not confuse the appearance of devotion with actual devotion. A man can learn religious vocabulary, adopt a respectable public manner, and become highly skilled at performing the outward habits associated with Christianity while concealing motives that contradict his profession. Second Corinthians 2:17 declares, **“but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.”** Paul understood that ministry required honesty before the Lord rather

than the manipulation of an audience. **A religious performance may deceive a congregation, impress a stranger, and attract public admiration, but it does not turn an insincere heart into a sincere one before Almighty God.** Heaven does not mistake religious acting for genuine love.

Sincerity, however, must not be separated from truth. A person may sincerely believe a false doctrine, sincerely trust personal religious accomplishments for salvation, or sincerely reject what Scripture teaches concerning Jesus Christ. The strength of his feelings cannot transform error into divine revelation. First Corinthians 13:6 declares concerning charity, **"Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;"** Philippians 1:9–10 connects love with knowledge, judgment, and sincerity. Therefore, genuine Christian devotion requires both an honest heart and submission to the word of God. A preacher may become so determined to appear loving that he refuses to correct serious doctrinal error. Another may defend accurate doctrine with extraordinary energy while being driven primarily by jealousy, bitterness, or the desire for recognition. Neither contradiction should be excused. **Sincerity without truth can make a man confidently wrong, while truth proclaimed without sincerity can become a tool for feeding religious pride.** The Lord commands His people to believe the truth and practice it honestly.

The closing **"Amen"** provides a fitting conclusion to the entire epistle. It is an expression of affirmation, not a mysterious formula that adds divine authority to whatever a preacher happens to say before pronouncing it. The authority belongs to the word of God, not the volume or enthusiasm with which a congregation responds. Consider the extraordinary journey through Ephesians: the believer's blessings in Christ, redemption through His blood, salvation by grace, the revelation of the mystery, the unity of the spiritual body, the command to walk worthy, the responsibilities of Christian homes, and the whole armour of God. Paul does not finish by congratulating the flesh for accomplishing these things through personal greatness. He finishes by invoking grace upon those who sincerely love Jesus Christ. **The final word of Ephesians leaves no crown upon the head of human pride. It directs the believer back toward the Saviour whose grace made redemption possible and whose word governs the redeemed life.** Amen is an appropriate conclusion when the truth has been received, but its meaning should be demonstrated through faithful obedience long after the final word has been spoken.

3. Key Themes

Ephesians 6:24 establishes **grace as the foundation of salvation and the continuing provision upon which believers depend**. Paul begins and ends Ephesians with grace, directing attention away from human merit and toward the finished work of Jesus Christ. The blessing extends to all who sincerely love the Lord rather than being restricted by

earthly status, religious prominence, or institutional membership. Such love responds to God's grace; it does not purchase that grace. Salvation remains by grace through faith, while obedient Christian living belongs to the responsibilities of those already redeemed.

The verse also establishes **the necessity of sincere devotion grounded in biblical truth**. Love for Jesus Christ must not be confused with religious excitement, outward performance, loyalty to human personalities, or an emotional profession detached from the gospel. Sincerity does not make false doctrine true, and sound doctrine does not excuse hypocrisy. **The central lesson is that genuine love for Jesus Christ rests upon His revealed truth and produces a life increasingly governed by His commandments. The epistle that began with grace ends with grace, leaving every believer dependent upon the same Saviour who first redeemed him.**

4. KJV Cross References Grouped by Theme

1. Salvation By Grace Rather Than Works

Ephesians 2:8 — **“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:”**

Ephesians 2:9 — **“Not of works, lest any man should boast.”**

Romans 3:24 — **“Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:”**

Titus 3:5 — **“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us,”**

2. Grace As God's Continuing Provision

2 Corinthians 12:9 — **“My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.”**

2 Corinthians 9:8 — **“And God is able to make all grace abound toward you;”**

Hebrews 4:16 — **“Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace”**

1 Corinthians 15:10 — **“But by the grace of God I am what I am:”**

3. Genuine Love For Jesus Christ

John 14:15 — **“If ye love me, keep my commandments.”**

1 John 4:19 — **“We love him, because he first loved us.”**

1 Peter 1:8 — **“Whom having not seen, ye love;”**

1 Corinthians 16:22 — **“If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha.”**

4. Sincerity In Christian Faith And Conduct

2 Corinthians 2:17 — **“but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.”**

Philippians 1:10 — **“that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ;”**

1 Timothy 1:5 — **“charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned:”**

2 Corinthians 1:12 — **“in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom”**

5. Love Must Be Joined With Truth And Obedience

Ephesians 4:15 — **“But speaking the truth in love”**

1 Corinthians 13:6 — **“Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;”**

1 John 5:3 — **“For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.”**

Galatians 5:6 — **“but faith which worketh by love.”**

6. Grace Teaches The Redeemed To Live Godly

Titus 2:11 — **“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,”**

Titus 2:12 — **“we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;”**

Ephesians 2:10 — **“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works,”**

Romans 6:14 — **“For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.”**

7. Grace At The Beginning And End Of The Epistles

Ephesians 1:2 — **“Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.”**

Ephesians 6:24 — **“Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.”**

Philippians 4:23 — **“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.”**

2 Corinthians 13:14 — **“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.”**

5. Reflection

Ephesians 6:24 brings the believer back to the glorious truth upon which the entire epistle rests: salvation and Christian life depend upon the grace of Almighty God. Paul has explained tremendous doctrines concerning redemption, the Church, Christian conduct, and spiritual warfare, yet he finishes with grace rather than human accomplishment. The Christian cannot purchase justification through good works, religious ceremonies, or personal holiness. Jesus Christ accomplished what the sinner could never accomplish for himself. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes salvation by grace through faith. **The man who finishes studying Ephesians believing that his own goodness deserves eternal life has missed the foundation of the entire book.** Grace leaves no room for boasting.

The expression **“that love our Lord Jesus Christ”** should also move believers beyond outward religious profession toward genuine devotion to the Saviour. A person may admire Christian traditions, enjoy religious music, and appreciate biblical morality without having trusted Jesus Christ for salvation. Genuine Christian love begins with recognizing who Christ is and what He accomplished through His death, burial, and resurrection. Such love should subsequently influence the believer's conduct. John 14:15 declares, **“If ye love me, keep my commandments.”** Obedience does not purchase salvation, but the redeemed are responsible for obeying their Lord. **A Christian who continually professes extraordinary love for Christ while deliberately disregarding His word should examine whether his religious language has become more impressive than his obedience.**

The words **“in sincerity”** directly confront the hypocrisy that can develop beneath respectable religious appearances. A preacher may speak passionately about grace while secretly cultivating pride, dishonesty, or personal ambition. A church member may display public affection toward the brethren while spreading bitterness through private conversations. Such behavior cannot be excused merely because the individual possesses accurate doctrine. Almighty God knows the motives that human observers cannot examine. Second Corinthians 2:17 identifies sincerity as an essential characteristic of faithful Christian communication. **The Lord is not impressed by a religious performance merely because the performer has memorized the appropriate vocabulary.** Genuine devotion requires honesty before God and willingness to submit to His correction.

Sincerity must nevertheless remain governed by the truth of Scripture. A person can sincerely believe false doctrine, sincerely trust religious works for salvation, or sincerely misinterpret a biblical passage. Strong feelings cannot establish what God has not

revealed. Christians must therefore study the Scriptures and rightly divide the word of truth rather than allow emotional conviction to replace biblical authority. At the same time, doctrinal accuracy does not excuse unnecessary cruelty toward those who misunderstand the Bible. Ephesians 4:15 commands speaking the truth in love. **The Christian who abandons truth to appear loving has compromised, while the Christian who abandons charity to appear courageous has permitted the flesh to govern his conduct.** Genuine faithfulness requires both.

Paul's closing blessing also provides a fitting conclusion to the spiritual warfare described earlier in Ephesians 6. Believers have been commanded to stand against the devil's wiles while depending upon the Lord's strength and wearing the whole armour of God. Yet the final words concern grace and sincere love for Jesus Christ. The Christian should therefore reject spiritual arrogance and the temptation to measure maturity through aggressive religious performances. Knowledge, experience, and courage remain insufficient without dependence upon the Lord. Even the apostle Paul requested prayer for boldness. **The soldier who becomes more interested in demonstrating his personal strength than honoring his Saviour has forgotten whose armour he was commanded to wear.** Grace must remain central.

Finally, Ephesians 6:24 should leave every believer examining the sincerity of his devotion rather than celebrating his religious accomplishments. Has the study of Scripture produced greater obedience, deeper gratitude, stronger faith, and genuine concern for the brethren? Or has biblical knowledge become another opportunity for personal pride and recognition? The Christian's standing before God rests upon Jesus Christ, while his daily walk should increasingly reflect the grace he has received. Paul ends this extraordinary epistle by directing attention toward the Lord rather than the servant. **The Book of Ephesians begins with the riches of God's grace and ends with sincere love for the One who supplied them.** Remember its final words: **“Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.”**

Conclusion to Ephesians — Verse-by-Verse Commentary

The final words of Ephesians have now been examined, the last verse has been opened, and the apostle Paul has concluded one of the greatest doctrinal revelations ever committed to the pages of Holy Scripture. But the conclusion of this commentary must not become the conclusion of the believer's responsibility toward what has been learned. There is a considerable difference between finishing a book of the Bible and allowing that

book to accomplish its intended work in the heart. A man can read six chapters, examine every verse, memorize the major doctrines, and congratulate himself upon completing another substantial course of biblical instruction while remaining just as proud, careless, worldly, and spiritually unprepared as he was before he began. That is not the purpose of the word of God. Hebrews 4:12 declares, **"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword,"** and that sword is intended to do more than decorate a theological library. It exposes, corrects, instructs, and confronts the very people who claim to believe it. **The true measure of a completed Bible study is not merely how much information the reader has acquired, but whether the truth has been received with enough sincerity to produce greater faithfulness to Jesus Christ.** The pages may now be behind us, but their commandments remain before us.

The first great truth that must never be forgotten is the believer's position in Jesus Christ. Ephesians opens by lifting the redeemed sinner far above the circumstances of this present evil world and revealing spiritual blessings that no earthly government, religious institution, or human enemy can manufacture. Ephesians 1:3 declares, **"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:"** Notice where those blessings are found. They are in Christ. Redemption is in Christ, forgiveness is in Christ, acceptance is in Christ, and the believer's spiritual standing rests upon his relationship to the risen Saviour. The apostle does not teach that the Christian's greatest riches consist of financial prosperity, public recognition, impressive possessions, or favorable earthly circumstances. Paul himself was imprisoned while declaring these glorious truths. A man may have very little in this world and possess extraordinary riches in the Lord Jesus Christ. Another may own enough property to impress an entire community while remaining spiritually bankrupt because he has never received the Saviour. **Earthly wealth can purchase a magnificent house, but it cannot purchase one moment of eternal life. Human influence can open important doors, but it cannot open heaven to a sinner who rejects Jesus Christ.** Ephesians begins by establishing where the believer's true riches are found, and no amount of worldly success should persuade him to exchange those riches for the temporary applause of men.

The second great truth concerns the absolute sufficiency of God's grace in salvation. Ephesians 2:1 describes the sinner as dead in trespasses and sins, destroying the flattering notion that fallen humanity merely needed a little religious encouragement to discover its hidden righteousness. Then the glorious words **"But God"** appear in Ephesians 2:4, revealing the divine mercy that intervened where human strength could accomplish nothing. Ephesians 2:8–9 declares, **"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."** There is

the foundation of the gospel of grace, and that foundation must never be exchanged for baptismal regeneration, religious merit, denominational membership, Sabbath observance, sacramental requirements, or a program of works through which the sinner supposedly finishes what Jesus Christ left incomplete. The Lord did not die upon the cross to provide a partial payment while leaving the remainder of redemption to be collected through the accomplishments of the flesh. He died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. The sinner receives eternal life through faith in Him. **If salvation were earned, grace would become wages, the cross would become insufficient, and heaven would eventually be filled with people congratulating themselves upon having assisted Almighty God.** The gospel leaves no place for such boasting. The redeemed owe their salvation entirely to Jesus Christ.

Yet Ephesians also destroys the equally dangerous error of turning salvation by grace into permission for deliberate wickedness. The same chapter that excludes works from the purchase of eternal life declares in Ephesians 2:10, **"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."** The order is unmistakable. The sinner is saved by grace through faith and is then commanded to walk according to the responsibilities belonging to his new life in Christ. Good works are not the price of redemption; they belong to the conduct expected of those who have been redeemed. Throughout this commentary, the distinction between standing and state, justification and sanctification, salvation and Christian service has remained essential. The believer's eternal security rests upon Jesus Christ, while his daily conduct remains subject to biblical correction and accountability. Ephesians 4:30 declares that believers are sealed unto the day of redemption, yet the same verse commands them not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God. **A Christian who treats eternal security as a license to practice sin has taken one of the most comforting doctrines in Scripture and attempted to make it a servant of the old man.** Grace does not excuse rebellion. It establishes why the saved ought to live in obedience to the Saviour.

The revelation of the mystery of Christ and His spiritual body must also remain firmly established in the reader's understanding. Ephesians 2 and 3 explain the reconciliation accomplished through the cross and the union of believing Jews and Gentiles in one body. Ephesians 3:6 declares, **"That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:"** This revelation was entrusted to the apostle Paul and belongs to the understanding of the present Church. It must not be confused with the national promises made to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their descendants. God has not become confused about the identity of Israel merely because generations of religious interpreters have become determined to spiritualize its covenant promises into something else. The Church possesses extraordinary spiritual blessings in

Jesus Christ, but those blessings do not authorize the cancellation of God's distinct prophetic dealings with Israel. Nor should the mysteries revealed through Paul be used to invent a different Saviour, a different foundation of redemption, or a competing means of salvation. **Rightly dividing Scripture is not the art of forcing the Bible into convenient theological compartments. It is the responsibility to recognize the distinctions Almighty God has actually placed within His revelation.** The Christian who refuses those distinctions will eventually confuse promises, responsibilities, prophetic events, and doctrinal applications that Scripture itself has kept distinct.

The fourth chapter teaches that heavenly doctrine must produce an earthly walk consistent with the calling of the redeemed. Ephesians 4:1 declares, **"I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,"** and that word **"therefore"** connects the great spiritual blessings of the preceding chapters with the practical responsibilities that follow. The believer is not commanded to earn his heavenly position through earthly conduct. He is commanded to conduct himself in a manner consistent with the position received through Christ. This includes humility, longsuffering, charity, unity, sound doctrine, and spiritual maturity. The Lord did not establish the Church so that every member could spend his Christian life competing for personal recognition. Nor did He supply spiritual gifts so that prominent individuals could become the objects of devotion that belongs to Jesus Christ. Ephesians 4:15 commands believers to speak the truth in love and grow up into Christ, who is the Head. **The congregation that knows every doctrine concerning the one body but spends its days divided into competing religious factions has learned how to describe unity without practicing it.** The Church must grow in truth while refusing the pride, envy, and personal ambition that hinder the very fellowship Christ established.

The practical instructions concerning the old man and the new man expose another contradiction that believers must never become comfortable defending. Ephesians 4:22 commands the putting off of the former conversation concerning the old man, while verse 24 commands believers to put on the new man, **"which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."** Paul does not leave those responsibilities floating among vague religious expressions that permit everybody to interpret obedience according to personal preference. He identifies lying, anger, theft, corrupt communication, bitterness, wrath, evil speaking, malice, and the necessity of forgiveness. The Christian who possesses an impressive understanding of prophecy while habitually deceiving people in ordinary business has neglected the very Scriptures he claims to honor. A preacher who can expose false doctrine in another man's ministry while deliberately concealing wickedness within his own has confused the authority of the Bible with the authority of his reputation. A believer who quotes passages concerning forgiveness but cultivates bitterness against his

brethren has not discovered an exception to the commandments of God. **The Christian who insists that every word of his Bible is true should be especially careful when the Bible begins describing the sins he would rather overlook.** The authority of Scripture does not stop where the reader's personal comfort begins.

Ephesians 5 carries those obligations into the influences that shape the Christian's daily life. Believers are commanded to walk in love, walk as children of light, avoid fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, redeem the time, and be filled with the Spirit. The apostle does not describe a Christianity that can be confined to an hour of respectable conduct on Sunday morning while the remainder of the week belongs to the appetites of the flesh. The eyes, ears, tongue, thoughts, relationships, habits, and ordinary activities of the believer must come under the authority of the Lord. Ephesians 5:18 declares, **"And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;"** The Spirit-filled life cannot be manufactured through emotional excitement, theatrical religion, or claims of extraordinary experiences that contradict the written word. The Holy Spirit does not inspire a man to rebel against the commandments He has given. **A Christian cannot spend his life deliberately cultivating darkness and then expect a dramatic religious experience to transform that darkness into light.** The believer must recognize the seriousness of personal holiness without confusing holy living with the finished work through which salvation was obtained.

The instructions concerning marriage and the Christian home deserve to remain especially prominent long after this commentary has been completed. Ephesians 5 reveals the relationship between husbands and wives within the larger mystery of Christ and the Church. The husband is commanded to love his wife **"even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;"** as Ephesians 5:25 declares. That is not a convenient command for a man who wishes to establish unlimited personal authority while avoiding the responsibilities that accompany it. Biblical headship is not permission for cruelty, neglect, intimidation, or selfish domination. The wife is addressed concerning her own responsibilities, while the husband is placed beneath the example of the Saviour's sacrificial love. Chapter six continues by commanding children to obey their parents and fathers not to provoke their children to wrath. The family is not a stage upon which each member competes to prove his personal importance. It is a household in which God's instructions establish distinct responsibilities requiring humility, love, discipline, and obedience. **The man who can explain the mystery of Christ and the Church but cannot treat his own family with the righteousness commanded by Christ has mastered the vocabulary of the doctrine while neglecting its practical demands.** The Christian home ought to reflect the truth being proclaimed within the church.

The treatment of servants and masters further demonstrates that Christian obedience reaches into responsibilities that may receive little public attention. Ephesians 6:5–9 addresses relationships within the ancient master-servant setting, requiring careful interpretation rather than a careless assumption that every feature of those arrangements corresponds directly to modern employment. Nevertheless, principles concerning sincerity, justice, good will, and accountability remain unmistakable. Servants are commanded to perform their duties as unto Christ rather than merely seeking the approval of men, while masters are reminded that they also possess a Master in heaven. The Lord does not measure righteousness according to wealth, earthly rank, or the ability to exercise power over others. Ephesians 6:9 concludes by declaring, **"neither is there respect of persons with him."** That should sober anyone who has begun imagining that authority provides an exemption from obedience. The Christian employer, supervisor, minister, or household leader remains accountable for the treatment of those under his care. **Earthly authority does not make a man the final authority, and an impressive title cannot purchase an exception to the commandments of Almighty God.** The same Lord who observes the faithfulness of an obscure servant also observes the injustice of a powerful master.

The whole armour of God provides a magnificent conclusion to the practical teaching of Ephesians because it reveals that the believer's responsibilities are carried out in the presence of genuine spiritual opposition. Ephesians 6:10 declares, **"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might."** Notice the source of strength. The apostle does not command Christians to become strong in personal intelligence, religious popularity, natural courage, or the ability to dominate theological disagreements. He directs them toward the Lord. The following verses identify the devil's wiles and explain that the Christian's warfare is not against flesh and blood. Truth, righteousness, the gospel of peace, faith, salvation, and the sword of the Spirit belong to the spiritual preparation God has supplied. These are not decorative subjects for religious artwork or material for dramatic sermons that leave the hearer impressed but unchanged. They are provisions the believer is commanded to take and employ. **The Christian who knows every piece of armour by name while refusing to stand upon the truth has become an expert in identifying equipment he has neglected to use.** The soldier's responsibility is not to admire the armour, but to wear it and stand.

The sword of the Spirit deserves particular emphasis because Ephesians 6:17 identifies it plainly as **"the word of God."** The Christian's weapon is not the personality of his preacher, the traditions of his denomination, the applause of his congregation, or the force of his own opinions. It is the word God has revealed. For the English-speaking Bible believer, the King James Bible remains the written authority to be read, studied, believed, and obeyed. A man

can carry a beautiful Bible for years, defend its authority with considerable enthusiasm, and still remain dangerously ignorant of what its pages actually teach. The sword must be handled properly. Second Timothy 2:15 commands the workman to study and rightly divide the word of truth. Scripture must be compared with Scripture, interpreted according to its context, and allowed to correct the reader rather than being forced to defend his favorite theories. **A man who constantly swings his Bible at other people while refusing to let it correct his own conduct has not become a skilled swordsman. He has become dangerous to everyone except the sins he personally intends to preserve.** The word of God must govern the heart as faithfully as it governs the message.

Prayer completes the picture by reminding the believer that spiritual knowledge and careful preparation never remove the necessity of depending upon Almighty God. Ephesians 6:18 commands, **"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit,"** and continues by instructing Christians to watch with perseverance and pray for all saints. Paul immediately requests prayer for himself, asking for utterance and boldness to make known the mystery of the gospel. That request is extraordinary when considered in light of the apostle's experience and spiritual responsibilities. A man who had endured persecution, imprisonment, and tremendous hardship still recognized his need for the prayers of ordinary believers. The lesson should humble every Christian who has begun believing his experience makes dependence upon God unnecessary. Prayer is not an emergency procedure reserved for circumstances beyond the reach of personal ingenuity. It belongs to the ongoing responsibilities of Christian service. **The preacher who believes he has become too accomplished to need prayer has attained a level of self-confidence that the apostle Paul never claimed.** Spiritual maturity should strengthen dependence upon Christ rather than encourage independence from Him.

The final appearance of Tychicus reminds the reader that the Church depends upon faithful servants whose usefulness cannot be measured by public recognition. Ephesians 6:21 describes him as **"a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord."** He was entrusted with communicating Paul's circumstances and comforting the hearts of the brethren. Such service may not attract the attention ordinarily reserved for prominent preaching, but it belongs to the necessary work of the spiritual body. The Lord has not commanded every believer to become famous. He has commanded His people to be faithful. Some will preach before large congregations, some will teach children, some will support missionaries, some will distribute biblical resources, and others will quietly strengthen the suffering through prayer and practical assistance. Their responsibilities differ, but the Lord remains the One before whom their service is performed. First Corinthians 4:2 declares, **"Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful." The Christian who insists upon being recognized before he will serve has forgotten that the Master sees**

the labour even when the congregation does not. The Church needs faithful brethren more than it needs another generation of religious performers competing for applause.

As Ephesians closes, Paul pronounces peace upon the brethren and joins love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. That blessing should not be overlooked after the forceful warnings concerning spiritual opposition. The same believers commanded to stand against the devil are expected to pursue peace within the body of Christ. They are not commanded to compromise the gospel, conceal serious wrongdoing, or pretend that contradictory doctrines are equally true. But neither may they use biblical conviction as permission for pride, cruelty, jealousy, or unnecessary division. Ephesians 6:23 declares, **"Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."** That is a fitting conclusion to an epistle that has revealed the riches of grace and the responsibilities of Christian fellowship. **The Church must possess enough conviction to stand against spiritual deception and enough humility to remember that every redeemed member entered the body through the same undeserved grace.** Truth and charity belong together, and neither should be sacrificed to satisfy the flesh.

The final verse leaves the entire study resting upon grace and sincere devotion to Jesus Christ. Ephesians 6:24 declares, **"Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen."** Notice the last great emphasis. It is not popularity, wealth, denominational prestige, ministerial accomplishments, or personal theological superiority. It is grace and sincere love for the Saviour. A man may possess extensive biblical knowledge without possessing sincere affection for the Lord whose word he studies. He may preach forcefully while secretly pursuing recognition, defend correct doctrine while treating the brethren with contempt, or perform impressive religious duties while refusing the plain commandments of Scripture. Such contradictions should be confronted rather than excused. Yet the answer is not to abandon doctrine or place the believer under a system of works through which he must continually purchase the salvation Christ has already provided. The answer is genuine devotion to Jesus Christ producing obedience through the grace God supplies. **The greatest result of studying Ephesians is not that a Christian becomes more impressed with his knowledge. It is that he becomes more deeply established in the truth, more grateful for the Saviour, more faithful in his walk, and more determined to live for the glory of Almighty God.** The Book has spoken. The responsibility to respond remains.

This commentary now closes with a final appeal to every reader who has traveled through these six chapters. Do not close the King James Bible and leave its doctrines behind as though they were merely another collection of interesting religious facts. Remember where

grace found you, what the blood of Jesus Christ accomplished for you, and what your position in Him means. Hold fast to the gospel of salvation by grace through faith. Rightly divide the word of truth, preserve the distinctions God has established, and refuse the confusion that results from forcing Israel and the Church into one indiscriminate theological arrangement. Walk worthy of your calling, put off the old man, put on the new man, guard your home, practice righteousness, and remain prepared for spiritual opposition. Take the whole armour of God, trust the Lord rather than the flesh, use the sword of the Spirit, and continue in prayer for all saints. Above all, keep your eyes upon the Lord Jesus Christ, the One in whom every spiritual blessing has been provided. **A completed commentary is a finished work of study, but the Christian's obedience is not a finished assignment while he remains upon this earth. The Bible was not given merely to fill our minds with information; it was given to establish us in truth and direct us toward faithful service.** Let these six chapters remain an open testimony to the riches of God's grace, the authority of His word, and the glory of His Son. **The sinner was saved by grace, the believer is called to walk by faith, the soldier is commanded to stand in the Lord's strength, and the entire redeemed life belongs to Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, now and forever. Amen.**