



EPHESIANS

WORSHIP AND HOUSEHOLD CODE OF CONDUCT

CA. A.D. 61–63. ROMAN IMPRISONMENT

Theme: Worship

Who, how, when, where, and why we worship? This Epistle is filled with hymns and prayers as well as the vocabulary of worship that ties the chapters together.

Title and Audience: *Ephesians*

Unlike all of Paul's other epistles, only the Epistle known as "Ephesians" fails to name or send greetings to any of the saints. This is odd because Paul knew the Ephesians well. He served in the region for three years as a missionary while "God did extraordinary miracles through Paul" (NIV, Acts 19:11; 1–41). In the oldest three Greek manuscripts, the word "Ephesians" is missing. Only in later versions is it added on the side, or as a postscript.¹

The letter suggests that his audience did not know Paul personally either (see 1:15; 3:2–3; 4:21), so this was probably a circular or general letter that was to be distributed across Asia (as was 1 Peter).²

Outline

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Problems

The Epistle claims it was written by Paul (Ephesians 1:1), but textual scholars note that it is different from his other letters in style, vocabulary, and themes.³ We assume that either Paul did not directly write or dictate it. However, he could have offered an outline, given general directions, approved someone else's work, or a myriad of other scenarios that would still allow his name on it without it being solely his creation. Furthermore, Ephesians is the only Epistle attributed to Paul that did not fit into the preliminary Pauline statistical vocabulary analysis known as stylometry.⁴



Background

This Epistle claims to come from Paul while he was imprisoned (Ephesians 1:1; 3:1; 4:1). It fits most likely into his Roman imprisonment letters, while he was on “house arrest.”⁵ This allowed the prisoner freedom to receive visitors, write letters, and live in a home of sorts. We have four “prison letters” that share many similarities: Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians and Philippians:

	BONDS	CARRIER	GREETINGS
Ephesians	6:20	Tychicus	
Philippians	1:7, 13–16	Epaphroditus	The brethren. . . with me
Colossians	4:18	Tychicus Onesimus	Mark, Luke, Aristarchus, Epaphras, Demas
Philemon	1:10, 13	Onesimus	Mark, Luke, Aristarchus, Epaphras, Demas

EPHESIANS 1

Greetings in Christ

Ephesians 1:1–4

Ephesians 1:1 “Paul, an apostle of Jesus . . . to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus” Paul introduces himself as the author and as an apostle writing to the faithful members. The letter lets us know that these saints had maturity and a spiritual understanding of the gospel. The name Jesus Christ is written as a title in Greek from the Hebrew or Aramaic, “*the Messiah, Jesus.*”

The couplet, “*in Christ*” is repeated five times in the next few verses. It is also referred to six more times as “in Him” (Ephesians 1:1–14). The phrase “*in Christ*” is unique to Paul. He is cited once as using it in Acts 24:24, and then uses it 99 other times in the Pauline Epistles (and 22 in Ephesians). In Greek, the word “*in/ἐν*,” is also translated as “on,” or “among.” Different translations may reverse the order of Jesus and Christ, or use a different word for variety. It can refer to a unity with Jesus as our Promised Messiah. However, in Greek, “*in Christ*” means “in the anointed” or “on the anointed” or “among the anointed.” This leads us back to temple imagery as priests and sacred structures were anointed to become holy (Exodus 30:30; Leviticus 16:32; etc.). Christ was anointed by God to become His holy heir. The promise of the Messiah was the promise of the Anointed One. Paul’s frequent use of this evokes the highest blessings of Jesus to the saints.

Ephesians 1:2 “Grace be to you, and peace, from God . . .” The letter begins with Paul’s standard greeting that is found at the beginning or ending of every letter attributed to him (including Hebrews). His audience included Hebrews/Aramaic, who understood, “peace/*shalom*/wholeness,” and Greeks “grace/*charis*,” meaning “(a) a gift or blessing brought to man by Jesus Christ, (b) favor, (c) gratitude, thanks, (d) a favor, kindness.”⁶ This verse also clearly separates Jesus and His Father within the Godhead.

Spiritual Blessings in Christ

Ephesians 1:3-14

These verses are all one long very in-depth sentence (supposedly the longest ever written in Greek). It is a full blessing. This blessing is a digest of the whole letter. It is an exclamation of prayers and praise or psalms similar to what the Jews were reciting in their synagogues and homes at the time.⁷ God is the subject of most phrases. It all resounds of God’s glory.

Ephesians 1:3 “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” In most translation this is how it begins, but the NIV translated it as, “Praise be to the God.” Both identify our need for a worshipful, dependent, meek relationship with our God. Unlike the use of “blessed” in the beatitudes, (i.e. “blessed are the peacemakers,” Matthew 5:9), or for Mary (“Blessed art thou among women,” Luke 1:42, here in Ephesians, this word in Greek, “blessed/*eulogétos*” is exclusively for God, as “entitled to receive blessing from man, worthy of praise.”⁸ It stands at the opening of this hymn like sentence and thesis of the Epistle.

Ephesians 1:4 “just as He chose us in Him before *the* foundation of *the* world for us to be holy and blameless before Him, in love” (BLB) Even though the restoration is alone in interpreting this verse as teaching a pre-mortal life, this powerful doctrine is also referenced in the New Testament in John 1:1–5; 17:24; and 1 Peter 1:20. We read this from the perspective of D&C 93:29 that humanity “was also in the beginning with God. Intelligence, or the light of truth, was not created or made, neither indeed can be.” The Book of Mormon first taught the Prophet Joseph Smith that God chooses all to be saved, and we must choose to be chosen.⁹ However, these verses, and the next one, are understood in most Christian dogma to speak of God’s power to choose whomever He will to be the elect without human action or agency involved. Joseph Smith taught that God’s powers are actually limited within the bounds of human agency. But most Christian creeds defended God’s predestination to election or damnation as the “secret purpose of God.”¹⁰

Ephesians 1:5 “having predestined us” Only once in Romans 8:29–30, and twice in this chapter (Ephesians 1:5, 11) the KJV translated “*proorizo*” into “*predestinated*.” Only a handful of modern English translations deviate from this traditional word choice, one of which is the Jubilee Bible 2000, “having marked out beforehand the way.” The Greek word, “*proorizo*” is made up of “*pro*/ beforehand” and the verb “*horizo*/ marking off or deter-

mining.” God planned the earth in advance and set bounds. We do not believe in a salvation superimposed on passive persons, though. Prophet Joseph restored the truth that God foreordained His spirit children (see D&C 93:7, 29). We can find writings from the earliest Christians through the second century, such as Justin Martyr, “who taught that at death the ‘soul ... goes back to the place from whence it was taken.” And, the oldest complete Christian sermon, 2 Clement (ca. A.D. 150) quoted Ephesians 6 and included: “the first church, the spiritual one which was created before the sun and moon.”¹¹

“unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will” Paul uses the image of Christ adopting or begetting the saints as his children. This is how we can spiritually speak of Christ as our Father. Connecting Paul’s emphasis on “in Christ,” we see the adoption “with Christ” through His at-one-ment, which knits disciples to Him through the oil crushed and shared in Gethsemane, or “olive press.” Paul also references the conversion of the gentiles through the Spirit’s adoption in Romans 8:15; 9:4; and Galatians 4:5. Similarly, the Nauvoo newspaper, “*Times and Seasons*” published, “For Abraham is heir of the promises, and the Gentiles through adoption can become heirs with him of the same blessings.”¹² In the Book of Mormon the principle of the Lord’s spiritual adoption is described in Jacob 5, as grafting into an olive tree. Nephi also describes salvation as a joint venture between the Savior and the sinner, “we labor diligently . . . for we know that it is by grace that we are saved after all we can do” (2 Nephi 25:23).

Ephesians 1:7 “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace” The author outlines Jesus’ grace as coming from our Creator, Redeemer, and Savior. He understood that Jesus’ blood was required for the forgiveness of our sins. In the Roman world, a citizen received exemption from tribute or taxes. A citizen in the Kingdom of God is also “absolved from payment for sins.”¹³

Ephesians 1:8–9 “Making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ” (ESV) God, in His wisdom and prudence, knows the best time to share His mysteries. The timing is part of the unknown with God that enables us to walk by faith. The Greek word for “mystery/*mustérion*” means: “a secret, of which initiation is necessary; in the New Testament: the counsels of God, once hidden but now revealed in the Gospel or some fact thereof; the Christian revelation generally; particular truths or details of the Christian revelation.” Mysteries refer to things that are hidden such as the details of the plan of salvation, the temple ordinances, and vicarious work for the dead (1 Corinthians 15:29). Christ has revealed them again in our dispensation. Through the gift of the Holy Spirit other mysteries are revealed. The Christian Orthodox Church refers to ordinances, or things that require initiation as mysteries. Paul will talk about three mysteries.

Ephesians 1:9b–10 “which he hath purposed in himself: 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” Only the KJV uses the word “dispensation,” rather than “a plan for the fullness of time,” (ESV) or “with a view

The oikonomia of a Greek household. Image in the Public Domain, courtesy of Patrick Gray, Flickr.



to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times.” This is the first of three mysteries that Paul address: The Dispensation of the Fullness of Time.¹⁴ The word “dispensation/*oikonomia*” means: “management of household affairs, stewardship, administration.” It is used nine times in the New Testament, but most often as “stewardship.” In the Restoration, each time God orders His affairs with prophets, keys, and saving ordinances, we refer to it as a dispensation. Ephesians 3:2 refers to that “dispensation of the grace of God.” The Lord revealed that we now live in the dispensation of the fullness of time:

- D&C 27:13 “I have committed the keys of my kingdom, and a dispensation of the gospel for the last times; and for the fulness of times, in the which I will gather together in one all.
- D&C 128:9 “in all ages of the world, whenever the Lord has given a dispensation of the priesthood to any man by actual revelation.”
- D&C 128:18 “. . . it is necessary in the ushering in of the dispensation of the fulness of times, which dispensation is now beginning to usher in, that a whole and complete and perfect union, and welding together of dispensations, and keys, and powers, and glories should take place, and be revealed from the days of Adam even to the present time.
- D&C 121:31–32 “All the times of their revolutions, all the appointed days, months, and years . . . shall be revealed in the days of the dispensation of the fulness of times. According to that which was ordained in the midst of the Council of the Eternal God” (also see D&C 112: 30; 124:41).

Ephesians 1:11–12 “**In Him we were also chosen as God’s own, having been predestined according to the plan of Him who works out everything by the counsel of His will**” This verse links chosen with predestinate, but the Lord taught Joseph Smith that “there are many called, but few are chosen. And why are they not chosen? Because their hearts are set so much upon the things of this world, and aspire to the honors of men.” As described in verse 5, human agency has always been part of God’s plan and boundaries.

Ephesians 1:13–14 “after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise” The promise (or “*errest*” KJV) of our inheritance is sealed with the “Holy Spirit of Promise.” This is the only place in the Bible to use this four-word phrase. All other Christian denominations who wrote on the “Holy Spirit of Promise,” that I have found, understand it to mean the promise of the Spirit, or the hope of the Spirit.¹⁵ It was often intertwined with the process of regeneration, sanctification, adoption, or redemption. We find the same phrase in modern scripture, but it has a special definition.

In our dispensation, the Lord restored a theological breakthrough with His definition of the Holy Spirit of Promise as a special tittle and role of the Spirit. By studying each of the seven verses of scripture, and six of Joseph Smith’s sermons in Nauvoo that include the phrase, we learn that the Holy Spirit of Promise has a special function to seal ordinances and other righteous acts (Ephesians 1:13; D&C 88:3; 124:124; 132:7, 18, 19, 26).¹⁶ The Holy Spirit of Promise has the power to validate and seal covenants and ordinances, both conditionally and permanently, on earth and in heaven.

One of the seven verses that cites the Holy Spirit or Promise refers specifically to the conditional ratifying of ordinances that is determined by the recipient’s personal commitment and worthiness (D&C 132:7). God will not accept the vow of an unrepentant hypocrite, nor an ordinance, without proper authority. This is how the Holy Spirit of Promise is essential. With perfect knowledge, the Spirit cannot be deceived, and therefore acts as the judge and sealer of ordinances.¹⁷ When disciples live their covenants valiantly, they were (and are) sealed with that Holy Spirit of Promise, which was the surety of their “inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession” (Ephesians 1:14). The redemption and inheritance are both offered by Jesus.

Six of the seven verses in scripture refer to the ultimate sealing of the Holy Spirit of Promise—a permanent assurance of Eternal Life—also known as one’s “calling and election made sure,” and the “more sure word of prophecy,” or “entering into the rest of the Lord” (2 Peter, 1:19; D&C 88:3–4; 131:5; 132:7). In our day, it is received as a sacred ordinance, performed only by God’s prophets to couples in the Holy of Holies in dedicated temples.¹⁸

Emil Frei stained glass window of the Holy Spirit as a dove taken at St. Pius V Church, St. Louis, MO. Photo by Hickory Hardscrabble via Flickr

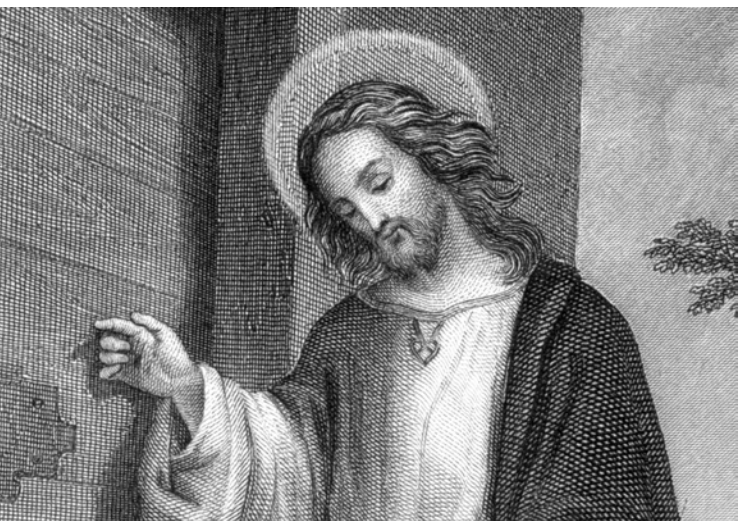


Who we Worship: Know Christ through Personal Revelation

Ephesians 1:15–23

Ephesians 1:15–17 “Ever since I heard about your faith . . . I keep asking that the God . . . may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation” (NIV) The prayer of the apostle was that the faithful saints would have a great outpouring of the Spirit’s revelation. This was the same message that the post-mortal Joseph Smith came to share with Brigham Young at Winter Quarters in a dream.¹⁹ This verse gives the impression that the author doesn’t know his audience personally... “I heard of your faith...” nevertheless, Paul prays for them so that they may receive wisdom and revelation.

Ephesians 1:18 “I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance” (NIV), If we understand the potential and feel the Savior’s hope for us, it can draw us to Him. The hope enlightens the whole person through the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ. “The calling” is our eternal call to be holy and to receive an inheritance—even to become joint heirs (Romans 8:17).



19th century steel engraving of Jesus Christ, by Peter Carl Geissler via Wikimedia Commons.

Ephesians 1:19–21 “His incomparably great power for us who believe . . . far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name . . .” (NIV) The name of Jesus as the Christ is the most powerful species and element in the universe. His name causes mountains to move, prisons to tumble, and the earth to shake (Moroni 8:24). Even more so, it can free us from sin eternally. Nephi’s final words include a similar message: “this is the way; and there is none other way nor given under heaven whereby man can be saved in the kingdom of God” (2 Nephi 31:21).

Ephesians 1:23 “God . . . appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body”

(NIV) This emblematic image of the church as Christ’s body, stems from the fact that it is His church. It is not Peter’s or Paul’s church (and in our day and age, it’s not Joseph Smith’s or Pres. Nelson’s church). Jesus, our Lord, directs the workings of the church from the other side of the veil. He governs His Kingdom through the operations of the membership. Willing saints serve as His hands and feet—which still carry the signs of His atoning sacrifice for all earthlings.

EPHESIANS 2

Personal Worship: Alive in Christ

Ephesians 2:1–10

Ephesians 2:1–3 “you were dead in your transgressions and sins, . . . you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is . . . disobedient” (NIV) Before coming to Christ in conversion, those who were disobedient to God’s commandments had served the devil. The Greek word “air/*aér*” is usually just the air, but can be haze, and here references the ruler of spirits or power in the air, “i.e. the devil, the prince of the demons that according to Jewish opinion fill the realm of air.”²⁰ The text suggests that mortal nature was wicked and gratified sinful and selfish cravings. The full text can be interpreted as saying that humanity is naturally wicked. Yet the Book of Mormon corrects this misunderstanding: “the natural man is an enemy to God,” yet “the Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil” in order to choose the right (Mosiah 3:19; Moroni 7:16). The Book of Mormon is a great resource in interpreting confusing biblical passages.

Ephesians 2:4–7 “But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ . . . raised us up together, and made *us* sit together in heavenly places in Christ” Even in our fallen state, God’s extended mercy and love offer the best gift of life: His Son as our Savior. It is the Lord’s grace that allows us to sit together with Him in heaven. This is the second mystery addressed in this chapter. “Quickened” is also translated as “made us alive” (ESV). All—Jews and Gentiles—will receive God’s grace and be restored to life or “quickened” through the gift of salvation.²¹

Ephesians 2:8–10 “By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves” These verses are completely true—we are saved by grace. Nothing we can do will redeem our fallen nature without this gift from God. We need to exert faith to realize His saving power, but it will happen with or without our faith. The next verse adds God’s plan and the need for good works.

“having been created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them” (BLB) The rest of the Epistle includes several examples of how humans should avoid sin and do good (see Ephesians 4:25–32; 5:1–5, 25; 6:22–32). The Epistle of James has even more (i.e. James 2:17–18; etc.).

Worship as One in Christ

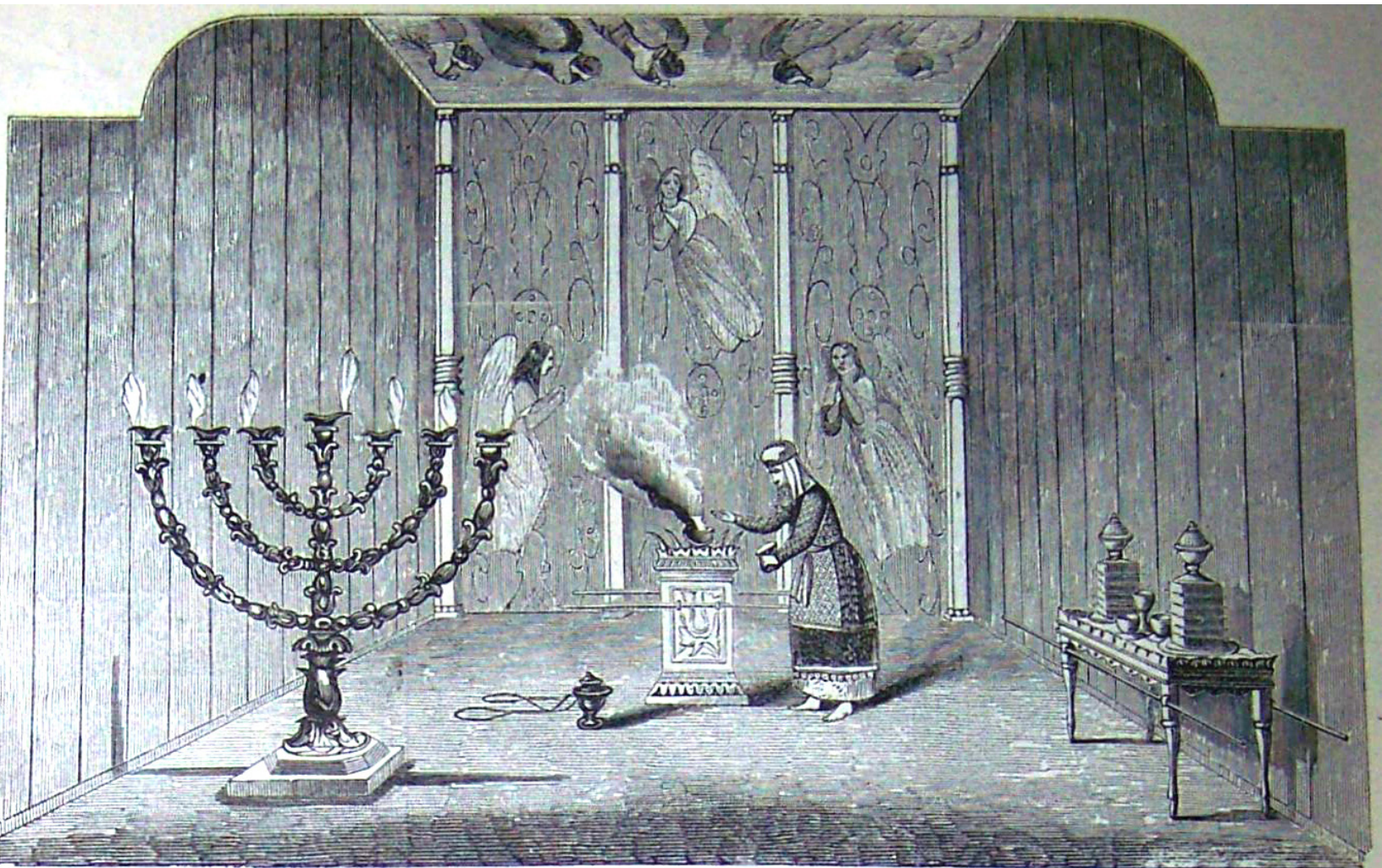
Ephesians 2:11–22

Ephesians 2:11–13 “Formerly you who are Gentiles in the flesh and called uncircumcised . . . But now in Christ Jesus you . . . have been brought near” (BSB) The Gentile converts to Christianity had entered the same

covenant of Abraham (but without the need for circumcision), because of Jesus' sacrifice for us in Gethsemane. We have the potential to come "nigh" unto God, our Heavenly Father, through His Son's mediation (KJV). With their eternal perspective, both know us better than we know ourselves in our second estate. This closeness is fostered through our faith in Him. Almost like a magnetic pull, God's Spirit sends love, companionship, and peace. Yet, the Spirit likes to be entreated gently.

Ephesians 2:14 "For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility" (NIV) Jesus fulfills Isaiah 9:5–6 as the "Prince of Peace."²² As Jesus' successor, the Spirit becomes the messenger of peace (D&C 6:23). The "wall" may refer to any barrier between God and humanity, or heaven and earth. Or perhaps it referred to the high stone wall that separated the court of the Gentiles from the clean House of God. Around this temple barrier, gentiles were commanded in three languages (Latin, Greek, and Hebrew) not to pass into the sacred space on penalty of death (see Acts 21:28).²³ As the discussion is about Gentiles receiving the blessings of Abraham, it seems appropriate that the barrier separating the court of the Gentiles from Israelites would be taken down. The barrier is also translated: "partition inside a house." In this light, it may mean the veil that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies in the temple (Exodus 26:33). Whatever the symbolism, it referred to a barrier between God and humanity.

The Holy Place of the Biblical Tabernacle; illustration from the 1890 Holman Bible. Image via Wikimedia Commons.



Ephesians 2:15–16 “He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity” Jesus reconciled both the old, “the law with its commands and regulations” (NIV) that was to point Israel to Him, and the separation between man and God, by His atoning sacrifice and death. By so doing, Jesus accomplished His mission to destroy Satan’s hold on mankind. The enmity placed between Satan and humanity in the Garden of Eden, was used by the devil to fight humanity. Yet, Jesus’ conquering over sin and death broke Satan’s grasp and enmity on humanity. Jesus rose as a “new man” (Ephesians 2:15) allowing Him to bring peace to the world.

Ephesians 2:17–18 “For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father” Now that Jesus is a resurrected man, His Spirit, the Holy Ghost, continues to testify within us of all truth. It is the Spirit that offers peace and sanctification to our souls so that we may return to our Eternal Parents someday.

Worship of Christ in the Household

Ephesians 2:19–22

Ephesians 2:19 “ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God” In the Roman world, citizenship included the right to: wear a toga, marry a citizen, and pass on citizenship to one’s children.²⁴ Politically, the civil rights of citizens included receiving an exemption from taxes, “rule by law,” having the right to a legal appeal, and enjoying a vested interest in their government.²⁵ Citizenship in Roman law paled to the great benefits and opportunities in God’s Kingdom. The Gentile-Christians are no longer foreigners to Israel, but are full citizens in the household or Kingdom of God.

Ephesians 2:20 “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone” Christ’s church was initiated by Himself. Christianity was not started by Paul or any other apostle as is commonly debated by biblical scholars.²⁶ Those in the New Testament called prophets were not the same as we hold them today. In the early church, a prophet was one who testified of Jesus Christ (Revelation 19:10), while the apostles held the keys (Matthew 16:19; see also Ephesians 4:11). The Quorum of the Twelve Apostles held the keys and directed the work, not as “one” prophet. Many people were referred to as prophets who spoke with the Spirit for God (Acts 21:9). Nevertheless, without the superstructure of



Cornerstone of a Latter-day Saint Church building in Provo, Utah. Photo by Ben P L via Wikimedia Commons.

apostolic authority, the lesser leaders could not stand. When the apostasy reigned across the early churches, the Lord withdrew His apostles. The foundation of Christ's church collapsed and the debris was gathered by scavengers to build another church.

Ephesians 2:21–22 “In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord” This is a fascinating image of the Temple. In the ancient world, the Greek and Romans temples, and even Herod's addition to the second temple, had fallen to corruption. This is why Christ's church and Jesus' body are used in the New Testament as new temples. It is through Jesus that we may enter into God's presence. He will show us the way to be washed, clothed, and anointed as priests and priestesses. Then the saint's bodies can be cleansed by the Spirit and they become temples wherein the Holy Ghost can dwell.

EPHESIANS 3

Worship for Gentiles: The Mystery of Salvation

Ephesians 3:1–13

Ephesians 3:1–2 “Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward” Paul's self-identification as a prisoner helps us date the letter to possibly his imprisonments in Rome or Caesarea. However, the next phrase suggests that the audience may not know him, which means that either it was not to the Ephesians, or not during those latter two imprisonments (“if ye have heard...”), which both happened after Paul served in Ephesus for three years. On Paul's second mission he was also imprisoned for less than a day in Philippi (Acts 16:16–35), but that does not seem long enough to write this letter. And the message and style seem to be written at the same time as Colossians. As mentioned at the beginning of this Epistle's explanation, there are many uncertainties entangled with the details of who and when. This is the only time we find the title, “dispensation of the grace,” in the New Testament.

Ephesians 3:3–4 “this secret was made known to me through a revelation, just as I wrote about briefly in the past” (ISV) Revelation is the key to new information from God. Here it references one specific revelation. Yet, in Galatians 2:2, and Romans 16:25, Paul describes “revelation as a continuous and unceasing flow of information and power.”²⁷ The secret or “mystery” (KJV) was explained in a previous letter to them. Here is more evidence that we are missing other scripture, or that the Bible has only canonized some of the correspondence from the apostles. Through revelation Paul received knowledge of the Messiah/Christ. This may refer to his first vision, or another sacred experience.²⁸

Ephesians 3:5–6 “It has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets [that] this mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are fellow heirs” (BSB) This is the third mystery shared in this

Epistle: Gentiles may become joint-heirs. Peter's revelation in Acts 10:9–48, came from the Spirit and opened the door for this specific mystery. The Lord taught Peter (and was later verified by the Quorum of the Twelve and the whole church), that the Gentiles had been cleansed through Christ's atonement, and were no longer unclean. They could be adopted into the covenant, too. There were converts to Judaism before that time, but not without complying with the Law of Moses. Peter's vision taught that Jesus' grace, was completely extended to the Gentiles. Now the chosen people are those who choose to follow Jesus' way.



Mosaic depicting Roman slaves. Image via Wikimedia Commons.

Ephesians 3:7–8 “I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God’s grace, given me through the working of His power. Though I am less than the least . . . to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ” (BSB) The choice of the word “servant” is always significant in their hierarchical culture where slaves and servants made up so much of the population. I doubt the word was used lightly. Everyone knew the work of a servant/slave. Yet that is the relationship that disciples have to the Lord—except for one major difference:

agency. We serve our master out of love and by choice. And, becoming a servant to God increases one's freedom. Paul was made a "servant" (NIV), or "minister" (ESV), or messenger, thanks to God's forgiveness and grace, to work under the power of God. We often describe "God's power" as priesthood.²⁹

Ephesians 3:9–11 "This mystery . . . was kept hidden in God . . . now, through the church. . . should be made known . . . according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ" (NIV) God's eternal purposes were planned, "before the foundation of the earth," and were then revealed to the chief apostle. (Ephesians 1:4). Evidence of a premortal life and plan are sprinkled throughout the Bible, even though it is not taught outside of the Restoration. These verses also speak of the Spirit as the source of revelation.

Ephesians 3:12–13 "In Him and through faith in Him we may enter God's presence with boldness and confidence" (BSB) Our spiritual confidence and trust comes from faith in Christ. With that we have "access" (KJV) to enter the presence of God (D&C 93:1). This is not self-confidence, but confidence in and with our Redeemer.

Ephesians 3:13 "I ask you not to be discouraged because of my sufferings for you" (BSB) Paul's use of sufferings or "tribulation" (KJV) in Greek means, "internal temptation and internal persecution." This verse sounds as if the audience at least knew of Paul and his challenges, even if they did not know him personally.

Worship through Prayer for Strength through The Spirit

Ephesians 3:14–21

Ephesians 3:14 "I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" Before the prayer itself (verse 16–21), we learn how and to whom the author prays. In the Old Testament, Psalms 95:6 reads, "Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the LORD our Maker," and Daniel knelt to pray three times a day (Daniel 6:10). In the New Testament, Satan asks Jesus to kneel before him (Matthew 4:9), but He would not. Instead, the scriptures include Him kneeling in Gethsemane (Luke 22:41). Note that the prayer is before and to the Father.

Ephesians 3:15 "from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name" (NIV) This is a unique verse in all scripture that describes families in heaven. The eternal sealing of a husband and wife is mentioned in D&C 132:19, but this verse alone mentions families. The doctrine of the Restoration alone speaks of families being sealed eternally, but many Christians believe they will see their family members again in heaven. The eternal family of God is gathered together in all things thanks to Christ as explained in Ephesians 1:10.

In the Roman world, citizens alone had the right to receive a special third name. The name given from God will be a new name written on a stone (Revelation 2:17). Each disciple covenants at baptism to take Christ's name upon them. This is the key name to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

Ephesians 3:16–17 “I pray that . . . he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit . . . through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love” The prayer begins with a request for the Spirit to strengthen the saints through faith. We often find a link between the workings of the Spirit and faith in Acts and the Epistles (especially the Pauline letters: 1 Corinthians 12:9; 2 Corinthians 4:13; Galatians 3:2; 5:5, 22; Ephesians 1:13, etc.). The prayer for inner strength extends to the need for being rooted in love.

Ephesians 3:18–19 “. . . to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God” (BSB) Of all the things to pray for, an understanding of God’s love is paramount. The letter includes an extraordinary request—to comprehend the depth of Jesus’ love and God’s fullness!

Ephesians 3:20–21 “Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen” (NIV) The prayer is closed by acknowledging that God’s abundant mercy and love will bless us beyond our comprehension, so we glorify His name eternally. The closing includes the name of Christ Jesus.

EPHESIANS 4

Worship in Unity in the Spirit

Ephesians 4:1–16

Ephesians 4:1–3 “I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received . . . keep the unity of the Spirit through . . . peace” (NIV) We are admonished to live a life worthy of the calling we have received as Christians. This half of the letter is filled with action. There are 36 verbs in the imperative or commanding form of Greek in the rest of the letter. Our efforts should be directed to refine our Christ-like traits. Jesus also taught a lot about fostering unity (especially at the Last Supper in John 15–17). The Lord revealed to Joseph Smith that unity is the key to the celestial kingdom (D&C 105:3–5).

Ephesians 4:4–6 “. . . one body, and one Spirit . . . one hope . . . One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all” In these three verses there are seven manifestations of oneness or unity. The Spirit is a unifier, as it teaches truth to all sincere seekers. God the Father is the subject of verse six, including the description of His omniscience.

Ephesians 4:7 “to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift” (NKJV) Jesus now becomes the main subject for the next several verses. The author transitions from “all” in unity to “each” receiving Christ’s gifts. God blesses the unified saints one by one.



The Descent of Christ into Limbo by Domenico di Pace Beccafumi, ca. 1535. Image via Wikimedia Commons.

like the way the NIV explains that Jesus gave the organization as gifts, “Christ himself gave the apostles.” Some of the names of the leaders differ—a pastor is a shepherd, but we use the name “Bishop.” Even though the Greek word for “evangelist” meant, “a missionary, bearer of good tidings,” Joseph Smith defined it differently: “An evangelist is patriarch...wherever the church of Christ is established in the earth, there should be a Patriarch for the benefit of the posterity of the Saints, as it was with Jacob in the giving of patriarchal blessings unto his sons.”³⁰

Regarding the foundation of apostles and prophets, Spencer W. Kimball taught, “Church authorities are a ‘hitching post.’ No one will ever go astray who ties himself to the authorities of the church. The majority of the 12 will never lead the church astray.”³¹ These church offices help the Saints attain a unity of faith “and thus grow up into Christ the head of the body” (NIV). Other lists are found in other Epistles and the Book of Acts.³²

Ephesians 4:8–10 “He who descended is the very one who ascended above all the heavens, in order to fill all things” (BSB) Christ captured the usurper and counterfeit, Lucifer, which then gave Him power over death. Psalms 68:18, describes Jesus’ resurrection as the act of releasing the captives from the Spirit Prison. The excerpt points to Christ’s condescension, too. Only those who hold the Doctrine and Covenants as scripture understand that during the three days that His body lay in the tomb, Jesus went to prepare a way for those in the Spirit Prison to be released (D&C 138). We, too, must descend in humility in order to ascend in faith.

Church Worship and Organization

Ephesians 4:11

Ephesians 4:11 “He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers” I like Paul’s perspective of giving gifts. He treats the organization of the church as if it were another gift from God. “He gave...” is also translated, “Now these are the gifts Christ gave” (NLT). I also

EPHESIANS 4:11

Apostle
Prophet
Evangelist
Pastor
Teacher

1 CORINTHIANS 12:28

Apostle
Prophet

Teacher
Help
Government

MEANING

One sent, special messenger
Foreteller, interpreter
Bringer of good news
Shepherd
Teacher
Help, Aid
Director, administrator

1 TIMOTHY 3; TITUS 1

Deacon
Bishop
Elder

ACTS 14:23; PHILIPPIANS 1:1

Deacon
Bishop
Elder

MEANING

Servant
Overseer
A member of the Sanhedrin, an elder of a Christian assembly

Ephesians 4:12–13 “For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith . . .” Under the Spirit’s direction, inspired members and leaders of the church seek united and church-wide edification. Most modern translations do not use the word “perfecting.” Instead, it reads: “equip his people for works of service” (NIV), or “for the training of the saints in the work of ministry” (HCSB). The word “saint,” means “holy ones” from the Latin, “*sanctus*.” The intent is that members of the church are to become holy. The road to become a joint heir with Christ requires that “we mature to the full measure of the stature of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13, BSB; also, Ephesians 1:13; 4:13; Romans 8:17). Line up on line, we progress in unity of faith and a personal knowledge of Jesus as our Christ.

Ephesians 4:14 “We should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting” (NKJV) The saints need spiritual maturity and grounding so as not to be swayed by the adversary’s schemes. We find people deliberately corrupting truths. Satan sends his henchmen to deceive truth-seekers.

Ephesians 4:15–16 “speaking the truth in love, we should grow up in all things into Him who is the head, Christ . . . the increase of the body makes for itself, to *the* building up of itself in love” (BLB) Paul is symboli-

cally using the image of Jesus' body as the body of the Church. When we are members of that body or when the church works in unity, then it grows as does Jesus' glorious body.

Worship through Christian Living

Ephesians 4:17-5:7

Ephesians 4:17-5:6 “As a follower of the Lord, I order you to stop living like stupid, godless people” (CEV)

Rather than living like the gentiles who were “separated from the life of God because of the ignorance . . . hardening of their hearts . . . sensuality . . . impurity, and . . . greed” (NIV), saints need to live a higher law. When we lie to someone else, or sin in any way, we are actually hurting ourselves as well as them.

The next ten verses list attributes needed to become disciples of Jesus and “children of God.” They are laced with imperative action verbs. These new commandments are included in our covenant to live the law of the gospel of Jesus Christ. These are just a few of the many selfish behaviors that need to be exchanged for a selfless Christ-like focus, and positive attributes that are needed to be called “followers of God” (Ephesians 5:1).

- “Put off your old self . . . corrupted by its deceitful desires” (Ephesians 4:22, NIV)
- “Put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness” (Ephesians 2:24, NIV)
- “Put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor” (Ephesians 4:25, NIV)
- “Do not let the sun set upon your anger” (Ephesians 4:26, BSB)
- “Do not give the devil a foothold” (Ephesians 4:27, NIV)
- “Steal no longer” (Ephesians 4:28, NIV)
- “Work, doing something useful with their own hands” (NIV)
- “Share with those in need” (NIV)
- “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths” (Ephesians 4:29, BSB)
- “Building others up according to their needs” (NIV)
- “Edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers” (KJV)
- “Do not grieve the Holy Spirit . . . in whom you were sealed for . . . redemption” (BSB)
- “Stop being bitter and angry and mad at others” (Ephesians 4:31, CEV)
- “Don’t yell at one another or curse each other or ever be rude” (CEV)
- “Be kind and tender-hearted to one another, forgiving each other” (Ephesians 4:32, BSB)
- “Follow God’s example . . . and walk in the way of love” (Ephesians 5:1-2, NIV)
- “There must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity” (Ephesians 5:3, NIV)
- “Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk, or crude joking (Ephesians 5:4, BSB)
- “Let there be thanksgiving” (ESV)
- “Let no one deceive you with empty arguments” (Ephesians 5:6, CSB)

Disciples who apply these steps (especially toward those we live with) become sanctified by the Spirit. The process of sanctification, or coming unto Christ, requires changes of behavior, attitude, and desire. By doing so, our way of live becomes our worship. We worship God by keeping His commandments. But, the author explains we are idolaters when we are greedy (Ephesians 5:4), and I add, whenever we deliberately sin. In our day, prophets have added to this list the commandment to avoid pornography as a plague. We need to control all our thoughts, including nursing a grudge. And, “repent daily.”³³

EPHESIANS 5

The Spirit’s Presence in Worship

Ephesians 5:8-14

Ephesians 5:8 “You were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light” (NASB) The reference to “children,” has less to do with age than with humility and meekness before God. Coming from the same general time period, we find other writings that discuss “light” and “darkness” as metaphors, including the Gospel of John and the Dead Sea Scrolls from Qumran.

GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT

Faith,
Hope,
Charity,
Healing,
Wisdom,
Miracles,
Prophecy,
Knowledge,
Discernment of Spirits,
Tongues + Interpretation of Tongues
(1Corinthians 12:8–10; 13:13; Moroni 10; D&C 46)

FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT

Joy,
Love,
Peace,
Patience,
Kindness,
Goodness,
Faithfulness,
Righteousness
Truth
(Galatians 5:22; Ephesians 5:9)

Ephesians 5:9 “For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth” Paul gave a longer list of the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22, but two of these three are new. By compiling and comparing the lists that Paul gives of the fruits of the Spirit beside the Gifts of the Spirit we learn new things about them. (We also find slight variations in the lists from each of the Standard Works.³⁴)

The major difference between the Spirit’s “gifts” and “fruits,” is that one is the *means* and the other, the *ends*. God gives us “gifts” as the means, or God’s power to bless others. (This purpose is repeated five times in D&C 46.) The

gifts are not given for selfish reasons, but as tools to improve our service. After one receives the “gifts” and serves others, then God blesses that disciple with the consequences or “fruits” of the Spirit (D&C 130:21).

Interestingly, there is only one duplicate: “*agapē*/love/charity.” It seems appropriate that charity bridges both God’s gifts and the fruits of our labors to follow the Spirit. If we work on love, we receive love. This is especially applicable in light of Lehi and Nephi’s vision of the most desirable, “fruit of the tree,” which is the love of God (1 Nephi 11:8, 22).

Ephesians 5:11–13 “Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them” (NIV) In contrast to the fruits of the spirit, darkness is unfruitful. How do we expose those full of darkness? The KJV calls on the saints to “reprove them.” The CEV reads, “show how wrong they are.” The Epistle calls the saints to not only recognize the difference between light and darkness, but to also speak up for what is right.

Ephesians 5:14 “Wake up, O sleeper/rise from the dead, /and Christ will shine on you” (NIV) This appears to be a poem or hymn. It may be quoting Jonah 1:6, “O sleeper, Arise!” In connection with the author’s discussion on the fruits of the Spirit, goodness, righteousness and truth will often radiate light through the disciple’s countenance. The Book of Mormon describes when Christ’s light can literally “shine” as receiving “the image of God engraven upon your countenances” (Alma 5:19).

Worshipful Living with the Spirit’s Power

Ephesians 5:15–20

Ephesians 5:15–16 “Be very careful, then, how you live . . . making the most of every opportunity” (NIV) This is an exciting principle. At times we feel this life is a test, but this verse teaches that it is also a great opportunity to learn and grow and make the world a better place. Every person can make a positive impact within their sphere of influence every day. In the Old Testament, the Lord taught that righteous people in a community can actually save it. Remember, the Lord would not destroy Sodom as long as Lot lived there. Good people bless their communities now as well. We have also learned from that the world is wicked enough for the Second Coming, but the righteous still need to preach and finish their preparations.³⁵

Ephesians 5:17 “Be wise by understanding what the Lord’s will is” (NET) To act wisely, we need to understand the Lord’s will. We can find general guidelines in the scriptures, words from living prophets (more specific to our era), and through the still small voice of the Holy Spirit (for personalized guidance) (D&C 6:15, 23; 8:2–3; 9:7–9; etc.).

Ephesians 5:18 “Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit” (NIV) Even though wine was often diluted with 10 parts water for normal use (and could be diluted with 20

parts water), and a strong drink was still diluted with 2 parts water to 1 part wine, drunkenness was denounced regularly in scripture (Luke 21:34; Romans 13:13; Galatians 5:21; Proverbs 20:1; 31:4; Isaiah 5:11; D&C 89:7; etc.).³⁶

Ephesians 5:19 “**Speak to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your hearts to the Lord**” (BSB) The KJV alone follows the Greek, which was more personal, “speaking to yourselves/*heautou*” which literally means, “of himself, herself, itself.” Whether it is to oneself or to others, the gift of music to accompany the truths of scripture is uplifting and blesses attitudes and lives. Sacred music adds to our worship in churches, homes, and our minds. It can foster inspiration and can bring the Spirit’s witness and peace. This is why the Lord asked for Emma Smith to prepare a hymnal shortly after the organization of the church, and only a few days after her baptism (D&C 25:11–12).³⁷

Ephesians 5:20 “**Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ**” A heart and voice of gratitude fosters the Spirit. Whether for private or group worship, a grateful heart is always healthy. The Lord has commanded that we give thanks in “all things,” whenever something in our lives goes wrong or right. When we give thanks for trials it demonstrates our trust in God’s wisdom. Giving thanks in challenging times of can soften hearts, foster repentance, and open avenues of thinking to find solutions and growth. Giving thanks to God should be a major portion of our worship (Romans 1:21; Psalms 92:1; 138:2; etc.).

EPHESIANS 5:21–6:9

Household Code: Wives and Husbands

*Ephesians 5:21–33*³⁸

Ephesians 5:21 “**Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ**” (BSB) It is often easier to submit to Christ than to others. Yet, when there is cooperating with others in righteousness, we learn that we are also honoring or worshipping our Lord. The Greek word “submit/*hupotasso*” is a favorite in the Epistles. In various forms, it is repeated forty times (with 30 of those coming in the Pauline Epistles). The Greek roots deal with order, accountability and submission. In the New Testament, it is applicable to use its *nonmilitary* meaning of voluntarily helping out or sharing a responsibility.³⁹ This type of submission is described in the Book of Mormon as, “sanctification” which “cometh because of their yielding their hearts unto God” (Helaman 3:35).

Ephesians 5:22 “**Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord**” In the previous verse, it says when Christians are asked to submit in unity to God, there is rarely offense taken. Yet, this verse and others like it are harder to

understand when we are asked to submit to mere mortals. In our generation, the word “submit” often carries negative connotations. We are sensitive to those who unwisely submit to other humans in abusive situations. However, by supplying the *nonmilitary* definition above, in the context of Christians who are striving for unity, we can interpret this verse in a more positive light. Wives should voluntarily cooperate and work with their husbands as they share their burdens together. This perspective also adopts the counsel God gave to Joseph Smith in Liberty Jail: “no power or authority can be maintained . . . only by . . . love unfeigned” (D&C 121:36–41; 131:1–4; 132:19–25).

Fresco of a Roman family feast in Pompeii, before A.D. 79. Image housed in the Naples National Archaeological Museum, via Wikimedia Commons.



The earliest Greek options of this verse do not have any verb placed there at all, but it references the earlier sentence about submitting to Christ.⁴⁰ The best manuscripts read, “. . . wives, to your own husbands, as to the Lord.”⁴¹ Jesus is our example in relationships just as He is in everything. We are all to submit to Him just as wives are to submit to their faithful husbands—voluntarily yielding through love.

Ephesians 5:23–24 “For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior” (NIV) These verses are also troublesome. It far easier to submit to, or cooperate with, a perfect being than an imperfect being. However, the ideal situation is still sought. Hugh Nibley sees this ideal relation between a husband and wife as including the Savior. He describes it as a system of checks and balances used in marriages. The three people included, like points on a triangle, each have to work in harmony. The wife follows her husband when he is in line with God (and she has to be in tune with God to recognize that). Similarly, if the husband is in line with God, then he can check on his wife, too.⁴²

The Epistle does not encourage blind obedience or resignation. Men are “heads” of their wives only if Christ is their “head.” Another rendering of the Greek is, “The wife stands [with] her husband in all things when the husband stands behind Christ; . . . she shows love, reverence, and respect to her husband.”⁴³ In Christ’s present-day church, we are taught that if the husband himself is not honoring that role, the wife has no obligation to submit to his guidance.⁴⁴ There is no room for a male chauvinist mentality in celestial marriages.

Ephesians 5:25–27 “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse her with . . . the word” The husbands also receive specific counsel in family matters. They are to follow Jesus’ new commandment, to love as He loves (John 13:34). The Greek word for “love/*agape*” is the same word that Paul uses for charity. There are at least five words that could have been translated as “love” (i.e. “*eros/erotic*,” or “*philo/friendship*,” etc.), but he chooses the pure love of Christ as the ideal aim for husbands toward their wives.

The word “church” is found nine times in this Epistle. All designate the same comprehensive group of believers. Christ loved His church and gave Himself over for her, and those outside of her protection. Even after His death, He continued to nourish and cherish His church (Ephesians 5:23–32). The promise is that as Christ sanctified the church, so too will He sanctify our marriages if we abide in love. The goal is to be unified together.

Ephesians 5:28–30 “In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives . . . just as Christ does the church” (NIV) This counsel on marriage was difficult to enact in Paul’s time as most first marriages were arranged by one’s father or guardian. Romance was not very often the source of the arranged marriage in part because marriages were arranged when girls were not yet in their teens.⁴⁵ In spite of all this, the message for Christian husbands was, “you need to love and serve and take care of your wife as Christ shows love. You need to develop

charity.” In the culture of the day, the average Greco-Roman person was divorced four to five times. This counsel was much needed. And, even when some couples did not divorce, the literature and dramas of the time describe simultaneous extra-marital relations.

Ephesians 5:31 “**For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh**” (NIV) Paul cites Genesis 2:24 just as Jesus had (Mark 10:7–8). The Christian attitude toward marriage is rooted in the creation story. The author is also open and positive about including the phrase on intimacy in marriage. The obligation of the husband to love his wife is treated more extensively than the obligation of the wife to cooperate. Both ideas are rooted in God’s initial plan for the union of marriage in the Garden of Eden.

Ephesians 5:32 “**This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church**” (NIV) The word mystery in this verse is explained in in at least three ways:

1. *Mysterion*: Equates marriage with an ordinance or a sacrament (in Catholic terms).
2. *Mysterion*: A mystical essence of either Christ and the church, or a husband and wife’s physical connection.
3. *Mysterion*: Allegorical interpretation of Genesis being brought to light.

Perhaps he is talking about celestial relationships in marriage (see footnote 27).

Ephesians 5:33 “**Each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband**” (BSB) The author taught that especially as saints, they should love their spouses and respect each other. In our day, apostles often touch on counsel for marriage and relationships.

EPHESIANS 6

Household Code: Children and Parents

Ephesians 6:1–4

Ephesians 6:1–4 “**Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right . . . fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord**” In the context of Christ’s love with respectful and loving parents, this is good advice. The addition of, “in the Lord,” expands Moses’ fifth commandment (cited from Deuteronomy 5:16). The parameters, “in the Lord,” speaks to a place where children do not have to obey in wickedness or abuse. Verse 4 expands on that, by asking fathers (and I add mothers) to not exasperate their children. President Gordon B. Hinckley taught, “we seldom get into trouble when we speak softly . . . The voice of heaven is a still small voice.”⁴⁶

Household Code: Slaves and Masters

Ephesians 6:5-9

Ephesians 6:5-6 “Slaves, you must obey your earthly masters. Show them great respect and be as loyal to them as you are to Christ. Try to please them at all times, and not just when you think they are watching. **You are slaves of Christ**” (CEV) These are also troubling verses when looking at them with twenty-first century spectacles. In the ancient Roman world, there were millions of slaves—some estimate 30 percent of the population were slaves or servants. (They shared the same word, “*doulos*.”) It saturated their culture and infiltrated every aspect of their social order including their homes. Understanding the servant-master relationship at the time was more like a serf-landlord in most cases. Servants even owned slaves. To avoid starvation, men sold themselves, their wives, and children into slavery for the benefit of room and board.⁴⁷ In the Jewish world, at every seventh year of labor, the servant boy or man was released, if they wanted their freedom (Exodus 21:2; Leviticus 25:39-42; Deuteronomy 15:12).⁴⁸ In the Roman world slaves were released by age thirty. Many were given their freedom prior to that age.⁴⁹

We have no record of Jesus nor his apostles advocating to abolish slavery. Instead, the New Testament counseled both slave and master to work honestly and show respect and kindness towards one another. Yet, Jesus did advocate for another reform. Rather than to completely release servitude, Jesus taught masters how to serve. He himself said, “I came not to be served, but to serve.” He took on the role as the servant as He healed, taught, and even washed His apostles’ feet. His greatest act of servitude came during His passion in Gethsemane and beyond as He became the suffering servant described by Isaiah 49-53.

Ephesians 6:7-8 “the Lord will reward each one for whatever good they do, whether they are slave or free” (NIV) The Apostolic church followed through with the Lord’s example. This Epistle encouraged, “with good will doing service, as to the Lord.” This counsel echoes King Benjamin, “When you are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God” (Mosiah 3:7).

Ephesians 6:9 “Masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him” (NIV) We have no recorded evidence that the Lord and His apostles ever gave lip serve to any unfair or unkind relations between slaves and servants. Their difference in station was not as important as how they treated their fellow men. In heaven, all will be judged on how they loved and served, not on what position they held.

Worship Clothed with the Armor of God

Ephesians 6:10-18

Ephesians 6:10-11 “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes” (NIV) The power of God is what allows disciples to



be strong in moral, intellectual, and spiritual matters. The metaphor of “armor” would have been very familiar to this audience. Across the empire, the image of a Roman soldier’s dress was well known. A soldier’s clothing told of his station. All wore breast plates and helmets, and those higher in rank added extra signs of their authority. For example, a cloak was the sign of a general, and a sash, a field marshal.⁵⁰ These verse on the armor of God were recited or reworded by martyrs who died for the faith.⁵¹

Ephesians 6:12–13 “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. 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” (KJV) A Christian’s battleground is far more important than anything earthly. Saints should fight with more determination and skill.

Ephesians 6:14 “Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness” Roman breast-

plates were leather. They often had an inscription of a Roman goddess or god carved or painted into the leather. The Christian breastplates had no idols inscribed on them, but were breastplates of righteousness. Their covenants with Christ became their breastplates and protection.

Ephesians 6:15–17 “And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” Paul’s armor is mainly defensive and to protect ourselves from evil. The most important protection was for the head. By the time of the New Testament, the Roman military helmet had developed into a status symbol:

A helmet was made of leather, bronze, iron, or in special cases, gold. What was originally no more than a protective cap developed—especially by the addition of crests—into a heavy, decorative, and expensive item. An inside lining of felt or sponge made the weight bearable. Nothing short of an ax or hammer could pierce a heavy helmet, and in some cases a hinged visor added frontal protection. Roman soldiers wore a bronze helmet equipped with cheek pieces.⁵²

In the armor of God, the helmet represents salvation—a gift from God to all mortals. Salvation also is our greatest defense. In the Jewish Midrash, they also used the phrase: “helmet of salvation,” as something that belonged with “garments of glory” that the Messiah would wear when He came.⁵³

The one offensive tool to use in our battle against wickedness is the “sword of the Spirit,” and the word of God. Knowing how to hear and understand God’s Spirit and His word will help us move forward in the battle.

Ephesians 6:18 “Pray in the Spirit at all times, with every kind of prayer and petition. To this end, stay alert with all perseverance in your prayers for all the saints” (BSB) The seventh piece of armor required to fight against the adversary is prayer. The Anchor Bible commentary pointed out the connection between “pray,” “watch/stay alert,” and using the sword, or even putting on the whole armor. The Spirit’s presence in continual prayer “can be the essence and modality of the whole process of arming oneself.”⁵⁴ Whenever we pray, we must do so *in* the Spirit of God. Prayer with the Spirit is like entering into God’s house to commune in person. One way to invite the Spirit into prayer is to begin by repenting and meekly seeking forgiveness. I have also found that sincere and thoughtful gratitude carries an added portion of the Spirit’s peace.

Final Greetings

Ephesians 6:19–24

Ephesians 6:19–20 “I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should” (NIV). Paul solicits prayers as “an ambassador in bonds” (KJV). The word “halusis/chain/bond” does not mean he was chained to a location. The normal Roman practice for house-arrest had the prisoner’s “right hand chained to the left hand on his guard.”⁵⁵ As a Roman citizen, Paul may have enjoyed his house arrest without chains as was a concession for “high status prisoners” as they awaited trial. However we cannot tell because “the terms ‘chains’ and ‘prison’ could be virtually interchangeable, and one could be in chains and not in prison.”⁵⁶ The real message he wants to communicate is triumphing with God’s help. He does not ask the saints to pray for his release, but instead that he can boldly testify of truth. Whatever situation he finds himself, he focuses completely on his calling to testify as an ambassador or emissary of Christ.

Ephesians 6:21–22 “Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful servant in the Lord, will tell you everything, so that you also may know about me and what I am doing” (BSB) Tychicus delivered and probably acted as

scribe for this Epistle (and Colossians too). He was trustworthy and educated in Greek and the gospel. The author does not take the time to share how he is doing in this letter, but rather delegates all greetings and updates to Tychicus.

Ephesians 6:23–24 “Peace to the brothers and sisters, and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace to all who love our Lord . . .” (NIV) The author closes just as he began with peace and love.

Header Image: Photo of Gladiator armor via Pxhere.com

ENDNOTES

1. Bart D. Ehrman, *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings* (NYC, NY: Oxford Press, 2004), 381–384.
2. Marcus Barth, *Ephesians 1–3*, 10.
3. *Ibid.*, 10, 4–11. The Epistle has 80 words not used elsewhere in the Pauline corpus, but there are 100 unique words in Romans and 1 Corinthians (books about twice as large).
4. John Levi Hilton, *xx*, unpublished.
5. Markus Barth *Anchor Bible: Ephesians 1–3* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974), 51. The postscript from Ephesians 6:24 “written from Rome,” is not found in the early Greek manuscripts until the ninth century. However, other claims in the text hint at this (Ephesians 3:1, 4:1; 6:20). Some Biblical scholars remove the letter from Paul by a century, but I do not.
6. Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance, “*charis*” 5485.
7. Skolnik, *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 1.73–34. From the time of the Second Temple, some Jewish prayers were set and recited daily and weekly, and others were contagious from the heart. One of the best-known Jewish set prayers was known as the “eighteen benedictions.” It began by referring to the God of: 1. the patriarchs, 2. nature, and 3. sanctification. Then, the prayer petitioned God for: 4. understanding, 5. repentance, 6. forgiveness, 7. redemption, 8. healing, 9. food, 10. gathering of exiles, 11. restore His righteous reign; 12. against heretics, 13. mercy for the righteous, 14. Jerusalem, 15. the messianic king, 16. hear our prayers, 17. return God’s presence to the temple, and 18. thanks to God for all his mercies. The prayer had variations for certain holy days.
8. Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance, “*eulogéōs*,” 2128.
9. 2 Nephi 2:28 “. . . look to the great Mediator, and hearken unto his great commandments; and be faithful unto his words, and choose eternal life, according to the will of his Holy Spirit.” Alma 40:13, “And then shall it come to pass, that the Spirits of the wicked, yea, who are evil—for behold, they have no part nor portion of the Spirit of the Lord; for behold, they chose evil works.” 3 Nephi 19:20 “Father, I thank thee that thou hast given the Holy Ghost unto these whom I have chosen; and it is because of their belief in me that I have chosen them out of the world.”
10. Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 3.104. Lynne Wilson, “Joseph Smith’s Doctrine of the Holy Spirit Contrasted with Cartwright, Campbell, Hodge, and Finney,” PhD diss., (Marquette University, 2010).
11. Anderson, *Understanding Paul*, 266.
12. *Times and Seasons*, 15 February 1842, 689. <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/search?query=Gentile,%20adoption&sort=relevance&page=1&perpage=10&startdate=&enddate=&transcripts=false&issuggestion=false&types=documents-papers|documents-papers-documents|related-materials|biographical-directory|geographical-directory|glossary|event> (accessed 9-19-19).
13. Welch, *Charting the New Testament*, 4–6.
14. Robert L. Millet, Kent P. Jackson, *Studies in Scripture: Acts to Revelation* (SLC, UT: Deseret Book, 1987), 114
15. Alexander Campbell, *Millennial Harbinger*, 319. Campbell spoke for many of his contemporaries who interpreted the

promise of the Spirit to mean the same thing as the Holy Spirit of Promise. In Charles Hodge's *Commentary on Ephesians* he explained that the elect "have obtained a portion in this inheritance, and, after having believed, have been sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise" (68). Similarly, I found two other publications from the nineteenth century that addressed the phrase from Ephesians 1:13 and 5. First, Rev. William G. Elliot, the pastor of the Church of the Messiah at St. Louis wrote, "The Holy Spirit or Spirit of God was 'poured out' or 'shed forth' both on Jews and Gentiles. Believers were 'sealed' with the Holy Spirit of promise. Jesus 'breathed on them' and said, 'receive ye the Holy Spirit.'" *Discourses on the Doctrine of Christianity* (Cambridge, MA: American Unitarian Association, 1855), 33. Also Rev. William Guthrie explained that one "must first believe and . . . then look for the seal and witness of the Spirit: 'In whom, after ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,' &c. As long as people hold fast these principles, and the like, they can hardly [*sic*] come to the knowledge of their gracious state, which God hath warranted people to prove and clear up to themselves, other ways than by these foresaid things." William Guthrie, *The Christian's Great Interest* (Glasgow, Scotland: Wm Collins, 1828), 75.

16. Ehat and Cook, *Words of Smith*, 4, 15, 190, 209, 284, 335.
17. There was/is no saving grace in a baptism that was followed by a hypocritical life of sin. Instead, he believed all covenants and ordinances were only efficacious when humans live worthily—When we uphold our covenants with God, the Holy Spirit of Promise ratified the ordinance; when we do not, there is no eternal reward. Another deterrent to ratification by the Holy Spirit of Promise, is proper order and priesthood authority (D&C 107:18).
18. Ludlow, *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 651–652.
19. Mark McConkie, *Remembering Joseph* (SLC, UT: Deseret Book, 2003), 215. Between February 1846 and spring of 1848, Posthumous accounts of Joseph's visitations from heaven. Wilford Woodruff's recorded a conversation with Brigham Young about a visitation he had from Joseph at Winter Quarters. "Brigham said, 'Joseph told him to tell the people to labor to obtain the Spirit of God. That they needed that to sustain them and to give them power to go through their work in the earth.
20. *Thayer's Greek Lexicon* of Strong's #109: ἀήρ. <https://biblehub.com/greek/109.htm> (accessed 9-17-19).
21. Millet, *Studies in Scripture*, 114.
22. Raymond Brown, *Birth of the Messiah* (Harford, CT: Yale Press, 1999), 415–416. Ironically, Caesar Augustus also used the title "savior of the whole world" as one of his official nomenclatures.
23. Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, xv.5.
24. Welch and Hall, *Charting the New Testament*, 4–6.
25. Donald L. Wasson, *Ancient History Encyclopaedia*, "Roman Citizenship," 2016. https://www.ancient.eu/article/859/roman-citizenship/#citation_info (accessed 9-17-19).
26. A. N. Wilson, *Paul: The Mind of the Apostle* (NYC, NY: Norton, 1998); James Tabor, *Paul and Jesus: How the Apostle transformed Christianity* (NYC, NY: Simon and Schuster, 2013).
27. Markus Barth, *The Anchor Bible: Ephesians* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974), 330.
28. Ehat and Cook: *Words of Joseph Smith*, 10; also 9, 42, 110, 210, 327–331. On multiple occasions, the Prophet Joseph explained that "Paul . . . knew . . . all the ordinances, and blessings were in the Church." With this understanding, this

may have referred to the endowment.

29. Neil L. Anderson, “Power in the Priesthood,” General Conference October 2013. “The priesthood is the power and authority of God given for the salvation and blessing of all — men, women and children. . . . As individuals make and keep sacred covenants, they are able to receive priesthood power and blessings.”
30. Joseph F. Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (SLC, UT: Deseret Book, 1938), 151.
31. Brown, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 623.
32. Anderson, *Understanding Paul*, 237; table adapted
33. Russell M. Nelson, General Conference, April 2019.
34. See chart comparing all four of them in “Come Follow Me Commentary,” 1 Corinthians 12:7.
35. Elder D. Todd Christofferson, “Preparing for the Lord’s Return,” General Conference April 2019 and Elder Dallin H. Oaks, “Preparation for the Second Coming,” General Conference April 2004.
36. John MacArthur , ed. *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: IL: Moody Press, 1985), ch 18, Eph 5:18.
37. The church was organized April 6, 1830. Emma was baptized June 28, 1830. The revelation was dated July 1830 and was given after in Harmon, PA, over 100 miles from the organization in Fayette.
38. Also a shorter version of a Household Conduct is found in Collisions 3:18–4:1; 1 Peter 3.
39. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, translator, Gerhard Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans1964), viii.41, *hypotasset, hupotasso*.
40. Andrew Robert Fausset, ed., *Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1961), Ephesians 5:22.
41. Barth, *Ephesians 3–6*, 610.
42. Hugh Nibley, *Old Testament and Related Studies* (Provo, UT: FARMS and Deseret Book, 1986), 93.
43. John W. Welch, *Charting the New Testament*, 15–15. I added the word [with] in place of behind, as both come from the same Greek word. Interestingly, the word *Islam* means, “*submission*.”
44. Russell M. Nelson, “Our Sacred Duty to Honor Women,” General Conference April 1999; D. Todd Christofferson, “Fatherhood,” General Conference April 2016; Elaine S. Dalton, “Love her Mother,” General Conference October 2011; etc.
45. *Mishnah, Kiddushin*, 2.1; “A man may give his daughter in betrothal while she is still in her girlhood either by his own act or by that of his agent.” Also see *Yebamoth*, 13.1, and Campbell, *Marriage and Family in the Biblical World*, 144. The day after a girl’s twelfth birthday, she was no longer a minor “young girl/*na’rah*,” and the day after she turned twelve-and-a-half she could legally be married, though there are examples of younger marriages.
46. Gordon B. Hinckley, *Ensign*, June 1971.
47. Keith Crim, ed. *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1976), Supplementary volume 830.
48. The Law of Moses stipulated that if a male servant received a wife from his master, he could not take his wife or children with him when released: “If he came in by himself, he shall go out by himself: if he were married, then his wife shall go out with him. If his master have given him a wife, and she have borne him sons or daughters; the wife and her children shall be her master’s, and he shall go out by himself” (Exodus 21:3–4). This is where the situation became tenuous. Many

men chose to remain in the employ of someone else rather than leave their family. So The Law added, “And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free: Then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an aul; and he shall serve him forever” (Exodus 21:5–6). The pierced ear was often filled with a hoop, so that servant for life was known by a hoop in his ear

49. Bromiley, *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 4.545. Campbell, *Marriage and Family in the Biblical World*, 135. Some sources record a release at age thirty, others thirty-five or forty. The process releasing a slave was known as manumission “Pertinent inscriptions indicate, however, that large numbers, approaching 50 percent, were set free prior to their thirtieth year.”
50. Graham Sumner, *Roman Military Dress* (Gloucestershire, England: History Press, 2009), 71–73, 175–177.
51. In the early 16th century Christian, Anne Askew wrote a beautiful poem filled with symbols from the armor of God as she, faced her martyrdom. The opening of the poem reads: “Like as the armed knight/Appointed to the field,/With this world will I fight/And Faith shall be my shield./Faith is that weapon strong/Which will not fail at need./My foes, therefore, among/Therewith will I proceed.”
52. Barth, *Ephesians 4–6*, 775.
53. *Ibid.* 775.
54. *Ibid.*, 777.
55. Ben Witherington III, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 68. “The reference to chains is important as it speaks to the nature of Paul’s confinement. A “prisoner” was not necessarily in a prison cell”
56. *Ibid.*