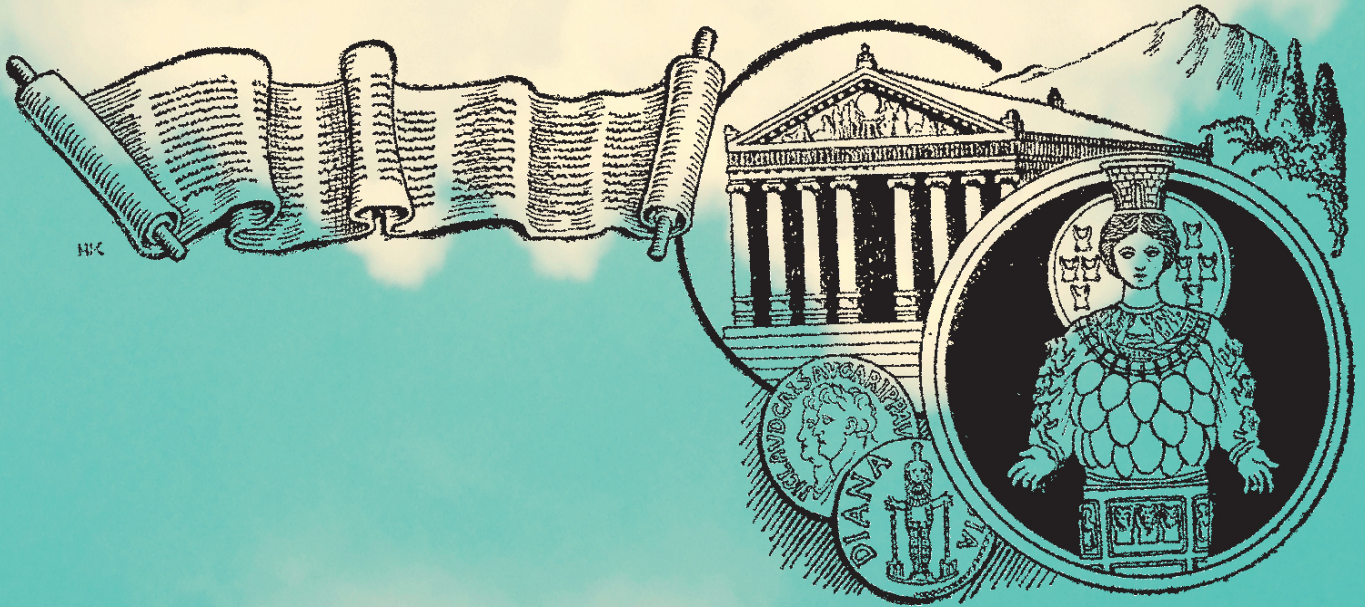




# A STUDY ON EPHESIANS

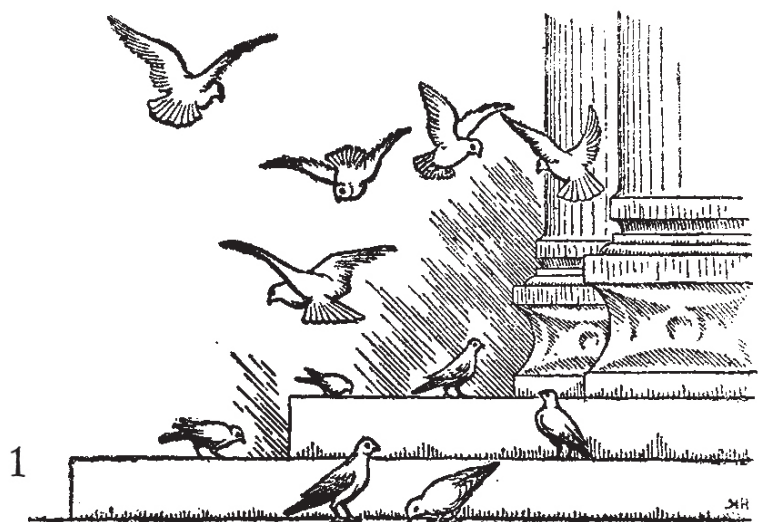




# INTRODUCTION

The letter to the Ephesians - a magnificent work by Apostle Paul - is aptly known as the “*the crown of Pauline theology*”. He wrote this letter to the churches in Ephesus, while awaiting trial in a Roman prison.

The cosmopolitan port city of Ephesus was a major trading centre, located in the richest province in Rome. It was also the site of the Temple of Artemis - one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. The temple earned considerable revenue from visiting pilgrims. The city's strategic position as a port city and a major trading centre for the Roman Empire prompted Paul to stay in Ephesus and spread the gospel to neighbouring cities. During his third missionary journey (Acts 19), Paul stayed in Ephesus for more than two years. Luke records Paul's emotional departure from the church in Ephesus, when he was on his final journey to Jerusalem (Acts 20).

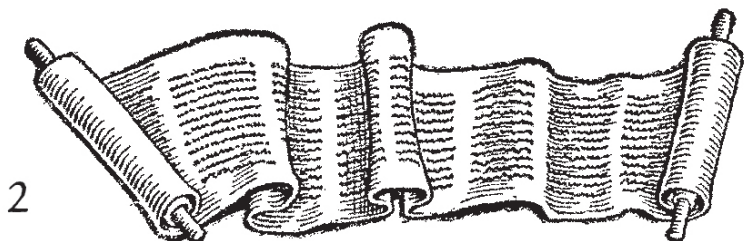


# THE BIG IDEA OF EPHESIANS

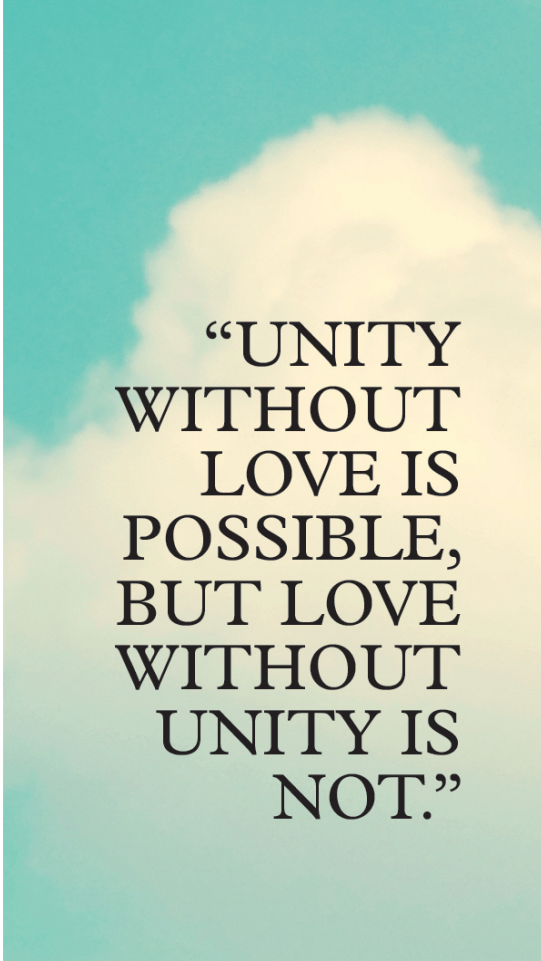
In this letter, Paul celebrates the **formation of the church** in Ephesus. He was certain that the church was as a part of God's sovereign plan for salvation from eternity to eternity. The church is the metaphorical image of Christ that reveals God's wisdom, grace, love and power to the whole world. It goes beyond human comprehension. The power of God that worked in the Lord Jesus Christ is currently active in the church. It reproduces His life and victory in communities that are founded on the gospel.

In the Old Testament, God chose Abraham and his descendants as a means to bless the whole world. They were called to reveal the invisible God through their transformed lifestyle and faith, and in doing so, bring those in darkness into the light of God. However, Israel as a nation failed to fulfil its destiny and God through the crucified and risen Messiah, Jesus Christ, integrated all things in heaven and on earth.

However, those who came to Christ in Ephesus were led to confusion by a mixture of Christian faith with their old magical beliefs. Paul writes this letter to encourage them to find their **identity in Christ alone**.



So, the emphasis on the church and its unity also explains why “love” is the major theme of this letter. As a noun and a verb, it occurs twenty times. Ephesians talks about love twice as much as Paul’s other writings.



“UNITY  
WITHOUT  
LOVE IS  
POSSIBLE,  
BUT LOVE  
WITHOUT  
UNITY IS  
NOT.”

The central message of the letter revolves around the theme of **unity, power and love**. This is established early in **Ephesians 1:9-10**, “Having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times ***He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him.***”

Paul wants us to:

- Reorient our vision of reality and inhabit a new story of God’s kingdom
- Take on a new and renewed set of practices to follow Jesus
- Experience God, others, ourselves, and the world through Christ, where Heaven and Earth become one



# CHAPTER SUMMARY

## Chapter 1-2

### Walk in the newness of Life

Ephesians 2:19-21,

*“Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people and also members of his household, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. 21 In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. 22 And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.*

## Chapter 3-4

### Walk in the power of Prayer

Ephesians 3:20,

*“Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”*

## Chapter 5-6

### Walk in wisdom in all Relationships

Ephesians  
6:10-12,

*“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11 Put on the full armour of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”*

# EPHESIANS 1 & 2

## Walk in the Newness of life

### We are Made New

Paul affirms our identity in Christ in the first chapter of Ephesians.

- The first affirmation is in God's purpose and our place in Him: **"We are chosen by God."**

*1:4, "...For he **chose** us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight."*

- The second: **"We are redeemed by Christ."**

*1:7, "...In him we have **redemption** through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that He lavished on us."*

- And the third: **"We are sealed with the Spirit."**

*1:13, "...When you believed, you were marked in him with a **seal**, the promised Holy Spirit,"*

According to Paul, circumcision, was a seal that confirmed Abraham's justification by faith (Rom. 4:11). It is commonly assumed that Paul also saw baptism as the seal of the Christian. The seal was more than an outward sign; it was an inward experience. Christians were sealed with the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is not an option in our salvation but an essential reality in our Christian experience.

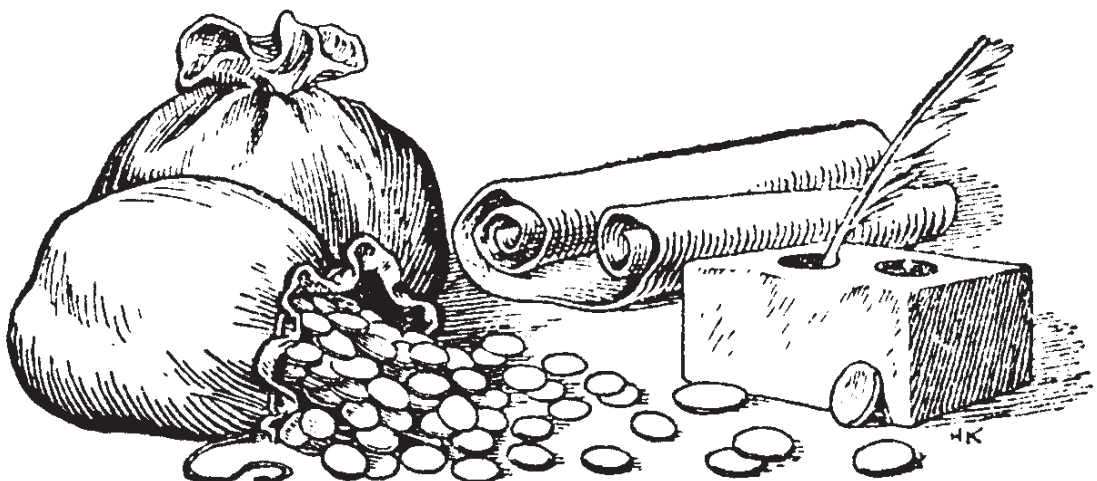


## Why is the Holy Spirit so essential?

- The Spirit reveals God
- He makes the power of Christ's sacrifice effective in our lives
- He perfects in love (making us holy and blameless)
- He seals us forever as belonging to God

The Holy Spirit functions in the present, giving us power and guidance to “work out our salvation.” The Holy Spirit also guarantees our future salvation and greater measure of blessings to come. But it is more than a guarantee, it is a foretaste of the fuller inheritance of our redemption.

A number of financial terms are employed in Chapter 1, providing a graphic image of a Divine Buyer who purchases His people out of bondage, pays with blood, seals what is now His, and offers a down payment until the final date of delivery. It is also a confirmation of God's grace towards His people, a summation of all things in Christ and an inheritance guaranteed by the Spirit.



## We Belong to the Household of God

**Ephesians 2:19-22**, “Now, therefore, you are no longer *strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, 21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, 22 in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.*”

The Jews believed that the “*present age*” was a period of dominion of sin, evil and death. They longed for it to be replaced by the “*age to come*”, which is characterized by righteousness, peace and joy. According to Paul, the “*age to come*” has already transitioned into the present and is working towards the grand finale - the future Messianic reign.

The power of God was demonstrated when Christ was raised from the dead (**1:19-20**). The resurrection involved more than resuscitation of a corpse. It marked:

- The inauguration of a new era, which emphasised God’s desire to save mankind
- The climax of God’s covenant with Abraham
- The beginning of new creation (Church)

Christ is far above all rulers and authority, power and dominion and every name that is invoked (**1:21**). Christ outranks all other powers and authority in both the present age and the age to come (**1:21**).





## ***Church as a Body***

The Messianic reign, which has already begun, is manifested in the church and is defined as His body (1:23). The relationship between Christ and the church is as close as that between your body and your head. To belong to Christ is to be incorporated into Him, the head, and to be filled with His power, purpose and presence. He fills everything in every way (1:23).

A body cannot live without a head. Thus, those who are not part of Christ's body (church) can be described as dead (2:1). They live in a culture of sin and follow the ruler of the kingdom of the air, Satan (2:2). But by God's grace, all who believe in Christ can be a part of His body (no more divisions of caste or creed or tribe).

In the Old Testament, the tabernacle or the temple was filled with God's glory. But, in the New Testament, God fills us with His glory because we are one with Him. We know this because Paul says:

- The church is the locus of the fulness of Christ (1:23)
- The place of dwelling of God in the Spirit (2:22)
- The entity where Christ dwells (3:17)
- The body that is filled up to the fulness of God (3:19)

So, Paul is saying that God is glorified "in the church" in Christ (3:21) and one cannot separate the body (Church) from the head (Christ).

Divine Dwelling	Construction	Filling
Tabernacle	Exodus 25-31	Exodus 40:34-35
Temple	1 Kings 5-9	1 Kings 8:10-11
Body of Christ	Ephesians 2:19-22	Ephesians 3:16-19

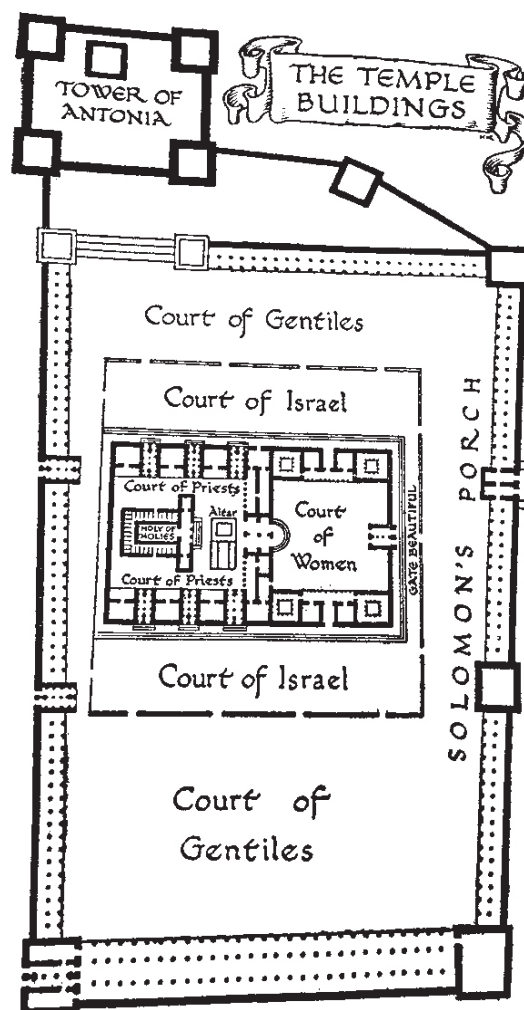
### ***Church as a Temple***

In **Ephesians 2:11-22**, Paul switches his comparison of the church from a household to a building or temple. Just like the Jerusalem temple was known as the dwelling place of God, Paul shows how the church becomes unified with God through the Messiah – a new dwelling place for the Holy Trinity. And this temple will last for eternity.

The foundation of the temple is laid by the Old Testament prophets and New Testament apostles (2:20).

Christ, Himself, is the chief cornerstone of their message - the one who holds the foundation together (2:21).

With Christ at the core, believers in the church grow to become holy temples of God. (Note: Gentiles were not given access to the Jerusalem temple, but Paul stresses that in Christ, the new temple welcomes all gentiles as living stones attached to the Lord - the chief cornerstone)







# EPHESIANS 3 & 4

## Walk in a Life of Prayer

### A Mystery Revealed to All

The Gospel is a mystery. The word ‘mystery’ is used 6 times in this letter (1:9, 3:3, 3:4, 3:9, 5:32, 6:19). According to the Greeks, a mystery is a secret that gods hold. It had the power to benefit humankind. They believed that it was revealed only to a select few.

According to the Scriptures, ‘mystery’ is not a secret. It is God’s salvation plan working through history, based on His timeline. It was unknown to Paul and other Jews for some time, but God revealed this mystery through the Damascus experience as well as through the Scriptures and holy apostles and prophets. It was revealed with the intent to transform lives and spread the good news (3:5).

***The revelation of the mystery is that anyone can become a full heir in the Kingdom of God through faith in Lord Jesus Christ. There is no first-class Christians or second-class Christians – all are equally saved by God’s grace and all are part of the same body of Christ with equal privileges.***

This is the mystery of Christ and the Church which was revealed to all. Paul celebrates this wisdom, knowledge and purpose of God because the path to God is not controlled by any ritual purity, moral perfection, racial privileges or any special religious rituals, but is open to all who have faith in Christ Jesus our Lord (3:12).

## Prayer – The Lifeline of the Church



All through the letter to the Ephesians, Paul places the spotlight on the criticality of prayer in the life of the church. Paul's prayer aligns with the Lord's prayer where all things in heaven and earth are brought to perfect integration in Christ.

**Ephesians 1:17-19**, *"I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. <sup>18</sup>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 in his holy people, <sup>19</sup>and his incomparably great power for us who believe."*

**Ephesians 3:14-19**, *"For this reason I kneel before the Father, <sup>15</sup>from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. <sup>16</sup>I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, <sup>17</sup>so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, <sup>18</sup>may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, <sup>19</sup>and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God."*

**Ephesians 6:18-20**, *"And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people. <sup>19</sup>Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, <sup>20</sup>for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should."*



Paul prays for **4 blessings** to be given to the church



- To be flooded with the **divine love and wisdom** of God so we know Christ more
- To be **empowered by the Spirit** to fulfil the plan of God's salvation to all
- To be **transformed in our character** so that we reflect the love, wisdom, mercy and compassion of God with one another
- To **stand against every force of evil** that comes to destroy the truth of the gospel

## EPHESIANS 5 & 6

### Walk in Wisdom in all Relationships

#### Let Us be Imitators of God

Paul has two warnings for Christians in all relationships: do not “*give place to the devil*” (v.27) and “*do not grieve the Holy Spirit*” (v.30). When we express our anger in bitterness, wrath, and undisciplined passion, we are giving the devil a place in our lives and grieving the Holy Spirit. The question on who will rule our lives and call our moves is pertinent to every Christian. Will it be the Holy Spirit or the devil?

#### ***Walk in Love***

Paul starts Chapter 5 by saying “*1 Therefore be imitators of God as dear children 2 And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.*”

We are adopted into God's family and are His children. Just as children imitate their parents, we are to imitate God. We are called to display the character of God in our own little areas of influence, thus proving that God is our Father.

In this passage, the idea of imitation is tied to a particular aspect of God's nature and action:

- Forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you (4:32)
- Walking in love – the self-sacrificing love of Christ (5:2)

(**Note:** In **Revelation 2:4**, Jesus declared to the Ephesian believers, *“Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.”* The believers in Ephesus did all the right things but their love for God was missing. They lost their first love. Initially, they were *fervently* in love with Jesus and completely sold out for Him — with no sorrows, regrets, or reservations. **Acts 19:18,19** reveals the early act of public repentance of the Ephesian believers, when they burned their occult fetishes and amputated every connection to the past that would hinder their new lives in Christ. Although the Ephesian believers were still committed to Christ, doing everything “for His name’s sake,” they no longer had the deep passion and fervency for Him that had once consumed their hearts. This is a warning to all of us to never let go of our relationship with Jesus, even when we get more accustomed to church experiences.)

### ***Walk in Light***

Paul says in **Ephesians 5:8**, “*For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light*”. Here, Paul does not say you are in the light or you belong to the light, but he emphasises that **you are light**, called into a new nature of living in the light and as the light. Being the light is to reflect Christ’s character - His goodness, righteousness and truth. The deeds of darkness (**5:3-6**) are fruitless.

These are acts of disobedience, injustice, violence, cruelty and licentious self-indulgence that people engage in secretly, while pretending to be good, caring and loving (**5:11-12**). The gospel of God’s grace does not license us to practice immorality and foster our selfish desires. On the contrary, it is a source of encouragement to live a life of integrity, honour and fruitfulness.

### ***Walk in Wisdom***

A Christian walks in love, in light and “*also in wisdom. See then that you walk carefully, not as fools but as wise*” (**5:15**).

One must recognize that we are living in a world where evil is prevalent. This provides us with umpteen opportunities to shine as lights for Christ (**5:16**). The definition of wise according to the Lord Jesus Christ is a person who hears His teachings and practices His word. He is likened unto a house built on a rock.



The mark of wisdom is to do God's will and be imitators of God's character. Also, Paul adds that the mark of wisdom is to experience the perpetual joy of being "*filled with the Spirit*" (5:18) rather than the false ecstasy of alcohol.

## **Mutual Love & Submission in all relationships**

Mutual submission in all relationships – at church, at home and at work - is a sign that the Holy Spirit is at work in the life of a believer. In **Ephesians 5:22 – 6:9**, Paul focuses on the relationships of wives and husbands, children and parents, and slaves and masters. In each case, he begins by addressing the group regarded as socially inferior and more vulnerable, before reminding the group in power of his or her responsibilities to the other. In all cases, the pattern to be followed is that of Christ's self-giving love. It is to be the essence of all Christians because we are called to follow the crucified Lord who emptied Himself to become the servant of all.

### ***Husbands and Wives (Ephesians 5:22-33)***

Paul's reasoning behind using the head-body metaphor for marriage is to show unity. He writes about the unity between Jesus Christ and the church, and uses this example to encourage husbands to love their wives. He also urges wives to love their husbands and be submissive to them (5:33). Our relationships with one another shows that we are people who are being sanctified and purified by our Lord.

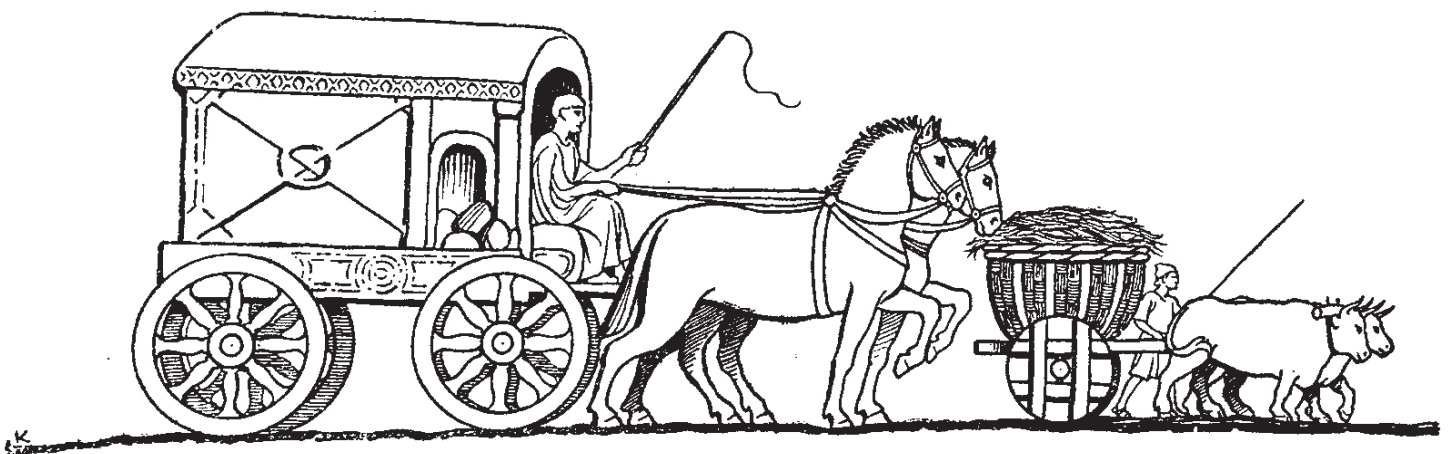
### ***Parents and Children (Ephesians 6:1-4)***

Children are to obey their parents out of loyalty to Christ, while parents are to nurture their children and guide them in the Lord. Parents should refrain from unreasonable demands, especially when it's inappropriate for their age or in contradiction to the gifts God has given them (6:4).

### ***Masters and Slaves (Ephesians 6:5-9)***

Paul makes no comment on the practice of slavery but seeks to transform his readers' thinking about the relationship between slave and master. Christian slaves were exhorted to respect and obey their masters, while practicing diligence and honesty (6:7). Christian masters are reminded that these words apply to them too.

The principles outlined by Paul are applicable to all employee-employer relationships. We must offer faithful service to those higher up the hierarchical ladder and be Christ-like in the way we treat those over whom we have authority.



## Be Strong in the Lord

Paul closes his letter to the Ephesians by giving us the blueprint for a life in Christ. He shows us how we can *be strong in the Lord*.

To be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might, we must put on the whole armour of God (**Ephesians 6:10-17**) and pray (**vs.18**) because we are in a battle for our own soul and the souls of others.

*Who do we fight?*

The Devil – a liar, schemer and a murderer from the beginning

The World – organized system in opposition and rebellion against God

The Flesh – our internal resistance (sin) towards God's ways

*What do we fight against?*

We fight against the schemes of the enemy - temptations and accusations.

*How do we fight?*

We fight with the whole armour of God, in prayer!

The protective armour of God consists of the *belt of truth, breastplate of righteousness, sandals of readiness that comes from the gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit*, which is the word of God. One must be prepared every day to ensure that we stand strong when evil strikes.

***Three truths about spiritual warfare:***

- Christ has won the victory for us
- We fight from victory and not for victory
- In the final battle of good and evil, the church will be on the winning side

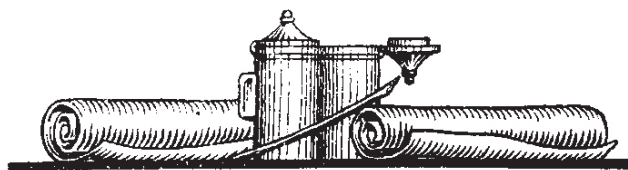


# CONCLUSION


Ephesians is written to encourage people to dwell in God's word, and remain steadfast to His values. Clear foundations are laid on altering thought patterns, feelings and actions to align our lives with God's word and accelerate our journey towards Christlikeness.

The entire letter can be summarized in the paragraph below:

*“A blessed God blesses his people graciously and lovingly through His beloved Son, redeeming them as His own possession, empowered to do good works, to manifest His power and glory as a united body of Christ with selfless love and worshipful lifestyle – filled by the Spirit submitting to one another, modelling marital relationships after the Christ-church relationship, maintaining household structures in accordance with Christlikeness – and gaining victory over supernatural enemies by divine empowerment – all of this being an integral part of God's grand and glorious plan to consummate all things in Christ.”*





A large, fluffy white cloud is centered in the upper half of the image, set against a solid teal background. The cloud has soft, irregular edges and a bright, slightly yellowish-white center, suggesting it is illuminated from above. The overall composition is simple and serene.

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