



TO THE EPHESIANS

A literal translation from the
Greek with notes

Translation and notes
by Jeffrey J. Harrison

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Προς Εφεσίους

INTRODUCTION

This is a literal translation from the Greek with explanatory notes. It is intended to give the English reader a deeper insight into the original text than is available with most translations. Only where a clear understanding would be compromised has literalism been softened in favor of clear understanding.

This literalism extends to preserving the original sentence structure of Paul, which is usually changed in English translations. This is an especially big challenge in Ephesians, where Paul outdoes himself in constructing long sentences. In the original Greek, for example, 1:3-14 is all one long sentence, although in English translations it is typically broken into as many as 5 to 8 sentences. In order to help the reader follow the thought, each phrase has been separated slightly from the preceding and subsequent phrases, and the referent identified, where necessary, with supplied words in italics or brackets. Although this method is not commonly used in Bible translation, it clarifies Paul's thought using information available to the Greek reader, while preserving the original structure of the letter.

This structure has been further clarified by the use of indentation to set off parallel phrases, which although clear in the Greek might otherwise prove confusing to the English reader.

Another important distinctive of this translation is its clarification of the identity of the two groups Paul often mentions only as "you" and "we." The "you" are explicitly identified as Gentile believers in Jesus (in 2:11, 3:1, and following) and the "we," by context and contrast, as Jewish believers in Jesus (1:12, 2:5, 2:12-14, etc.). This distinction, after 1,500 years of almost exclusively Gentile Christianity, needs to be underlined for the modern reader to grasp Paul's meaning. The bracketed clarification "Jewish believer" or "Gentile believer" always refers to Jewish or Gentile believers in Jesus.

Equally distinctive is the use of the English "Messiah" to clarify the meaning of the Greek "Christos." For the Greek reader, "Christos" preserves an association with anointing and with Old Testament messianic passages ("Christos" appears several times in the Greek Old Testament [LXX]). But this is not the case for the English reader, for whom the English "Christ" never appears in any Old Testament passage, and is therefore devoid of similar associations. "Messiah" better preserves these associations with the rest of the Bible, while avoiding the more awkward (though more accurate) expression "the Anointed One."

The English personal pronoun "you" and its derivatives have been marked to indicate singular (*) or plural (#). Alternate readings and the referents of Biblical quotes and obvious allusions also appear in brackets. The notes supply interpretive and historical information to clarify the meaning of the text.

The Greek text used for this translation is the 26th edition of the Nestle-Aland text, with consideration of the punctuation in the 3rd edition of the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament.

TO THE EPHESIANS

1 ¹ Paul, ° an apostle ° of Ephesus, ° *who are* also faithful in
Messiah ° Jesus ° by *the* will of Messiah Jesus: °
God, to the holy *ones* ° who are in

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^{1:1} **Paul:** Paul, originally named Saul, was born into a Jewish family in Tarsus of Cilicia (modern southeastern Turkey). He came to faith in Jesus as the Messiah while traveling to Damascus to persecute Jewish believers in Jesus in that city. By the time he wrote this letter, he had already preached the gospel from Israel as far as Greece. But during a visit to Jerusalem, he was arrested by the Roman authorities. The charge brought against him by Jewish officials was that he had violated the sanctity of the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem. They claimed he had brought Gentiles into areas restricted to Jews (see 2:14 and note). During his trial, Paul appealed his case to Caesar (the Roman Emperor). As a result, he was taken as a prisoner to Rome. At the time of writing this letter, he was under house arrest in an apartment in Rome, awaiting trial before Caesar.

^{1:1} **Apostle:** From a Greek word meaning “someone sent on a mission.” The Jewish Sanhedrin Council (the Jewish Supreme Court) sent word of its decisions to Jews living outside of Israel by means of apostles (or emissaries). The apostles of Jesus were sent with the gospel of salvation first to Jerusalem and nearby provinces (Judea and Samaria) and then “to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

^{1:1} **Messiah:** “The Anointed One.” Pouring oil on the head (anointing) was a Hebrew custom to show that an individual was chosen and given the ability by God to fill a certain position. The Old Testament records the anointing of kings, priests, and prophets. Later, “the Anointed” was used as a title for the coming deliverer mentioned by the prophets. The anointing of Jesus was poured out by God at the time of his baptism, when the Holy Spirit descended on Him in the form of a dove (Matthew 3:16,17). For an explanation of the use of “Messiah” rather than the traditional “Christ,” see the Introduction.

^{1:1} **Jesus:** This is a Greek form of the Hebrew name “Yeshua” (ye-SHU-ah), which means “salvation.” Jesus’ disciples knew him and referred to him by this Hebrew name.

^{1:1} **The holy ones:** Refers to those who have been “set apart” from the world (made holy) for the sake of Messiah—the calling of all true believers.

^{1:1} **Ephesus:** The chief city of the Roman province of Asia. The province of Asia included most of modern southwestern Turkey. Ephesus had been an important

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² Grace to you^{#°} and peace from God our Father and Lord[°] Jesus *the* Messiah.

³ Blessed[°] *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus *the* Messiah,

the one [the Father] *who* has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies by means of Messiah,

⁴ for he has chosen us in him [in Messiah] before the foundation of the universe,[°]

that we might be holy and blameless before him [the Father] in love,

⁵ for he predestined us for adoption to him through Jesus *the* Messiah, according to the desire of his will,

⁶ *that it might* result in *the* praise of *the* glory of his grace,

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coastal city for hundreds of years. It was well known for its temple of the Greek goddess Aphrodite just north of the city. Her devotees once forced Paul to flee the city (Acts 20:1). Paul first visited Ephesus during his second missionary journey (Acts 18:19-21). A year or so later he returned to found a church, which he served as pastor for two years (Acts 19:10). This letter was written from prison in Rome about seven years later. Although the name “Ephesus” does not appear in all the ancient copies of this letter, this destination was generally accepted by early Christian writers.

^{1:1} **In Messiah Jesus:** Everyone who is “in Messiah” is a member of his spiritual body, just as a cell is part of a physical body. This is the Hebrew idea of collective personality. “Israel,” for example, can refer either to the son of Isaac or the nation of his descendants. In the same way, “Messiah” can refer either to Jesus personally or to the community of those who believe in him, including himself as its head. Throughout this letter, “in Messiah” refers to this spiritual position of believers in the body of Messiah.

^{1:2} **You[#]:** Each pronoun in the second person is marked to indicate whether it is singular or plural in the original language. A pound sign (#) is used for plural, an asterisk (*) for singular.

^{1:2} **Lord:** In Greek, “Lord” (*Kyrios*) was used to translate the personal name of God (*YHWH* in Hebrew). By calling Jesus “Lord,” Paul and other early Greek-speaking believers declared that Jesus shared the divinity of God, and was himself God. This is why confessing Jesus as Lord is essential to salvation: it is a confession that he is God (God the Son; Romans 10:9).

^{1:3} **Blessed:** Paul’s introductory blessing is a single sentence from verse 3 to verse 14. The original structure has been preserved here and throughout the letter.

^{1:4} **Foundation of the universe:** The creation.

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the same grace with which he [the Father] graced us by means of the beloved [Jesus],

⁷ in whom we have redemption through his blood—*that is*, the forgiveness of sins—according to the riches of his grace,

⁸ which *same grace* he gave to us in abundance in all wisdom and understanding

⁹ when he made known to us the mystery^o of his will,

according to his desire, which he

publicly put forward in him [in Messiah],

¹⁰ that *the* administration of the fullness of the times^o [the end times] *will* bring all *things* under one head [one ruler]

in the Messiah, *both* the *things* in the heavens and the *things* on the earth;

in him,

¹¹ in whom we [Jewish believers in Jesus]^o have also been chosen by *sacred* lot,^o

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^{1:9} **Mystery:** The hidden will of God which has been disclosed through his prophets. This letter is itself largely the record of a revelation received by Paul of God's plan for the equal participation of both Jews and Gentiles in the body of Messiah (3:3-7).

^{1:10} **Fullness of the times:** This phrase describes the passage of time as a vessel filling with water (as in the water clocks of ancient times). When the vessel is full, the appointed time has come. The "fullness of the times" is therefore similar to the expression the "end times" or the "last days." God's plan for this final period is for the Messiah to rule over both the heavens and the earth. The reign of Messiah began with his ascension and enthronement (Acts 2:33-35) and will eventually bring all things into subjection to him (1 Cor. 15:25-28).

^{1:11} **Jewish believers in Jesus:** Although Paul does not state it here directly, the context clearly shows that "we" ("the first to hope in Messiah," 1:12) are Jewish believers in Jesus as the Messiah. At the time Paul was writing, the church was still mostly Jewish. There was much uncertainty as to how or if Gentiles should be included. In this letter, Paul explains God's plan for the inclusion of Gentile believers in the church (3:3,5,6).

^{1:11} **Lot:** A marked stick, bone, or other object that was thrown to determine the will of God. The answer was taken from the marking on the side facing up (Proverbs 16:33, 18:18; Matthew 27:35; Acts 1:26). Here Paul uses the lot to describe God's selection of the Jewish people, among whom Messiah was revealed, and from whom the first believers were chosen.

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having been predestined according to the plan of the *one* working all *things* according to the counsel of his will,

¹² that we, the first to hope in the Messiah, might be to the praise of his glory;

¹³ in whom you[#] [Gentile believers in Jesus °], too, after you[#] heard the word of truth—the good news of your[#] salvation—

in whom you,[#] too, after you[#] believed, were sealed[°] with the Holy Spirit of promise,[°]

¹⁴ who is a down payment[°] to us of our inheritance

toward *the* redemption [liberation or setting free at Messiah's return] of the possession[°] [the church], *that it might* result in *the* praise of his glory.

¹⁵ For this reason, and because I have heard of your[#] faith in the Lord Jesus and your[#] love *there* among all the holy *ones* [in Ephesus],

¹⁶ I do not stop giving thanks when I make mention [make a remembrance] of you[#] in my prayers

¹⁷ that the God of our Lord Jesus *the* Messiah, the Father of glory, may give you[#] a spirit of wisdom and revelation in your[#] knowledge of him, ¹⁸ *now that* the eyes of your[#] heart have been enlightened, that you[#] may know

what is the hope of his calling,

what *are* the riches of the glory of his inheritance among the holy ones, ¹⁹ and

what *is* the surpassing greatness of his power in us who believe,

NOTES

^{1:13} **Gentile believers in Jesus:** Non-Jewish believers. Paul clearly states that the “you” he addresses in this letter are Gentile believers in Jesus (2:11, 3:1). The church in Ephesus must have been largely if not entirely Gentile.

^{1:13} **Sealed:** The sealing of the Holy Spirit is the imparting of the Spirit into the life of the believer, which serves a sign (a mark or seal) of the believer's participation in the body of Messiah (2 Corinthians 1:22, Ephesians 4:30, Revelation 7:3).

^{1:13} **Holy Spirit of promise:** Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4, 2:33,39; Galatians 3:14.

^{1:14} **Down payment:** The Holy Spirit in us is a pledge of the eternal life to come—our “inheritance”—which will be revealed at our “redemption” when Messiah returns.

^{1:14} **The possession:** Refers to the special relationship between God and his chosen people (Exodus 19:6, 1 Peter 2:9). The “redemption of the possession” refers to the setting free of God's people from the afflictions of Satan and the world at Messiah's return (2 Thess. 1:7).

EPHESIANS 1,2

a power that matches the action of the intensity of his might, ²⁰ which he made active in the Messiah when he

raised him from the dead, and seated *him* on his right in the heavenlies ²¹ above every ruler and authority and power and dominion and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the *age that is* about to appear, ²² and

“put all things *in subjection* under his [Messiah's] feet” [Psalm 8:6], and

made him [Messiah] to be *the* head over the entire church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of the *one* filling all

[in the church] with all *things*.^o

2 ¹ And you[#] [Gentile believers], being dead because of your[#] trespasses and sins,

² in which you[#] previously walked [or lived]

according to the *present* age of this world,

according to the ruler of

the principality of the air,^o

the principality of the spirit now acting in the sons of disobedience [apathy, stubborn indifference],

³ among whom we [Jewish believers in Jesus] also all previously turned up [conducted ourselves] in the desires of our flesh,

NOTES

^{1:23} **The fullness of the one filling all with all things:** Since the body of Messiah is made up of believers, we are his “fullness” or completion (the body of Messiah would be empty without us). But at the same time, he is *our* “fullness,” filling each of the members of the body with the wisdom, revelation, power, and other blessings that Paul has been talking about. (See 3:19 below.)

^{2:2} **The ruler of the principality of the air:** The devil. The New Testament teaches that the devil has been expelled from the heavens, where God dwells (compare Luke 10:18 with Isaiah 14:12. See also John 12:31, Rev. 12:9-12). For a short time longer, he exercises his rule over the unbelieving world from the air around us, the traditional location of spirits in religious thought at the time.

EPHESIANS 2

obeying the wishes of the flesh and of the mind,^o and were by nature children of wrath, as also the rest [everyone else],

⁴ but God, being rich in mercy, because of his abundant love with which he loved us, ⁵ even *though* we were dead because of trespasses, made us alive together [Jewish and Gentile believers] with the Messiah

—by grace you[#] are saved—^o

⁶ and raised us up together and seated us together in the heavenlies in Messiah Jesus, ⁷ in order that he may demonstrate in the ages that

are coming on us the surpassing riches [abundance] of his grace in kindness in Messiah Jesus. ⁸ For by grace you[#] are saved^o through faith, and this is not from you,[#] but is the gift of God, ⁹ not from deeds, that no one *else* may boast, ¹⁰ for we are his workmanship, having been created in Messiah Jesus for good deeds, which God prepared in advance, in order that we might walk [or live] in them.^o

¹¹ Therefore remember that once you,[#] Gentiles in the flesh, called “uncircumcision” by the so-called “circumcision,”^o

NOTES

^{2:3} **Wishes of the flesh and of the mind:** This may be an allusion to the traditions of the elders, also known as the Oral Law (Mark 7:3,5). The scribes and Pharisees added these traditions to the Written Law of Moses, making them obligatory to the Jews. But Jesus rejected this claim to divine authority. He considered these traditions to be nothing more than the teachings of men (Mark 7:6-13).

^{2:5} **You are saved:** The Greek verb here emphasizes the continuing state of salvation which results from the past action of coming to faith in Messiah: “by grace you were saved and now continue in that salvation.”

^{2:8} **You are saved:** see above (2:5).

^{2:10} **In them:** In these good deeds, in contrast to the sins we used to do (mentioned in 2:1,2).

^{2:11} **Circumcision:** The Jews. The Jewish ritual practice of removing the foreskin at eight days of age is a sign of participation in the covenant of God with his people. Paul understands this physical act as a foreshadowing of the spiritual circumcision of the heart in Messiah. For Paul, only this spiritual circumcision is true circumcision; not the “so-called ‘circumcision’” of the flesh.

a circumcision made in the flesh by human hands, ¹² *remember* that you[#] were at that time without Messiah, alienated from the citizenship of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and in the world without God. ¹³ But now, in Messiah Jesus, you[#] who once were far away were made near by the blood of Messiah.

¹⁴ For he himself [Jesus] is our peace [Micah 5:5a], who made both [Jews and Gentiles who believe in him] one and destroyed the dividing wall of the fence,^o the hostility *between the two*, in his flesh ¹⁵ when he made the law of commandments in

ordinances ineffective^o [or powerless] that in himself he may create out of the two one new man, making peace, ¹⁶ and may reconcile both in one body to God by means of the cross, abolishing the hostility *between the two* in him. ¹⁷ And when he came, he preached good news of “peace to you[#] [Gentiles] who were far away and peace to those [the Jews] who were near” [Isaiah 57:19], ¹⁸ for through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.

¹⁹ So, therefore, you[#] are no longer foreigners and strangers, but you[#] are

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^{2:14} **The dividing wall of the fence:** The Jewish Temple in Jerusalem was divided into two parts by a stone fence. The court outside this fence was permitted to Gentiles; the areas of greater holiness inside this fence, which represented greater nearness to the presence of God, were permitted only to Jews. At the time this letter was written, Paul was in prison in Rome because of the charge that he had taken a Gentile past this boundary (Acts 21:27 ff.; The charge was not true). Here he uses this same fence to represent the historical division between Jews and Gentiles, which created mutual hostility between them. Through faith in Messiah, this “dividing wall” has been abolished.

^{2:15} **Law of commandments in ordinances ineffective:** The Law as an external code is no longer sufficient as a means of reconciliation with God. Now, reconciliation takes place through Messiah, who accepts equally both Jews and Gentiles who believe in him. The division and resulting hostility that once existed between these two groups has now been eliminated for those who are “in him.”

EPHESIANS 2,3

fellow-citizens with the holy ones^o and

members of the household of God,

²⁰ having been built up on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Messiah Jesus himself being the cornerstone^o [Isaiah 28:16]

²¹ by which the whole building is joined together and

because of which it is growing into a holy sanctuary^o in the Lord,

²² in whom you[#] [believing Gentiles] are also being built together [with believing Jews] into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

3 ¹ For this reason, I, Paul, the

prisoner of Messiah for the sake of you[#] Gentiles—^o

² if indeed you[#] have heard of the *task of* administration of the grace of God given to me for you;[#] ³ that by revelation^o the mystery was made known to me,

as I wrote earlier in brief, ⁴ *by reference* to which you[#] will all be able, while reading *this*, to *better* understand my insight into the mystery of Messiah,

⁵ which was not made known in other generations to the sons of men as it has now been revealed in the Spirit to his holy apostles and prophets,^o

⁶ *which is that* the Gentiles [together with the Jews] *are*

NOTES

^{2:19} **The holy ones:** That is, Jewish believers in Jesus.

^{2:20} **Cornerstone:** A large stone placed at the bottom of one of the corners of a stone building. It gave the building structural stability, and could be said to hold it or join it together.

^{2:21} **Sanctuary:** This was the name given by the Jews to the innermost building of the Temple area. In the sanctuary was located the Holy Place (with the lampstand, bread of the presence, and incense altar) and the Holy of Holies (which once held the ark of the covenant). Only priests were allowed in these areas, the Holy of Holies restricted to the high priest once a year. Paul describes the church as its spiritual fulfillment.

^{3:1} **For the sake of you Gentiles:** Paul was imprisoned because of his faithfulness to his calling to preach the gospel to the Gentiles.

^{3:3} **Revelation:** Paul considered “revelation” one of the spiritual gifts made available to the church, and mentions it frequently with regard to his own life (1 Corinthians 14:6,26; 2 Corinthians 12:1,7; Galatians 1:12, 2:2).

^{3:5} **Prophets:** Paul here refers to New Testament prophets (see 4:11).

EPHESIANS 3

fellow heirs and
fellow members of the body and
fellow sharers *in* the promise
that is in Messiah Jesus,
by means of the gospel ⁷ of which I
was made a servant
according to the gift of the
grace of God given to me
according to the action of his
power.

⁸ To me, the very least of all the
holy ones, this grace was given for
the purpose of

preaching to the Gentiles the
good news of the
immeasurable riches of
Messiah, ⁹ and of

bringing to light for all [both Jews
and Gentiles] what the
administration is to be of the

mystery that had been
hidden from *former* ages in
God, who created all things,
¹⁰ in order that the many-sided
wisdom of God may now be made
known to the rulers and authorities
in the heavenlies through the
church, ^o

¹¹ according to *his* plan for the ages
that he [God] carried out in the
Messiah, Jesus our Lord,

¹² in whom we have boldness and
may with confidence *obtain* access ^o
[to God] by means of his [Messiah's]
faith. ^o ¹³ Therefore I ask you [#] all
not to despair because of my
afflictions ^o for your [#] sake, such
affliction is in fact glory for you. [#]

¹⁴ For this reason, I bend my
knees to the Father [*Pater*], ^o

NOTES

^{3:10} **May now be made known...through the church:** Compare 1 Peter 1:12.

^{3:12} **And may with confidence obtain access:** Unlike the access denied to Gentiles in the Temple in Jerusalem.

^{3:12} **His faith:** We have access to God by our participation in the body of Messiah and the exercise of his faith on our behalf. The Old Greek (LXX) text of Habakkuk 2:4 says: "The righteous will live by my [God's] faith." This same reading appears in some New Testament manuscripts of Hebrews 10:38. This is a parallel image to that presented in Hebrews, where our access to the Father is by means of the mediation of Jesus, who, acting as our high priest, intercedes for us (Heb. 10:19-22). The emphasis in both is that our access to the Father is through the ministry of Jesus.

^{3:13} **Afflictions:** Or, tribulations.

^{3:14} **Father [*Pater*]:** The Greek word for families (*patria*) is derived from the Greek word for father (*pater*). Paul uses this linguistic fact as an illustration to support his argument that God is the Father of all, both Jews and Gentiles.

EPHESIANS 3,4

¹⁵ from whom all families [*patria*] in *the* heavens and on earth are named, ¹⁶ in order that he may grant you[#], according to the riches [abundance] of his glory, to be strengthened with power by his Spirit in the inner man, ¹⁷ that the Messiah may dwell in your[#] hearts by means of faith, in order that you[#], having been rooted and established in love, ¹⁸ may be able to grasp with all the holy ones what is the breadth and length and height and depth ¹⁹ and to know the love of the Messiah, which surpasses knowledge, in order that you[#] may be filled up to all the fullness of God.°

²⁰ But to the *one who* is able to do infinitely more than all that we ask or imagine, by the *same* power that acts in us, ²¹ to him be the glory in the church and in Messiah Jesus in all the generations of *all* ages.° Amen.

4 ¹ Therefore I exhort you[#]—I the prisoner—that you[#] walk [or live] in the Lord in a manner worthy of the calling to which you[#] were called,

² with all humility and meekness,

with patience,

enduring one another in love,

³ making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace;

⁴ one body and

one Spirit, just as you[#] also were called in

one hope of your[#] *shared* calling;

⁵ one Lord,

one faith,

one baptism,

⁶ one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.°

NOTES

^{3:19} **Filled up to all the fullness of God:** See above (1:23). Paul teaches that through knowledge of the love of Messiah, and by his indwelling presence, we can be filled with the fullness of God (see below, 4:13). This is similar to Peter's radical claim that we can share in God's divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4).

^{3:21} **Of all ages:** Literally, of the age of the ages.

^{4:6} **Over all and through all and in all:** God rules over all who are in the body of Messiah, he acts through all who are in the body, and he indwells all who are in the body.

⁷ But grace was given to each of us individually, according to the measure of Messiah's gift^o [to each of us]. ⁸ Therefore it [Scripture] says, "When he ascended on high,^o he made captivity captive *and* gave gifts to men" [Psalm 68:18 LXX]. ⁹ But what is the *meaning of* "he ascended,"^o if not that he had also descended into the lower *parts* of the earth? [Proverbs 30:4].^o ¹⁰ The one descending is himself also the one ascending above all the heavens, in order that he may fill all^o [the members of the body].

¹¹ He himself also gave some *as* apostles, others *as* prophets,

others *as* evangelists, others *as* pastors and teachers, ¹² toward the equipping of the holy ones for the work of service [or ministry], for building up the body of Messiah,

¹³ until we all attain

to the unity of faith and knowledge *found* in the Son of God,

to *the goal of becoming* a complete [or perfect] man, and

to the measure [or level] of maturity *found* in the

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^{4:7} **Grace...according to the measure of Messiah's gift:** Grace (unmerited favor) has been given to each of us individually according to the measure required by the individual gift each of us has received.

^{4:8} **On high:** Literally, "into a height," that is, into heaven. Paul interprets this verse in Psalm 68 as a reference to the ascension of Jesus and the distribution of the gifts of the Spirit. Here he follows the Septuagint (Greek) translation of this Psalm: "When you ascended on high, you made captivity captive *and* received gifts for men, even though they were disobedient, that you might dwell *among them*" (Psa. 68:18 LXX).

^{4:9} **What is the meaning of "he ascended":** Paul argues that an ascent implies a prior descent by alluding to Proverbs 30:4 ("Who has ascended into the heavens and descended?"). This was a proof text of Jesus' identity as the Son of God ("Who has gathered the wind in his fists?... What is his name or his son's name?").

^{4:9} **Descended into the lower parts of the earth:** This has been interpreted either as (a) Jesus' descent to earth in the incarnation, (b) his death and burial, or (c) his descent into Hades. But Paul's Biblical allusions align more closely with option (a) above: that Jesus' later ascent into heaven is the simple reverse of his prior descent from heaven. See Gen. Rab. 19:7 in which the "lower parts" also refer to the surface of the earth in the context of a heavenly ascent and descent.

^{4:10} **That he may fill all:** See above 1:23 and 3:19. Here, by the structure of Paul's argument (compare 4:8), the "filling" of believers by Messiah is associated with his giving of spiritual gifts. See 5:18.

EPHESIANS 4

fullness of the
Messiah,^o

¹⁴ in order that we may no longer be immature—tossed here and there in the waves and carried here and there in every wind of doctrine

by the trickery of men,

by a cleverness with regard to the scheming of error—

¹⁵ but being truthful in love, we may cause all [the members of the body] to grow until *they become like* him who is the head, Messiah,¹⁶ from whom the whole body,

being joined and held together by every supporting ligament^o

is, as a result of the *divine* action *corresponding* to the measure of *the*

gift given to each individual part, making the growth of the body result in its *being* built up in love.

¹⁷ This, therefore, I say and testify in the Lord: You[#] are no longer to walk [or live] as the Gentiles also walk [or live] with their minds full of foolish thoughts,¹⁸ being

darkened in their understanding, separated from the life of God

because of the ignorance that is in them,

because of the stubbornness of their hearts,

¹⁹ those who, being insensitive, have given themselves over to sensuality in the pursuit of every kind of uncleanness,^o with a desire for *even more of it*.^o ²⁰ But you[#] did not become disciples of Messiah in this way, ²¹ if you[#] really have listened to him^o and *really* were taught in him—*as you[#]*

NOTES

^{4:13} **The measure of maturity found in the fullness of the Messiah:** That is, the same level of maturity found in Messiah himself.

^{4:16} **Every supporting ligament:** Or, “ligament of provision.” This refers to the ministry gifts mentioned above (4:11,12), as indicated by the complex chiasmic structure of this section: a (4:7-10) b (4:11,12) c (4:13) d (4:14) // C (4:15,16a), B (4:16b), A (4:16c).

^{4:19} **Uncleanness:** That is, moral impurity or evil.

^{4:19} **With a desire for even more of it:** Literally, “in greediness.” They can't get enough of their evil ways, but desire more and more of it.

^{4:21} **Listened to him:** That is, heard and obeyed his teachings.

were, as truth is in Jesus!°—

²² to take off° the old man that, after the manner of your[#] former way of life, is being corrupted by deception's desires, ²³ and

to be *continually* renewed in the spirit of your[#] mind ²⁴ and

to put on° the new man that, after the manner of God, was created in the righteousness and holiness of the truth.

²⁵ Therefore take off ° falsehood: “speak truth each *one of you*[#] with his neighbor” [Zechariah 8:16], for we are members of one another.°

²⁶ “Be angry and do not sin” [Psalm

4:4]: don't let the sun go down on your[#] anger,° ²⁷ nor give *any* place to the devil.

²⁸ Let the one who steals steal no longer, but rather let him work hard doing good with his hands, that he may have something to share with the one who has a need.

²⁹ Don't let any harmful word come out of your[#] mouth, but instead whatever *is* good for the building up of *any area of* need,° that it may give grace to those who hear.

³⁰ And don't grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you[#] were sealed for a day of redemption.

³¹ Let all bitterness and anger and wrath and clamor and blasphemy [or slander] be removed from among you[#] with every evil *thing*.

NOTES

^{4:21} **And really were taught in him—as truth is in Jesus!:** That is, “as you were taught, and both you and I know you were!” Paul himself was one of their primary instructors while pastor of the church in Ephesus.

^{4:22} **Take off:** As in removing clothing.

^{4:24} **Put on:** As in putting on clothing.

^{4:25} **Take off:** As in removing clothing.

^{4:25} **We are members of one another:** We are joined with one another, like the parts of a body, as a result of our participation in the body of Messiah.

^{4:26} **Don't let the sun go down on your anger:** Don't carry your anger over to the next day.

^{4:29} **Whatever is good for the building up of any area of need:** Encouraging, uplifting words help resolve difficulties. Harmful words create them.

EPHESIANS 4,5

^{3,2} Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, dealing graciously with yourselves[#] just as God in Messiah also has dealt graciously with you.[#]

5 ¹ Be, therefore, imitators of God, as beloved children, ² and walk [or live] in love, just as the Messiah also loved us and gave himself up[°] for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God[°] for a fragrance of pleasing aroma.[°]

³ But don't let immorality and any uncleanness[°] or covetousness[°] even be mentioned among you,[#] as is fitting for those who are holy; ⁴ and *let there be no* indecent behavior and foolish or dirty talk, which are not appropriate, but rather words of thanksgiving. ⁵ For you[#] can be

sure of this: that any immoral, or unclean, or covetous *person*, which is *the same as being* an idol worshipper,[°] does not have a share in the kingdom of the Messiah and of God. ⁶ Let no one deceive you[#] with empty words, for because of these *things* the wrath of God is coming on the sons of disobedience [apathy, stubborn indifference].

⁷ Do not, therefore, become participants with them, ⁸ for you[#] were once darkness, but now in the Lord you[#] are light. Walk [or live] as children of light—⁹ for the fruit of the light *is* in every *act of* goodness and righteousness and truth—¹⁰ trying to *find out*[°] what is pleasing to the Lord.

NOTES

^{5:2} **Gave himself up:** Turned himself in to the authorities. This is a reference to Jesus' voluntary submission to his arrest, trials, and crucifixion.

^{5:2} **For us, an offering and a sacrifice to God:** Jesus died in our place as a sacrificial offering for our sins.

^{5:2} **A fragrance of pleasing aroma:** That is, a sacrifice found acceptable to God. Compare Genesis 8:21 and Exodus 29:18.

^{5:3} **Uncleanness:** Moral impurity or evil.

^{5:3} **Covetousness:** The desire for more; greediness.

^{5:5} **Which is the same as being an idol worshipper:** Paul considers immorality, moral uncleanness, and covetousness to be as serious as the sin of idol worship.

^{5:10} **Trying to find out:** Or, testing, proving.

¹¹ And do not take part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather even expose them.^o ¹² For the *things* done by them in secret are disgraceful even to speak *of*,¹³ but when they are exposed^o by the light, all *things* are revealed,^o ¹⁴ for every *thing* that is revealed is light.^o Therefore it [Scripture] says, “Wake up,” sleeper, and rise from the dead, and the Messiah will shine on you* [Isaiah 60:1,2].

¹⁵ Therefore, watch carefully how you[#] walk [or live], not as unwise but as wise *people*,¹⁶ making good use of the time, for the days are evil. ¹⁷ So then don't be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

¹⁸ And don't get drunk with wine, which is wasteful self-indulgence, but be filled with the Spirit,¹⁹ speaking to yourselves[#] [or each other] in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing to the Lord and praising Him in song with your[#] heart,²⁰ always giving thanks for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus *the* Messiah to *our* God and Father.

²¹ Submit to one another in the fear of Messiah:²² wives to their own husbands as to the Lord,²³ for a man is head of *his* wife even as the Messiah is head of the church, *being* himself savior of the body;²⁴ but as the church submits to the Messiah, so also should the wives

 NOTES

^{5:11} **Expose them:** Or, point out the error in them.

^{5:13} **Exposed:** Or, when their error is pointed out.

^{5:13} **Are revealed:** That is, they are no longer hidden; their true nature has been revealed.

^{5:14} **Revealed is light:** Without light shining on something, it cannot be seen. But if light shines on it, what is actually seen by our eyes is the light reflected from it. In the same way Paul argues that exposing sin with truth is quite different than participating in it, even by way of talking about it, since you are bringing to light God's word on the subject, and are thereby looking at the light of God's word rather than the sinful action itself. In the same way, he continues, Scripture calls us to rise up out of the darkness of spiritual death, so that the light of Messiah can shine on us, exposing every evil way, and replacing the darkness with God's light. This is an allusion to Isaiah 60:1,2. Compare Romans 13:11-12.

EPHESIANS 5,6

submit to their husbands in all things.

²⁵ Husbands, love *your*[#] wives, just as the Messiah also loved the Church and gave himself up for her,

²⁶ that he might make her holy, having *first* cleansed her *in preparation* for the bath of the water [of baptism] by *his* word,^o

²⁷ that he might present the Church to himself as glorious, not having a stain or wrinkle or any such *thing*, but that she might be holy and blameless.

²⁸ In the same way, husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies. The one who loves his own wife loves himself. ²⁹ For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Messiah also *does* the church,³⁰

for we are parts of his body. ³¹ “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united with his wife, and the two will become one flesh” [Genesis 2:24]. ³² This mystery is great; but I speak with regard to Messiah and the church. ³³ Nevertheless, *you*[#] too, let each one of *you*[#] love his own wife as himself; but the wife must fear [respect] her husband.

6 ¹ Children, listen to *your*[#] parents in the Lord,^o for this is right. ² “Honor *your*^{*} father and mother,” which is the first commandment with a promise: ³ “that it may be well with *you*^{*} and *you*^{*} may have a long life on the earth” [Deuteronomy 5:16]. ⁴ And fathers, don't make *your*[#] children angry, but nourish them with [raise them in] the discipline [training] and instruction of the Lord.

NOTES

^{5:26} **Cleansed her for the bath of the water:** Immersion in a ritual bath (or *mikvah*), the Jewish custom on which Christian baptism is based, was not for getting the dirt off. This was done in an ordinary bath that preceded the ritual immersion. In the same way, Messiah's spoken word performed the cleansing that prepared his followers for baptism (see John 15:3). In the context of contemporary Jewish society, Paul paints an incredibly humble and tender picture of Jesus washing his bride while she is in a state of ritual impurity, an act by which he willingly became ritually impure for her.

^{6:1} **Listen to your parents in the Lord:** Implying both to hear and to obey. The meaning of the expression “parents in the Lord” is unclear. It may refer either to parents who are believers or to spiritual parents, that is, those responsible for leading someone to Messiah.

⁵ Servants [slaves], listen ° to your[#] lords [masters] according to the flesh with fear [respect] and trembling in the sincerity of your[#] heart as to the Messiah,

⁶ not according to eye-service [service performed only to attract attention or impress others] as men-pleasers,

but as servants [slaves] of Messiah,

doing the will of God from your[#] soul [sincerely],

⁷ serving with eagerness as to the Lord and not to men,

⁸ knowing that each *one*, if he does any good *thing*, will be paid this back by the Lord whether *he is* a servant [slave] or a free *man*.

⁹ And lords [masters], do the same to them, and stop threatening, knowing that both their Lord and yours[#] is in the heavens, and there is no partiality [favoritism] with him.

¹⁰ Finally, grow strong in the Lord and in the intensity of his might. ¹¹ Put on the complete *outfit of the armor of God*, that you[#] may be able to stand against the scheming of the devil:

¹² for our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but

against the rulers, °

against the principalities, °

against the world-class powers ° of this darkness,

NOTES

^{6:5} **Listen:** Implying both to hear and obey.

^{6:12} **Rulers:** In Greek, “archons,” as in archangels. Angelic archons have authority over nations in Daniel 10:13,20,21 and 12:1 (LXX), as with Michael over Israel. Satan himself is also referred to as an archon (Matt. 9:34, Eph. 2:2).

^{6:12} **Principalities:** This can refer either to the spiritual beings who control certain domains or simply to the domains themselves. In the temptation of Jesus, Satan offers him his principality if he will worship him (Luke 4:6). Colossians 1:13 says that God has delivered us from the principality of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his son.

^{6:12} **World-class powers:** In Greek, “cosmocrats” (“cosmo” meaning world; “crator” a ruler or one holding power). These were identified in contemporary literature with the pagan gods, who were associated with the planets and therefore with astrology by the Greeks and Romans. They are demonic beings whose realm of influence extends over the entire inhabited earth.

EPHESIANS 6

against the spiritual *forces* of evil in the heavenlies.°

¹³ Therefore, take up the *complete outfit of the armor* of God, that you[#] may be able to resist [hold your[#] ground] in the evil day,°

and after you[#] have accomplished all° [after you[#] have been victorious over

everything (that comes against you[#])], to stand.°

¹⁴ Stand, therefore,

having *first* girded your[#] loins with truth° [Isaiah 11:5] and

having put on the breastplate of righteousness° [Isaiah 59:17] ¹⁵ and

NOTES

^{6:12} **The heavenlies:** A general term that can refer to the sky or atmosphere and outer space as well as to the spiritual heavens in which God dwells (Ps. 2:4, 19:1, 89:11). Paul clearly identifies the realm of evil with the air (Eph. 2:2), that is, the lowest of the heavenly regions, within “arm’s reach” of the believer. This accounts for his use of the term “wrestling” and the imagery of a soldier’s armor in the verses that follow. The “powers” or “forces” mentioned in this verse are personal spiritual beings—armies—arrayed against the Lord and against his people.

^{6:13} **The evil day:** The day of trial or temptation (Heb. 3:8). Compare Ephesians 5:16: “Making good use of the time, for the days are evil.”

^{6:13} **Accomplished all:** As a soldier who has successfully carried out his orders in battle.

^{6:13} **Stand:** As opposed to those who fall in the fighting.

^{6:14} **Girded your loins with truth:** This is an allusion to the Messianic prophecy of Isaiah 11:5, which Paul applies to believers as the body of Messiah. In this section (6:13-17), Paul describes the ideal spiritual warrior by using as an analogy the full battle gear of a Roman soldier. The first element, girding the loins, doesn’t refer to a belt, as is usually supposed, but to the leather, breech-like apron of a Roman soldier. This protected the lower abdomen, as does the protective equipment of modern athletes. Isaiah, who speaks of a “girdle” encircling both waist and loins, has in mind an earlier version of the same type of gear (see Genesis 3:7). While “girding the loins” often simply meant preparing oneself for something difficult, Paul may also have had in mind his earlier teaching against immorality (see Ephesians 4:22, 5:3-6).

^{6:14} **Breastplate of righteousness:** This is an allusion to the Messianic prophecy of Isaiah 59:17, which Paul applies to believers as the body of Messiah. A breastplate covered the heart, which was thought to be the center not only of the emotions, but also of the intellect and the will. Spiritually, our hearts are protected by doing what is right (righteousness)—by our obedience to God’s will.

having tied *something* on your[#] feet[°] in readiness *to preach* the gospel [the good news] of peace [Isaiah 52:7], ¹⁶ and in all *circumstances*[°]

having taken up the shield of faith [Psalm 91:4-5], with which you[#] will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil *one* [Psalm 76:3];

¹⁷ and receive the helmet of salvation[°] [Isaiah 59:17]

and the sword of the Spirit, which

is a word from God[°] [Isaiah 49:2],

¹⁸ while praying *together* in every *appointed* time, throughout every prayer and earnest request, in *the* Spirit, and being alert to him [the Spirit] in all your[#] perseverance *in prayer* and *in every* earnest request concerning all of the holy *ones*,

¹⁹ *praying* also for me,

that a word [a message] may be given to me when I open my mouth,[°] to make known with boldness the mystery of the good news,²⁰ for which

 NOTES

^{6:15} **Having tied something on your feet:** This is an allusion to the Messianic prophecy of Isaiah 52:7, which Paul applies to believers as the body of Messiah. In Paul's analogy, this corresponds to Roman military boots.

^{6:16} **In all circumstances:** In all our wrestling and resisting.

^{6:17} **Helmet of salvation:** This is an allusion to the Messianic prophecy of Isaiah 59:17, which Paul applies to believers as the body of Messiah. In Isaiah, this is the helmet of "yeshuah," the noun form of the Hebrew name of Jesus: Yeshua. In modern times, we associate our heads with our minds and thinking abilities. But in the Bible, the head (headship) is associated with the leading and guidance provided by those in authority (probably because of the location of the senses in the head; 1 Corinthians 11:2-16). Putting on the helmet of Yeshua (Jesus/Salvation) means submitting ourselves to the leading and guidance of Messiah, as well as to gaining the protection that comes through obedience and salvation.

^{6:17} **The sword of the Spirit, which is a word from God:** This is an allusion to the Messianic prophecy of Isaiah 49:2: "He made my mouth like a sharp sword." It refers to a word received from God and then spoken out. This is an illustration of the exercise of spiritual gifts by the body of Messiah.

^{6:19} **A word may be given to me when I open my mouth:** Another reference to the exercise of spiritual gifts.

EPHESIANS 6

I am an ambassador in chains,

that in it [that word (or message)] I may speak boldly, as it is necessary *for* me to speak.

²¹⁻²² But so that you[#] may also know *what* my circumstances *are* and how I'm doing, Tychicus,[°] *our* beloved brother and faithful servant [deacon] in *the* Lord, whom I have sent to you[#] for this same *purpose*,

will make everything known to you,[#] so that you[#] will know these *things* about us and it will comfort your[#] heart.

²³ Peace to the brethren, and love with faith, from God *the* Father and Lord Jesus *the* Messiah.

²⁴ Grace *be* with all those who love our Lord Jesus *the* Messiah with *an* incorruptible *love*.[°]

NOTES

^{6:21-22} **Tychicus:** This letter was delivered to Ephesus by Tychicus, a companion of Paul from the province of Asia. During the same journey, he also delivered Paul's letter to the Colossians (Colossians 4:7).

^{6:24} **With an incorruptible love:** Literally, “in incorruptibility.”

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